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**Ethno-politics perceptions and foreign policy: A case study of
the activities of the organized American Jewish community
in regard to the decision by the United States to enter into a
diplomatic dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organization
(1967–1988)**

Jager, Elliot, Ph.D.

New York University, 1994

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ETHNO-POLITICS
PERCEPTIONS
AND FOREIGN POLICY

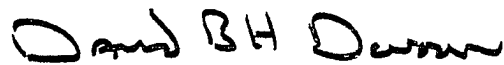
A CASE STUDY OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE
ORGANIZED AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY
IN REGARD TO THE DECISION BY THE UNITED STATES
TO ENTER INTO A DIPLOMATIC DIALOGUE
WITH THE
PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION
(1967-1988)

by

Elliot Jager

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Politics
New York University
May 1994



David B.H. Denoon

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1994

“Jews are associated with liberalism the way the French are with wine...The pure liberal spirit precludes the possibility of intractable hatred or intransigent political will.”

-Ruth R. Wisse
The Liberal Betrayal of the Jews

“One of the curious things about political opinions is how often the same people line up on opposite sides of different issues...They have different visions of how the world works...Implicit in the unconstrained vision is the notion that...means exist to improve human nature...Much of...twentieth century liberalism builds upon these foundations...”

-Thomas Sowell
A Conflict of Visions

For My Mother
Yvette Jager
Yecheved Channa Bas Yosef

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The day is short and the work is great

-Rabbi Tarfon

Sayings of the Fathers (Pirkei Avot)

This dissertation is the product of more than several years of effort. Urging me on, first and foremost, was my mother Yvette Jager. She reminded me that I only *thought* I was indispensable to the various projects which kept me from completing the manuscript sooner. I have since found an appropriate aphorism which encapsulated her advice and refer to it anytime I feel myself about to be side-tracked: "The graveyard is full of indispensable men."

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to explain the role and activities of the organized American Jewish community in the decision by the United States to enter into a diplomatic dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

I argue that American Jewish support was essential for the success of the U.S.-led peace process; that this support depended on changing perceptions about the nature of the Arab-Israel conflict among American Jewish leaders, and that this perceptual change was connected to political suasion or manipulation from outside the American Jewish community and from within.

My approach is to associate perceptual changes to political suasion and agenda setting. A conflict that had been zero sum became non zero sum. A dispute involving the Arab states versus Israel became a struggle between an indigenous Palestinian Arab population and Israel. The PLO, whose *raison d'être* was Israel's annihilation, became a multifaceted NGO capable of self-reformation.

Without minimizing the impact of other variables (facts-on-the-ground, reversals of Arab policy, etc.), this study examines changing perceptions of the Arab- Israel conflict and argues that leadership elements in the American Jewish community played a critical role in evaluating and codifying the perceptual transformation of the conflict. All of these perceptual changes were politically necessary prerequisites before "talking" to the PLO was possible. The US approach to resolving the conflict benefited immensely from the facilitating role played by various Jewish leadership elements.

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INTRODUCTION

On the morning of September 10, 1993 Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin initialed a document recognizing the Palestine Liberation Organization. Shimon Peres, the main architect of the mutual recognition deal told the inner-cabinet, "The PLO has changed completely. Many Israelis had hoped for years for these changes. Israel has achieved in this document all the points it had demanded." ¹ Three days later, on the South Lawn of the White House, before an audience that included Keffiyahs and yarmulkas Yasir Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin sealed their accord. A reporter marveled that: "In the audience were lawmakers and American Jewish leaders who had built political careers on making sure that Mr. Arafat would never come to the United States."² This case study argues that, on the contrary, many in the Jewish leadership helped make the Rabin-Arafat accord possible by laying the groundwork for an earlier milestone, the December 1988 US decision to enter into a diplomatic dialogue with the PLO. ³

This study will examine how changing perceptions of the Arab-Israel conflict, on the part of the organized American Jewish leadership, affected the role they played in the events culminating in the December 1988 decision.⁴ The September 1993 accord on self-rule in Judea, Samaria and Gaza is best understood as the culmination of a perceptual transformation that began years earlier. It is my contention that this perceptual transformation would have been unrealizable in 1993 without the earlier contributions of the American Jewish leadership.

The underlying theme of this study is that "talking" to the PLO was the

¹ *Jerusalem Post*, September 10, 1993

² *New York Times*, September 14, 1993

³ For purposes of exposition, I shall identify three leadership groupings, in relation to the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, which evolved in the course of the 1967-1988 era. They are: (1) internal opposition; (2) outside elite; and (3) peace activist camp.

⁴ U.S. talks with the PLO were formally suspended by the Bush Administration in June 1990 as a result of a PLO sanctioned attempted terror attack. US-PLO talks were ultimately resumed by the Clinton Administration after the Rabin-Arafat deal.

outcome of a fundamental, though gradual, shift in perceptual orientation about the Arab-Israel conflict. I explore the United States decision to establish formal diplomatic contacts with the PLO in the context of the activities of the organized American Jewish community. I ask: How did the perceptions of the Jewish community about the PLO's mission and the nature of the conflict evolve? Why are their perceptions germane to the December 1988 decision?

Until the Summer of 1993, Israel had refused to "talk" to the PLO not because the PLO was a "terrorist organization" but because Israel perceived the goals of the PLO to be the destruction of the Zionist enterprise. For this reason, Israel's willingness to negotiate with Palestinian Arabs from the Administered Territories did not extend to the Tunis-based PLO. Until the momentous events of August and September 1993, it was accepted wisdom among students of the Arab-Israel conflict that while mainstream Israeli politicians could conceivably reach an accommodation with the Arabs in the Territories, there was nothing Israel and the Tunis-based PLO leadership could usefully talk about.

American Jewish support for Israel's position of not negotiating with the PLO was premised on a shared perceptual orientation about the PLO's mission. The essence of this study is an examination of the U.S. Jewish leadership's changing perceptions of the Arab-Israel conflict and their heightened appreciation of the Palestinian Arab role in the struggle. Insofar as perceptions are concerned, the bedrock of the conflict shifted from state-centered to inter-communal and from zero-sum to non zero sum. The Rabin-PLO accord of September 1993 was facilitated by the political groundwork undertaken by elements in the American Jewish leadership. This study is a

descriptive analysis of that groundwork.⁵

A Jewish Foreign Policy?

Is there such a thing as a "Jewish foreign policy?" According to Shmuel Sandler, not only does such an agenda exist but, "Diaspora leaders appear to be challenging in some respects Israel's predominance in determining a Jewish foreign policy agenda..."⁶ Sandler argues that, "Jews as a people interact with ethnic groups, nations, states, and international organizations at all levels."⁷

Jewish foreign policy is concerned with the external relations of organized world Jewry in all its manifestations. The relations encompass levels of interaction ranging from intrastate (communal) to interstate (international) and cross-state (transnational)... The components of Jewish foreign policy can be distinguished along temporal or spatial boundaries. . . We could articulate the basic tenets of a Jewish foreign policy along two aspects: normative and actual. The first involves the self-conception of the Jews and their role in the world while the second concerns the relevant issues to which Jews as

⁵ How the American Jewish leadership reacted, in the late summer of 1993, to the prospect of a Rabin-Arafat accord was very much on the mind of the Labor Government, the Clinton Administration and the PLO itself. Plainly, even at the finale of the process, the importance of having the U.S. Jewish community "on board" was manifest. Prime Minister Rabin and Foreign Minister Peres briefed Lester Pollack and Malcolm Hoenlein of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. The Israeli Consulate in New York also called in the Jewish leadership for a detailed briefing. Press reports circulated that the Administration was urging the Israelis to "go slow" because political support among US Jews was had not yet jelled. The Egyptian Government invited Henry Siegman of the AJCongress to Cairo for a special briefing. Secretary of State Warren Christopher called Pollack to gauge the leadership's reaction to the pending Israel-PLO deal. *JTA*, August 31, 1993.

⁶ Shmuel Sandler, "Is There A Jewish Foreign Policy," *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, Vol. XXIX, No. 2, December 1987, p. 115

⁷ Sandler, *op. cit.*, p. 118 He writes: "It may be that there is a (perhaps subconscious) reluctance on the part of Jewish scholars to evolve a theory of a Jewish foreign policy because of the risk that such a theory might justify the accusation in the infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* that there is an international Jewish conspiracy against the Gentile world and to rule the world. The Protocols, a fabrication much used by the Nazis, are still popular among modern anti-semites and especially among Muslim ideologues; but this should not inhibit academic investigation and intellectual discussion."

a whole are expected to react...(normative) concepts that come to mind are *kol Yisroel arevim zeh baze* (all Jews are responsible for one another), *am levadad yiskon* (a nation that dwells alone, or *lagoyim* (a light unto the nations), and *hazon aharit ha-yamim* (the vision of the end of days, that is the vision of the Messianic age).⁸

Jewish foreign policy, Sandler points out, is based on triad of concerns: (1) Jewish communities in distress; (2) anti-Semitism (local, national, international); and (3) the security and well-being of the State of Israel.

For years, the perception that the struggle was zero sum had blocked a PLO role in the United States-led peace process. Gradually, a confluence of factors contributed to the idea that the Arab mission was undergoing transformation. A key turning point came in 1974, during the Ford Administration, when the PLO began sending discreet signals that it was altering course. It would take an additional fourteen years to formalize a change in orientation and to convince the United States that the change was genuine.⁹ The organized Jewish community was part and parcel of this process.

We can point to a variety of factors to explain this change in American Jewish perceptions: political agenda setting and suasion (by several of the parties), a (perceived if not genuine) shift in mission by the PLO, and a conviction on the part of Israeli political leaders (mostly those aligned with

⁸ Sandler, op. cit., p. 120

⁹ The PLO signaled the shift at the July 1974 PNC session.

Labor) that the very essence of the Arab-Israel conflict was evolving.¹⁰ Equally important to the equation was media portrayal of the changing situation on-the-ground. The US television networks and prestige newspapers also contributed to the image of a conflict having undergone a metamorphosis .

American Jewish participation in the US-led "peace process" was a domestic political necessity. It is ironic that, with time, the Jewish leadership became more active in lobbying Israel than lobbying for Israel. To understand the Jewish leadership's role it is necessary to focus on the political dynamics inside the community. For purposes of exposition, I shall focus on the following three categories and their relationship with the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations or Presidents Conference.

1. Internal Opposition - Comprised of several Presidents Conference constituent groups that openly criticized Israeli policies and supported the overall US approach to resolving the conflict.

2. Outside elite - Supporters of unconditional PLO participation whose roots had been inside the Jewish establishment.

¹⁰By September 1993, the Labor-Left Israeli Government became convinced that the PLO's zero sum mantle had been usurped by Hamas. Weakened and in near bankruptcy, the PLO of September 1993 was not believed to be the "same" group whose *raison d'être* was Israel's destruction. This analysis has not gone unchallenged. Indeed, there is every reason to expect that Hamas and the PLO will cooperate on-the-ground despite tactical differences. See, "Palestinian Rivals, Fatah and Hamas, Exploring Pivotal Ties," *Washington Post*, January 16, 1994, and "The Secret Relationship Between the PLO and Hamas," *The Jewish Voice & Opinion* (Englewood, N.J.) April 1994 [re-printed from the *Washington Jewish Week*]. Aside from the Hamas-PLO connection, Arafat himself continued to issue occasional zero-sum pronouncements. Speaking in South Africa, on May 17, 1994, Arafat said: "Jihad will continue and Jerusalem is not for the Palestinian people. It is for all the Muslim people...Our main battle is Jerusalem...I see this agreement as being no more than the agreement signed between our prophet Muhammad and the Quraysh in Mecca...we now accept the peace agreement. but [only in order] to continue on the road to Jerusalem." JTA, May 19, 1994 and *Forward*, May 27, 1994

3. Peace Camp - Leftist Jewish supporters of unconditional PLO participation who came onto the scene with no previous ties to Jewish communal life.

This study will examine the American Jewish response to pronouncements from the executive branch (primarily the White House and State Department) and the PLO which shed light on the essential character of the Arab-Israel conflict. This examination of American Jewish perceptions toward evolving U.S. foreign policy will reveal a sharp contrast between the Jewish leadership's position toward the PLO in the late 1960's versus its stance in late 1988.

This study covers the period from the June 1967 Six Day War until the December 1988 announcement by Secretary of State George Shultz that the United States was prepared to enter into a "substantive dialogue" with the PLO. A special emphasis is placed on the 1977-1988 time frame. But for purposes of context, some material covering the 1948 -1967 phase is also presented.

CENTRAL PROBLEM AND THESIS

Here is a community that for some twenty-one years (1967-1988) spent much of its hard won political capital (a) fighting the perception that the Palestinian Arab problem was at the core of the Arab-Israel conflict; (b) opposing various steps that could be construed as enhancing the legitimacy of the Palestinian issue and of the PLO; (c) stressing the zero sum and state-centered nature of the conflict, and (d) consequently opposing U.S.-PLO relations. Yet, when the United States announced the decision to "talk" to the PLO the American Jewish response was muted.¹¹ Why?

I argue that, in fact, the events of December 1988 were the product of an

¹¹ JTA Daily News Bulletin, December 15, 1988.

incremental shift *in perceptions* that had been taking place for some time. In the wake of the November 1977 Sadat visit to Jerusalem, key elements in the United States Jewish leadership rejected the Government of Israel's vehement argument that the struggle remained zero sum and accepted the non zero sum American characterization of the conflict. Gradually, they also accepted that the Palestinian problem was at the core of the conflict and given that the PLO was the internationally recognized "address" for Palestinian Arab issues, all that remained to be done was to oversee the "reform" of the Palestinian Arab leadership. So that with the encouragement of some Israeli politicians aligned with the Labor Party, U.S. Jewish leadership elements then contributed, in an important way, to the decision process by which the United States weighed *when* to enter into negotiations with the PLO.

Thus, key Jewish organizations and leaders embraced the basic American position on the peace process, even as they fought aspects of its implementation. Like the United States, American Jewry came to accept the Palestinian issue as the root cause of the Arab-Israel conflict. Like the United States they viewed the struggle as shifting toward non-zero-sum terms. Like the United States, American Jewry came to believe that the Arab states would make peace only after a solution to the Palestinian Arab problem was achieved. Like the United States, American Jewry opposed Jewish claims to the West Bank. And, like the United States, American Jewish leaders believed that a dialogue with the PLO was anathema *only until* the PLO transformed itself in a plausible manner.

But why did the community opt to adopt the U.S. approach? Most likely because as American citizens they preferred to embrace the views of their own country and were affected by the messages of their own media to a greater extent than by the claims--no matter how heartfelt--of a foreign government. Moreover, from 1948 to 1977, under successive Labor Governments, the Jewish claim to Gaza, Judea and Samaria was rarely

articulated and never emphasized.¹² Yet I do not believe this to be the entire story. That is why this study emphasizes the relationship between changing perceptions of the conflict and political suasion.

Research Hypothesis One
American Jews As Part of the Equation

• Summary- The way in which American foreign policy decision makers approached the U.S.-PLO dialogue issue indicated that, for the United States, a prerequisite to bringing the Palestine Liberation Organization into the United States led-peace process was convincingly portraying the conflict in non zero sum terms. To that end, it was particularly important that Israel's supporters in the organized American Jewish community participate in making the case that the essential nature of the struggle had been transformed. Politically, American Jewish involvement legitimized the U.S. decision to negotiate with the PLO.

This hypothesis will be tested by showing the extent to which:

1.1 American Jewish leaders repeatedly met with U.S. officials to confer on the PLO issue becoming an intrinsic component in the process leading up to the U.S. decision to "talk" to the PLO. United States officials reassured Jewish leaders that no dialogue would take place until the PLO met certain conditions which would formalize the perception that the nature of the conflict had changed.

1.2 Several groups served as independent transnational actors traversing

¹²In April 1994, opponents of Rabin Government policies distributed a leaflet in Jerusalem quoting Labor's own David Ben Gurion as saying: "It would be a grave and dreadful error if we do not settle Hebron, the neighbor and predecessor of Jerusalem, with an extensive Jewish population within the shortest possible time." Assuming the quote is accurate, it does not change the fact that Labor ideology did not press Jewish rights to Eretz Israel.

Washington, Jerusalem and Tunis in an effort to foster a U.S.-PLO dialogue. American Jewish leadership elements were concretely involved in the scenario culminating in a U.S.-PLO dialogue.

1.3 Pro-PLO elements made a conscious effort to garner support for a US-PLO dialogue within the Jewish community.

The null hypothesis would discover that: U.S. foreign policy makers did not view Jewish support as absolutely essential to success; that this was a view shared by supporters of the PLO and that, on the whole, Jewish activities were a sideshow.

Research Hypothesis Two

Change in Perceptions

•Summary- Prerequisite to negotiating with the PLO, it was necessary to demonstrate that: (a) the PLO no longer sought the destruction of Israel; and, (b) the Palestinian Arab problem could not be circumvented or avoided. These issues were confronted at the perceptual level. The perceptions of U.S. decision makers were the first to change (based perhaps on information generated through secret US-PLO contacts) while the critical evolution of American Jewish perceptions unfolded over time.

This hypothesis will be tested by showing the extent to which:

2.1 Official U.S. statements suggested that the struggle was non zero sum.

2.2 American Jewish leaders made statements indicating that they believed the nature of the struggle had indeed shifted and called for concomitant Israeli concessions (though not necessarily a US-PLO dialogue).

2.3 Several clusters of leadership elements within the community

(identified below) lobbied within the Presidents Conference as well as outside its framework in support of the idea that the nature of the conflict had changed and that the PLO should be brought into the peace process.

The null hypothesis would discover that no great emphasis was placed by the players on how the PLO or the Palestinian cause was perceived.

Research Hypothesis Three
Suasion and Agenda-Setting

• Summary- Parallel with the key role played by the Jewish leadership and changing perceptions about the Arab-Israel conflict, suasion and agenda-setting were used to impede support within the American Jewish community for Israeli claims to the West Bank and Gaza. Such claims had to be negated so that these lands could be traded in return for peace. Suasion and agenda-setting were manifested, in part, through a regime of “disassociation” in which pro-Israelism became divorced from backing Israel’s long-term retention of Judea, Samaria and Gaza. Additionally, contacts (not sanctioned by Israel) between American Jewish leadership elements and influential Arab figures were encouraged.

This hypothesis will be tested by showing the extent to which:

3.1 A policy of “disassociation” had been articulated and can be concretely illustrated.

3.2 Statements by U.S. policy makers reflected the importance they attached to blocking Israeli moves to solidify control of the West Bank and Gaza.

3.3 The place of the PLO Covenant in the political culture of the Palestinian Arabs was denigrated or ignored.

3.4 Lobbying by a cluster of Jewish leadership elements within the Presidents Conference and outside its structure was aimed against Likud Government policy regarding the West Bank and Gaza and was supportive of Palestinian Arab aspirations.

3.5 Jewish critics of the Likud-led Government participated in efforts to counsel the PLO regarding its public diplomacy.

3.6 The American Jewish Committee, Union of American Hebrew Congregations of America and American Jewish Congress were instrumental in blocking efforts to maintain a unified (non critical) consensus position within the Presidents Conference on West Bank issues. Elements of the American Jewish political elite cooperated with segments of the Israeli Labor opposition in undermining the policies of the Likud-led Government, especially after 1985, for the purpose of undermining the stance taken by the Government of Israel on how best to resolve the Arab-Israel conflict.

The null hypothesis would reveal that the Jewish leadership made no effort to consciously separate support for Israel's general safety and security from the Likud Government's policies in the Administered Territories.

PROPOSITIONS

1. Key U.S. government decision-makers believed that they needed, at minimum, the acquiescence of the organized American Jewish leadership to achieve success for their evolving policy regarding the PLO.
2. Adopting a cooperative bargaining stance, and sharing common strategic negotiating goals with the various U.S. administrations, the American Jewish leadership helped frame the parameters for the peace process, namely, that the struggle had indeed become non-zero sum in

nature. And, that it therefore made sense to pursue a “land-for-peace” approach.

3. Contrary to the position of the Likud-led Government of Israel, the American Jewish leadership and key U.S. government decision makers shared a strategic agenda based upon the idea that, ultimately, the Arab states and moderate Palestinian-Arabs would be prepared to trade “land-for-peace.” Beyond security concerns, for the most part, they also agreed that Israel should not pursue historical or legal claims to Judea, Samaria and Gaza.

Major Research Questions

1. Through what mechanism were political choices recast? For example, at what point did the question before the Jewish leadership shift from: “How can we assist Israel in avoiding concessions on the West Bank that might prove suicidal?” to: “How can we persuade the Israelis that the US policy approach toward the Palestinians and the West Bank is, on the whole, sound?”
2. Can we conclude that shifts in perceptions actually impact upon a player’s actions?
3. Is there a larger lesson to be drawn from the findings of this study?
4. How did the Executive Branch exploit personality and policy differences within the Jewish leadership?
5. Did the American Jewish leadership cooperate with the Israeli political opposition to impair the policies of the Likud Government?
6. Was the Likud Government the target of psychological warfare?

Theoretical Approach

My theoretical model is a synthesis of two approaches developed by political scientists interested in bargaining, decision making and political psychology: (1) political manipulation (i.e. changing the agenda through suasion) and (2) image and perception.

Methodological Problems

A number of methodological problems were encountered and addressed:

<> Can objective criteria for perceptual factors be identified? I believe they can. This study does so by providing a wealth of contextual data that allows the reader to draw his/her own conclusions.

<> How can we "know" that the activities of the American Jewish players had a qualitative influence on the ultimate outcome? How else can one explain the extent to which US policy makers engaged the Jewish leadership each step of the way? This study documents scores of meetings between government officials, including the President and the Jewish leadership.

Moreover, scholars interested in the domestic sources of US foreign policy have established that elite opinion matters. Says Cecil Crabb: "Policy makers look to this group of citizens to provide them with enlightened and informed judgments on diplomatic questions."¹³ According to Crabb, no matter how you define the minority of numbers of people interested and informed about foreign policy issues, "Within this category, some students of public opinion identify a very small, but sometimes highly influential, subcategory called the 'mobilizers' of public sentiment. This group--normally comprising no more than 1 or 2 percent of the American people--is extremely interested in foreign policy questions: is well informed about them; and frequently devotes its time, energy, and money to communicating its viewpoints to national policy makers."¹⁴

Logically, therefore, opinion that matters is a two-way street. Elite

¹³ Cecil V. Crabb, Jr., *American Foreign Policy in the Nuclear Age*, 4th Edition, (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), p. 238

¹⁴ Crabb. p.238

groups seek to influence policy makers and policy makers seek to gain the support of interested groups.

<> Can the actions taken by various actors to influence the U.S.-PLO dialogue be shown as demonstratively “manipulative?” The presence of agenda controlling behavior and manipulation of dimensions is evidenced, I believe convincingly, by the data.

Data Collection

Of course, it is impossible to capture a full and comprehensive picture of events for every stage in the evolution of this issue. Nor can we know with certainty the motivations of the key players. Fortunately, our main concern is with perceptual makings that ebb and flow in the public domain. To that end, a wealth of data is developed as evidence for perceptual shifts and political suasion. And, I hope, the connection between the two becomes apparent.

Various periodicals, but most importantly, the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency Daily News Bulletin*, a highly regarded source for news within the American Jewish community, have been carefully scrutinized. Additionally, primary sources for this study include interviews with a number of the key players (among them several chairmen of the President’s Conference and leaders of the International Center for Peace in the Middle East).

Variables

I want to explain the U.S. foreign policy decision to “talk” to the PLO in the context of the activities of the organized Jewish leadership. The decision is this study’s *dependent variable*. The *independent variable*, defined as the cause or antecedent found within the American political system, contributing to a shift in U.S. foreign policy on the PLO, is, for the purposes of this study,

changing perceptions about the real essence of the Arab-Israel conflict (as a result of suasion, media coverage and efforts by the Executive Branch). The study's *intervening variable* is the organized American Jewish leadership.

Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation is comprised of nine chapters.¹⁵

Part I - After this Introduction, Chapter 2 summarizes the theoretical literature and justifies the approach taken in this work. Chapter 3 provides what I believe is a necessary historical and perceptual setting for the 1948-1967 era.

¹⁵This descriptive case study tries to explain a United States foreign policy outcome from the vantage point of the activities of the organized Jewish community. It does not claim to explain the process, structure, or methods of U.S. foreign policy decision making.

Though the role of the media is linked closely to the formation of perceptions, references to the media will be limited to setting the context for larger events. This research will not examine, in any great detail, the various other domestic sources influencing the U.S.-PLO relationship. Influence might have been exerted by pro-Arab interest groups, the bureaucracy, and the United States Congress, to name several possible sources.

This paper will also not seek to appraise the impact of various events in the IR arena on America's ultimate decision to "talk" to the PLO. These influences might include pressure from allies and events at the United Nations. Incidents directly related to the perceived shift from zero-sum to non-zero sum situation will, however, be noted.

This paper is not a study of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. In addition, this work is, decidedly, not a study of the Palestine Liberation Organization, its leadership or an analysis of its strategic goals toward Israel.

The semantic battlefield is an integral part of the overall conflict in the Middle East between Arabs and Jews. The connotations of certain mundane words are often used to give political advantage. It is virtually impossible to deal with this topic without using, or failing to use, some politically-loaded terms. In fact, the very vocabulary of the dispute-- "*Palestinian*" (both sides claim the other has usurped the phrase), "*West Bank*," "*Judea and Samaria*," "*Jerusalem*," and "*occupied*," to cite just some examples--is itself in contention.

In this study, the territory east of the river Jordan captured by Israel as a result of the June 1967 war will be referred to alternately as Judea and Samaria, the West Bank and the Administered Territories. The terms "*Palestinian*" and "*Palestinian Arabs*" will be used interchangeably.

Part II- Chapter 4 deals with the structure and organization of the American Jewish community and describes the Presidents Conference as well as the internal opposition. Chapter 5 reveals how elements in the Jewish leadership redefined the meaning of "pro-Israelism." The chapter also introduces the outside elite and peace camp.

Part III - Weaved throughout the chapters that follow is the perceptual and political suasion approach. Chapter 6 covers the Nixon and Ford years. Chapter 7 deals with the Carter presidency. Chapter 8 covers the Reagan years.

Part IV - Chapter nine is my summary and conclusion.

An appendix provides some useful documentary material.

Chapter 2

Beyond Pressure Politics and Linkage: A Self-Lobbying Interest Group

Scholars have long utilized variations of the pluralist model to explain the role of ethnic interest groups in U.S. foreign policy. Studies of Jewish political influence in the foreign policy sphere generally focus on the community's lobbying efforts at the Congressional or White House level to affect policy.

I take a different approach by examining how the organized Jewish community lobbied itself as well as the Government of Israel in support of the U.S. approach to resolving the Arab-Israel conflict. These self-lobbying efforts were influenced by, and contributed to, changing perceptions regarding the essential nature of the conflict. Intra-communal lobbying, I argue, was facilitated by episodes of political suasion (manipulation and agenda setting).

This case study reveals the Jewish community as both a target of lobbying and a practitioner of self-lobbying. In seeking to explain why Jewish lobbying activities succeed or fail, previous case studies have tended to view the community as a homogeneous political entity. This paper will show a very different set of dynamics by illuminating inner cleavages.

This chapter describes the methodological approach and thematic framework I take in analyzing the role of the American Jewish leadership in the US decision to negotiate with the PLO. I make the argument that standard approaches to the study of ethnic interest groups are not particularly revealing in this instance. But first, it is necessary to say a few words about the case study format.

CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY

The research strategy of this paper is the descriptive case study.¹ The case study approach is adopted here because it is highly suitable to understanding “how” the organized Jewish community influenced US-PLO dialogue policy and “why” American policy makers took Jewish involvement in the peace process seriously.

A frequent criticism of the case study approach pertains to the problem of “generalizability.” One practitioner responds that case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes: “In this sense, the case study like the experiment, does not represent a ‘sample,’ and the investigator’s goal is to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalizations) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization).”²

The features of this study’s research design were enumerated in the Introduction. They include: questions and propositions posed by the study regarding the role of the organized Jewish community in the U.S. decision to “talk” to the PLO; units of analysis specified as the Presidents Conference, internal opposition, outside elite and peace camp; and, time boundaries delineated as 1967-1988. In an effort to link the data to the propositions, the narrative will present a pattern of actions by the organized Jewish leadership and posit their relationship to the propositions.

Edwin Block confronts the charge that case studies risk yielding little of political science value, ostensibly, because they report on nonrepresentative

¹ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research*, Applied Social Research Methods Series, Vol. 5, Revised Edition, (Newbury, California : Sage, 1989). For a history of the case method see: K.N. Llewellyn, “Case Method “ In E. Seligman and A Johnson (eds) *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, (New York: Macmillan 1948), which is devoted largely to teaching law using the case method.

² Yin, op. cit., p. 21

situations:

Representativeness is related to frequency, to ordinariness, to regularity. On the other hand some actions of government and politics...have great irreversible effects on the viability of a nation and the state of human society. Such actions are, both in life and by definition, unusual (not to say unique)...Even if one eliminates from consideration the value of momentousness and great impact on human society, the disciplinary implications of unqualified application of the representativeness criterion are forbiddingly severe...³

It is nevertheless my hope that this case study will be "generalizable" to other interest groups where (a) a controversial policy is implemented only after elements of the interest group most effected have allowed themselves to be coopted; (b) interest groups take positions different from what might be expected and (c) changes in perception and political manipulation may be said to have contributed to an outcome.

Among the distinctive qualities identified by Edwin A. Block that a case study should contain are: (1) A focused description of the forces, conditions, and sequences that led to, or affected, a particular outcome. (2) Accentuating dynamic sequences and relationships, as opposed to static analysis. (3) A compact time period under review. (4) A sense of how the principal characters perceived the events as they were occurring. (5) Material based on primary sources including interviews. (6) A solid portrayal of how real-world politics works, whether it fits existing theory or not, combined with an ability to "wrest significant order from the complex hurly-burly of real life." And, (7) enough data to put the reader on a plane of equal factual knowledge with the author prior to offering analysis and interpretations.⁴ I believe this study

³ Edwin A. Block, "Improving the Usefulness of the Case Study," in *Foundations of Political Science*, edited by Donald M. Freeman, (New York: Free Press, 1977,) p. 688.

⁴ Block, *op. cit.*, 683-685.

manages to follow Block's criteria.

Case studies are primarily useful, according to Block, in exploring real-world politics, organizations and personalities; in allowing for the utilization of appropriate methodologies as an integral component of the research; and lastly, as having pedagogic value.⁵ Block points out that, "The single case by definition is not comparative, and the impossibility of using a single case to prove a hypothesis is widely accepted."⁶ Still, case study data "can be additive and transferable."⁷

I acknowledge what Harry Eckstein called attention to in his 1958 pressure group case study of the British Medical Association, namely, that case studies do not 'prove' anything; their purpose is to illustrate generalizations..."⁸

Interest Group Theory Limitations

Why was the decision to "talk" to the PLO so very difficult and drawn out? Moreover, why did it take three Administrations some thirteen years to shift gears on this issue? Was the delay ascribable to the strength of the Jewish lobby? Was the December 1988 "talk" decision a defeat for the Jewish lobby? I argue that a standard analysis of this issue (interest group vs. government policy) and the usually helpful theoretical approaches fail to provide satisfactory answers to these questions.

To date, most scholars who focus on domestic sources of United States

⁵ Block, op. cit. p. 686.

⁶ Block, op. cit., p. 691

⁷ Block, op. cit., p. 691

⁸ Harry Eckstein, *Pressure Group Politics - The Case of the British Medical Association*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1960), p15

foreign policy have, understandably, relied upon interest group theory.⁹ Under the rubric of domestic sources of US foreign policy, previous studies have tended to focus on how the Jewish lobby sought to influence Congress or the White House on Israel's behalf. In these studies, a unified Jewish community confronted a determined Administration-- say the Carter administration in the case of the 1978 F-15 sale or the Reagan Administration in the 1981 AWACS battle --and lost.

One notable alternative research approach was undertaken by Etta Zablocki Bick, who studied the linkage role of the Jewish community between 1956 and 1968 as a transnational linkage group:

I found that they acted not only to assist the Israeli government's decision makers convert their outputs or decisions into inputs into the American system, but they also acted to convert the outputs or decisions of the American government into inputs or influences on the Israeli system. The linkage actor was actually a double linkage actor and linkage activity occurred in reverse as well...Specifically, my research for the years 1956-1968 indicates that American Jews acted in a dual linkage role, *i.e.*, the Israeli government utilized its ties with American Jewish leaders and prominent private individuals to enlist them in an effort to influence American policy-makers on issues of interest to Israel. The American government likewise took advantage of the relationship between Israeli leaders and American Jews and, less successfully, tried to enlist American Jewish support and assistance on matters of interest to the United States.¹⁰

By 1988 the influence equation was turned on its head. This study will demonstrate the politically crucial role Jewish leadership elements played in undermining support for Likud-led Israeli Governments.

⁹ Specific examples are offered further on.

¹⁰ Etta Zablocki Bick, *Ethnic Linkage and Foreign Policy: A Study of the Linkage Role of American Jews in Relations Between the United States and Israel*, (Ph.D dissertation, CUNY Graduate Center, New York, 1983), pp. 227-228

The approach I have chosen is warranted because the US-PLO dialogue issue offers a number of original theoretical challenges and opportunities. In this instance, the battle did not substantively involve Congress; here the community itself was anything but determined and united about continuing a confrontation with the Administration. Here, too, the issue is one of a much higher order entirely. At stake is not a policy action but a fundamental shift in political orientation.

Because of the positions they took, in this particular instance, the interest group model does not adequately explain “how” and “why” the American Jewish leadership affected US-PLO policy. A more suitable approach here is to focus on (a) political manipulation {suasion and agenda setting by several of the parties} and (b) the changing perceptual framework which influenced, and was influenced by, the Jewish leadership. Administration and Jewish leadership activities are sifted to determine whether they embody elements of political suasion. The criteria for identifying political suasion is described later in this chapter. The perceptual yardstick revolves largely around the issue of Arab and PLO intentions. Specifically, the thinking of the Jewish leadership regarding the goals and intentions of Israel’s foes can be discerned from the public statements they proffered.

While not taking the conventional approach, this study nevertheless benefits from the work done by interest group scholars. The following concise synopsis outlining the interest group approach is offered with the objective of presenting this study in an overall theoretical context.

THE STUDY OF INTEREST GROUPS

Gabriel A. Almond suggests that political science is currently

experiencing its third wave of “interest group” studies.¹¹ The first wave “was a sociological revolt against legal formalism” and incorporates the work of Arthur F. Bentley. A continuous second wave, led by David Truman, “sought to spread the word of empirical political science research and to encourage an escape from formalism and ideologism in European and Third World studies.”¹² The third wave, which began in the 1970’s, was concerned with developing coherent theoretical approaches to the study of “neocorporatist” and other pursuits involving “the interaction of the major economic interest groupings” and bureaucracy, according to Almond.¹³

Scholars interested in understanding events which take place within the American political system have identified four broad theories: Traditional democratic theory, derived largely from the work of Robert A. Dahl in his *Preface to Democratic Theory*; Pluralism, or group theory, tied closely to David B. Truman’s *The Governmental Process*; variations of Elite and Class theory derived from the works of Max Weber and (to a lesser extent in the American sphere) Karl Marx; and more recently, Hyperpluralism, or pluralism “gone sour,” associated with the scholarship of Theodore Lowi’s *The End of Liberalism*.¹⁴

The political role of groups has interested scholars since the days of James Madison. In his seminal work, *The Governmental Process*, David B.

¹¹ Gabriel A. Almond, *A Discipline Divided, Schools and Sects in Political Science*, (Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, 1990), chapter 7. For a comprehensive critical history of group theory in political science see G. David Garson, *Group Theories of Politics*, Volume 61 (Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1978)

¹² Almond, op. cit., p. 174

¹³ Almond, op. cit., p. 184-185

¹⁴ See Robert L. Lineberry, George C. Edwards III, and Martin P. Watterberg, *Government in America*, (New York: Harper Collins, 5th Edition, 1991), p 17-19. See also: Theodore J. Lowi, *The End of Liberalism*, (New York: W.W. Norton 1979); David Truman, the *Governmental Process: Political Interests and Public Opinion*, (New York: Knopf, 1951); and for a discussion of the elite/class theories see Thomas R. Dye and Harmon Zeigler, *The Irony of Democracy: An Uncommon Introduction to American Politics*, 8th Edition (Pacific Grove, California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1990).

Truman defined an interest group as “collections of people with some common characteristic,” interacting “with some frequency on the basis of their shared characteristics.” He went on further to define an “interest group” as “any group that, on the basis of one or more shared attitudes, makes certain claims upon other groups in the society for the establishment, maintenance, or enhancement of forms of behavior that are implied by the shared attitudes.”¹⁵ L. Harmon Zeigler and G. Wayne Peak note: “An *interest*...is a desire for, or concern over, either an abstract or a material political object.”¹⁶ They proceed to define “interest group” as “an organized social aggregate which seeks political goods that it is incapable of providing for itself.”¹⁷ Scholars in the Truman mold seek to explain what groups do; furthermore, they argue that one cannot really understand the continuity of the American political system without reference to groups. Truman postulated that, “The frequency, or rate, of interaction will in part determine the primacy of a particular group affiliation in the behavior of the individual.”¹⁸ A group that makes claims on the political system is transformed into an interest group. These claims are often economic though they can be ideological from the start. Government’s role is to mediate among competing groups. Internal cohesion is closely tied to a group’s effectiveness. Yet, Truman’s dictum that, “complete stability within any interest group is a fiction” seems tailored to describe the Jewish polity.¹⁹ In the instance under study, the Jewish leadership made contradictory claims on the political system while jockeying for positions of influence. Government, in the final analysis, did not so much mediate among them as coopt those it thought useful.

Groups compete at all levels of government including the executive branch.²⁰ But the executive branch is not merely the passive recipient of

¹⁵ Truman, op. cit., p. 33

¹⁶ L. Harmon Zeigler and G. Wayne Peak, *Interest Groups in American Society*, Second Edition, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: , Prentice-Hall, 1972), p. 1

¹⁷ Zeigler and Peak, op. cit., p.3

¹⁸ Truman, op. cit.,p. 35

¹⁹ Truman, op. cit.,p. 156

²⁰ Truman, op. cit., chapter 13

lobbying. *Congressional Quarterly* takes cognizance of an administration's power to lobby: "No one else can organize the pressure as thoroughly or sustain it as long as the president."²¹ This pressure from the administration is aimed at the Congress. However, as this study will demonstrate it can also be targeted at a domestic interest group.

Interest Groups And U.S. Foreign Policy

"American society is relentlessly pluralistic," Charles W. Kegley, Jr. and Eugene R. Wittkopf note. Moreover, the domestic underpinnings of U.S. foreign policy have long been recognized.²² These include what Cecil V. Crabb, Jr. has called "the American ethos," namely, that the unique American characteristics of idealism, morality and utopianism combined with shades of isolationism shape what this country does abroad.²³ Equally well understood, in the words of James N. Rosenau, is that the "foreign policy of governments is more than simply a series of responses to international stimuli, that forces at work within a society can also contribute to the quality and contents of its external behavior."²⁴ Efforts to influence the system may be viewed as "inputs to the foreign policy-making process." In the words of Kegley and Wittkopf, interest group inputs are converted into system outputs.

We can think of foreign policy as the goals that the nation's officials seek to realize abroad, the values that give rise to those goals, and the means or

²¹ *The Washington Lobby*, 5th Edition, Congressional Quarterly, (Washington, D.C. :1987),

²² Kegley & Wittkopf, op. cit., p. 2

²³ Cecil V. Crabb, Jr., *American Foreign Policy in the Nuclear Age 4th Edition*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1983). Elsewhere Crabb expands on this ethos. He understands US foreign policy to be, above all else, pragmatic. It is precisely this pragmatism which, I think, united Administrations as diverse as Carter and Reagan behind the same Arab-Israel foreign policy. "The core idea of pragmatism," writes Crabb, "is the belief that the most reliable criterion for ascertaining and validating truth lies in the degree to which it accords with human experience. Pragmatists are convinced that the interaction between the human species and its environment is the key fact of experience; that the environment is dynamic and pluralistic; that human society must continually adapt and evolve or perish." *American Diplomacy and the Pragmatic Tradition*, (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), p. 83.

²⁴ quoted in Charles W. Kegley, Jr. and Eugene R. Wittkopf, *The Domestic Sources of American Foreign Policy, Insights and Evidence*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), p.2

instruments through which they are pursued. Conceptualized as the outputs of the process that converts domestic influences into goals and means, foreign policy (or, perhaps preferably, policies) is typically multifaceted, ranging from discrete behaviors linked to specific issues to recurring patterns of behavior that define the continuous efforts of the United States to cope with the environment beyond its borders. Importantly, however, neither discrete events nor broad policy patterns are likely to be accounted for adequately by reference to only one explanatory factor.²⁵

The People

The key institutional players in the development and implementation of U.S. foreign policy are the president and his executive agencies. Though Congress plays a significant role it is seldom in the driver's seat in matters of foreign policy. While U.S. foreign policy is developed in the context of an open political process, most observers accept the fact that "the people" do not direct American foreign policy. At the same time, however, students of U.S. foreign policy tend to acknowledge that it is hard to sustain a particular policy in the face of persistent public opposition.²⁶ Michael Clough argued recently that "the people" are taking control of US foreign policy from the "wise men" largely because of the technology of modern communications as well as

²⁵ Kegley & Wittkopf, op. cit., p. 3

²⁶ See for example: Benjamin I. Page and Robert Y. Shapiro, "Effects of Public Opinion on Policy," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 77 No. 1 (1983). The authors looked at U.S. foreign policy between 1935 and 1979 and found "considerable congruence between changes in preferences and in policies, especially for large, stable opinion changes on salient issues...public opinion is often a proximate cause of policy, affecting policy more than policy influences opinion." But they go on to note that public opinion is itself affected by political manipulation: "If, for example, interest groups or politicians manage to manipulate opinion through lies or deception, and policy subsequently responds to the manipulated opinion, we would hesitate to celebrate the result as a democratic one...." p. 189. Regarding popular support, fluctuations in U.S. public opinion about whether the PLO should participate in the peace process are beyond the scope of this study. While eschewing efforts to match poll results about the PLO's popularity to specific Presidential statements about the Palestinian problem, for example, the pivotal import of public opinion on the issue of "talking to the PLO" is clearly recognized in the course of this study.

demographic changes.²⁷ But, this study found, working with a subset population group, that the opinion of "the people" is malleable.

Various groups participate in the development of U.S. foreign policy. These include business, labor, agricultural interests, the "military-industrial complex," and ethnic minorities. While I believe it is overstated, Crabb's description of the pro-Israel lobby is worth noting: "By many criteria, the Zionist lobby must be ranked among the most resourceful, skillful, and perhaps successful examples of pressure group activity witnessed in the annals of American diplomacy."²⁸

A number of scholars have addressed the limits of pressure group influence on U.S. foreign policy. After having reviewed the literature, Bernard C. Cohen suggested that: "The weight of current judgement is...that interest groups of all kinds, including those that are economic in nature, have little influence on issues of security policy."²⁹ Furthermore, Cohen asserts, to have any real chance of success, interest groups must argue convincingly that their position is in the national interest. Mitchell Bard found that, in the case of the Israel lobby, success depends largely on the locus of decision making.

The data shows that the president is more likely to support the lobby when the locus of decision was Congress (57 percent), than the White House (47 percent). . .The case studies provided evidence that there is a difference in lobby success depending on the policy content...The results showed that presidents are very supportive on economic issues (61 percent), but *oppose* the lobby on security issues 54 percent of the time, and split their preferences

²⁷ Michael Clough, "Grass Roots Policymaking," *Foreign Affairs*, (January/February 1994). I am not at all enamored with the idea of a foreign policy based on participatory democracy. It runs contrary to the Madisonian model of democracy. At any rate, this study shows that an oligarchic leadership can mold the views of a population group even in those instances where the grass roots community tends to be interested and well informed in a foreign policy issue.

²⁸ Crabb, op. cit., p. 252

²⁹ Bernard C. Cohen, "The Influence of Special-Interest Groups and Mass Media on Security Policy in the United States," in *Perspectives on American Foreign Policy*, edited by Charles W. Kegley, Jr. and Eugene R. Wittkopf, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), p. 224.

evenly on political issues...³⁰

Ethnic Interest Groups

The array of literature on ethnic interest groups and U.S. foreign policy is vast. Literature relating to the Arab-Israel struggle, scholarly and popular, is in itself voluminous. But precious little of this material illuminates the goings-on within the community. The most important exception to the general pattern of ignoring intra-group dynamics involves scholarship of the Irish American community.

In *Irish-Americans in the American Foreign Policy Making Process*, Robert J. Thompson and Joseph R. Rudolph, Jr. examine the relative lack of success of the Irish-American community in the foreign policy arena. They ask why Irish efforts to use as leverage the threat of blocking close British-American relations unless their concerns about Northern Ireland are addressed have been ineffectual. Thompson and Rudolph attribute this failure to a number of factors including: divisions within the Irish-American community; internal disputes among pro-Irish Republican Army supporters in the United States; assimilation among Irish-Americans into the larger population; the failure of Irish-American elected officials to champion the cause of British withdrawal from Ireland; the fact that there appears to be no clear resolution to the Irish problem; and, that their cause has no natural ally abroad.³¹ Perhaps my own case study can serve as a foundation for students who want to do a comparative analysis on the role intra-communal divisions play in the foreign policy activities of Irish and Jewish Americans.

³⁰ Mitchell G. Bard, *The Water's Edge and Beyond: Defining the Limits to Domestic Influence on United States Middle East Policy*, (New Brunswick, N.J., Transaction Publishers, 1991), p.298-301

³¹ Robert J. Thompson and Joseph R. Rudolph, Jr., "Irish-Americans in the American Foreign Policy Making Process," in *Ethnic Groups and U.S. Foreign Policy*, edited by Mohammed E. Ahrari, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, contributions in Political Science, Number 186, 1987).

Mohammed E. Ahrari, in *Ethnic Groups and United States Foreign Policy*, says that hyperpluralism in the American political system allows groups to be quite active without actually accomplishing very much. "At no time in the foreseeable future is any ethnic group likely to determine the American foreign policy toward its old country...that prerogative, despite the growing nature of hyperpluralism, is destined to stay with the president, his top national security aides, and congress."³² Aharari identifies several "power characteristics" that can help gauge the impact of interest groups interventions on foreign policy:

- Congruence of strategic interests promoted by an ethnic group and the U.S. strategic interest toward that group's old country.
- Degree of acculturation without actual assimilation on the part of the ethnic group.
- The degree of group homogeneity.

With regard to American Jews, Aharari concludes: "There is no doubt that Jewish Americans are not only likely to maintain their high pace of activities, but also most likely to sustain their power quotient."³³

In *Ethnic Groups, Congress and American Foreign Policy*, Paul Y. Wantanabe's case study outlines the strategies, techniques and resources Greek Americans employed during the Cyprus crisis. Wantanabe investigated the sources, conduct and consequences of the organized Greek American community's efforts to influence foreign policy. He found that the ability to influence the foreign policy agenda depends on a variety of factors including resources applied and tactics utilized. Ethnic groups invariably claim, among other things, that the interests of the United States are in harmony with the cause they are espousing. Ultimately, in this particular instance, he

³² Mohammed E. Ahrari, *Ethnic Groups and U.S. Foreign Policy*, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Contributions in Political Science, No. 186,1987).

³³ Mohammed E. Ahrari, op. cit., p. 157

determined that Greek-American efforts to influence Congress created more tumult than tangible successes.³⁴

"The national interest is not simply the sum of our special interests and attachments," Senator Charles McC. Mathias, Jr. noted pointedly in his critical essay, "Ethnic Groups and Foreign Policy," published some years ago in *Foreign Affairs* quarterly. Mathias also offered a number of penetrating scholarly insights about what makes groups effective or ineffective. Groups must have a strong indigenous political base to have any hope for influence. He says that "the once formidable 'China lobby,' now a Taiwan lobby, failed to mount an effective campaign against the Carter Administration's decision in late 1978 to transfer American recognition from the Republic of China to the Peoples Republic of China." Mathias offers that "they might have been highly effective if these groups had won the united support of an aroused Chinese-American community."³⁵ In the Irish case he found that the high level of moderation on the part of the Irish Government as well as Irish-American elected officials removed the prospect of allowing the issue to disrupt British-American relations. From the vantage point of the early 1980's he suggested that interest groups must have reasonable goals and, therefore, the East European ethnic lobby could not succeed because the liberation of those countries "cannot be achieved without incurring the risk of World War III."³⁶ Turning to the Greek lobby's efforts to embargo American weapons to Turkey, he notes that there were three million Greek-Americans compared to 45,000 Americans of Turkish origin. Still, "intensive efforts by President Ford and Secretary of State Kissinger culminated in congressional approval in

³⁴ Paul Y. Watanabe, *Ethnic Groups, Congress and American Foreign Policy, The Politics of the Turkish Arms Embargo*, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Contributions in Political Science #16, 1984).

³⁵ Charles McC. Mathias, Jr., "Ethnic Groups and Foreign Policy, *Foreign Affairs*, (Summer 1981). Actually, this is a somewhat dubious statement since recognition of the PRC was welcomed by most Chinese Americans. The "China lobby" was comprised mostly of non-Chinese conservatives who, in Kissinger's words, "had never forgiven Truman and Acheson for allegedly betraying Chiang Kai-shek." Henry Kissinger, *White House Years*, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), p. 167.

³⁶ Charles McC. Mathias, p. 986

October 1975 of a partial lifting of the arms embargo against Turkey."³⁷ Lest his criticism be misconstrued, he writes:

The point should not be overlooked: for all the technique involved, and despite frequently exaggerated claims and arguments, neither Greek nor Jewish lobbies would command the support they do in Congress and with the American people if their case did not have substantial merit.

Still, he suggests wryly that congressional support of Israel "has been measurably reinforced by the knowledge that political sanctions will be applied to any who fail to deliver."³⁸ Finally, and with implications for the subject of this study, he concludes:

The "secret weapon" of ethnic interest groups is neither money nor technique, which is available to other interest groups as well, but the ability to galvanize for specific political objectives the strong emotional bonds of large numbers of Americans to their cultural or ancestral homes....Ethnic advocacy represents neither a lack of patriotism nor a desire to place foreign interests ahead of American interests; more often it represents a sincere belief that the two coincide.³⁹

U.S. Jews & Foreign Policy

There is no dearth of literature detailing and analyzing efforts by the organized Jewish community to influence U.S. foreign policy on the Middle East. Doctoral dissertations and other scholarly works on the subject tend to fall into one of several broad categories. Representative of the literature are:

1. **Jewish Influence** - Quantitatively, this appears to be the area where most work has been done. This literature includes: Michael Reiner's *The Response of the Organized Jewish Community to American Policy in the*

³⁷ Charles McC. Mathias, p. 988

³⁸ Charles McC. Mathias, p 992

³⁹ Charles McC. Mathias, p. 996-997. The patriotism issue is one I shall address later on. For now it is enough to note that the Jewish leadership is keenly sensitive to charges, even hints, that their actions are motivated by feelings of dual loyalty.

*Middle East 1957-1967;*⁴⁰ and *Domestic Political Interests and American Policy in the Middle East: Pro-Israel, Pro-Arab and Corporate non-Governmental Actors in the Making of American Foreign Policy, 1966-1971*, where Robert H. Trice argued that interest groups have strong but by no means controlling influence on American Middle East policy.⁴¹ Richard Alan Balboni offered *A Study of the efforts by American Zionist to Influence the Formulation and Conduct of U.S. Foreign Policy During the Roosevelt, Truman and Eisenhower Administrations;*⁴² David Howard Goldberg wrote on *Ethnic Interest Groups as Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy: A Theoretical and Empirical Inquiry*, examining this issue within the Canadian political arena⁴³ Then there is Steven Fred Windmueller's *American Jewish Interest Groups: Their Role in Shaping United States Foreign Policy in the Middle East. A Study of Two Time Periods: 1945-1948, 1955-1958.*⁴⁴

1B. American Jews as conduits -The work of Etta Bick Zablocki, mentioned earlier, in *Ethnic Linkage and Foreign Policy: A Study of the Linkage Role of American Jews in Relations Between the United States and Israel, 1956-1968*, laid some of the groundwork for the present case study. Bick Zablocki is concerned with "boundry-crossing" and "transnational activities" on behalf of Israel.⁴⁵ Her work applies "linkage behavior" as it is defined by Karl Deutsch, Robert Trice and James Rosenau. American Jewish leaders, she concludes, "acted not only to assist the Israeli government's decision makers convert their outputs or decisions into inputs into the American system, but they also acted to convert the outputs or decisions of the American government into inputs or influences on the Israeli system. The linkage actor was actually a double linkage actor and linkage activity occurred in reverse as

⁴⁰ D.H.S. dissertation, 1986 Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, California

⁴¹ Robert H. Trice, Jr. *Domestic Political Interests and American Policy in the Middle East: Pro-Israel, Pro-Arab, and Corporate Non-Governmental Actors and the Making of American Foreign Policy,* 1966-1971. (Ph.D Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1974).

⁴² Ph.D Dissertation, Brown University, 1972

⁴³ Ph.D Dissertation, McGill University, Canada 1987

⁴⁴ Ph.D Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1973

⁴⁵ Ph.D Dissertation, CUNY, 1983

well."⁴⁶

Bick Zablocki calls for additional scholarship along similar lines, saying it "would be interesting to study the role of American Jews as linkage actors" during the more troubled post-1973 era when "negotiations between the United States and Israel on withdrawal from territories occupied by Israel and mutually acceptable conditions for peace talks have strained relations between the two countries."⁴⁷ In a sense, this work is a response to Bick Zablocki's challenge.

2. **Lobbying** - Efforts by Jews to lobby Congress are studied by Marvin C. Feuerwerger's *Congress and Israel Foreign Aid Decision Making in the House of Representatives, 1969-1976*.⁴⁸ Mitchell Geoffrey Bard uses *The Water's Edge and Beyond: Defining the Limits to Domestic Influence on United States Middle East Policy*, to develop a scheme for predicting the prospects of lobbying efforts.⁴⁹ There are also works aimed at the general reader. Edward Tivnan's *The Lobby* is a critical study of the America-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). A Peace Now supporter, Tivnan challenges the premises of old style pro-Israel sentiment within the Jewish community.⁵⁰

2B. **Arms sales Lobbying** - Typical of this genre is the work of Marshall Hershberg who wrote on *Ethnic Interest Groups and Foreign Policy: A Case Study of the Activities of the Organized Jewish Community in Regard to the 1968 Decision to Sell Phantom Jets to Israel;*⁵¹

⁴⁶ Bick-Zablocki, op. cit., p. 227.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 233-34

⁴⁸ Marvin C. Feuerwerger, *Congress and Israel: Foreign Aid Decision Making in the House of Representatives, 1969-1976*, (Westport, Conn: Greenwood, 1979).

⁴⁹ Originally a dissertation, Bard's study has been published by Transaction Publishers, op. cit.

⁵⁰ Edward Tivnan's critical study of AIPAC, *The Lobby: Jewish Political Power and American Foreign Policy*, (New York: Touchtone, 1987) Also see, "On Middle East Policy, A Major Influence: Lobbying for Israel, The American Israel Public Affairs Committee," by David K. Shipler, *The New York Times*, July 6 and July 7, 1987.

⁵¹ Ph.D Dissertation, University of Pittsburg, 1973

2C. **Soviet Jewry Lobbying** - Paula Stern, in *The Water's Edge*, examined Jewish efforts to deny the Soviet Union "most favored nation" status as a tactic aimed at influencing Soviet emigration policies toward Jews.⁵²

3. **Jewish Attitudes Toward Israel** - Charles Liebman authored *Pressure Without Sanctions*.⁵³ *Kissing Through Glass: The Invisible Shield Between Americans and Israelis* by Joyce Starr examines the changing nature of the relationship.⁵⁴

4. **Propaganda/Opinion/Media** - Michael Segal wrote *A Study in Persuasion: The Arab and Israeli Propaganda Campaign in America*,⁵⁵ Ralph Lee Savage, *Israeli and American Jewish Attitudes in 1971 on the Future of Israel's Conquered Territories: A Comparative Analysis*,⁵⁶ Edward Aloysius Padelford, *The Regional American Press: An analysis of its Reporting and Commentary on the Arab-Israel Situation*.⁵⁷ This sub-speciality also benefited from the work of scholars in related disciplines. For example, Michael Alan Siegel and Jerry Charles Gephart wrote a joint dissertation entitled *A Study in Persuasion: The Arab and Israeli Propaganda Campaigns in America*.⁵⁸

5. **Internal Dynamics**- In my estimation, the area that now deserves the most attention and has received the least involves the goings on within the Jewish polity. To the best of my knowledge, the only post-1973 work that has as its central focus intra-communal cleavages is Marla Brettschneider's *The Liberal Roots of Group Theory: A Case Study in American Jewish*

⁵² Paula Stern, *Water's Edge: Domestic Politics and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1979)

⁵³ Charles Liebman, *Pressure Without Sanctions: The Influence of World Jewry on Israeli Policy*, (Cranberry: Associated University Presses, 1977).

⁵⁴ (Chicago, Contemporary Books, 1991).

⁵⁵ Ph.D Dissertation, University of Utah, 1972

⁵⁶ Ph.D Dissertation, University of Southern Mississippi, 1972

⁵⁷ Ph.D Dissertation, The American University, 1979

⁵⁸ Ph.D Dissertation, (Communications), University of Utah, 1972

Community.⁵⁹ That is not to say that previous students of Jewish politics have been oblivious to the issue. Amy Jill Higer, for example, wrote her Master's thesis on *Dual-loyalty and public dissent: The American Jewish community and Israel*, in which she identified areas of tension between American Jews and Israel.⁶⁰ Both Higer and Brettschneider view Israeli policies as a "dilemma" and warn against "silencing" American Jewish dissent. I am more interested in understanding how the changes in the perceptual environment gradually created these "dilemmas" in the first place.

The level of analysis in this study is the American Jewish leadership as it operated across political systems. In describing non-state actors in world politics, Russett & Starr refer to "private organizations operating within a nation-state, such as interest groups," and "transnational organizations."⁶¹ These boundary crossing entities influence other actors in the international system.⁶² Since I am particularly concerned with inner factors contributing to changes in interest group behavior, my plan is to frame this study inside the American political system.

Political "Manipulation" or "Suasion"

At the very outset of the US commitment, in 1975, not to negotiate with the PLO, US policy makers established an agenda which limited what was actually expected of the PLO. Casting aside the PLO Covenant as a

⁵⁹ Ph.D Dissertation, New York University, 1993.

⁶⁰ Master's Thesis, American University, 1988. She found, "Critical choices now facing Israel will likely intensify the debate among American Jewry and have direct implications for U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East."

⁶¹ Bruce Russett and Harvey Starr, *World Politics the Menu for Choice*, (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1981), p. 17

⁶² Berman and Johnson studied the non-governmental transnational activities of the Society of Friends and other church groups, writing: "Unofficial diplomats may set the stage for official actions, and contribute to the possibilities of success once matters are taken up in normal diplomatic channels." Maureen Berman and Joseph Johnson, *Unofficial Diplomats*, cited in Bick Zablocki, op. cit., p. 7

yardstick for evaluating the group's mission, the US established a more realistic goal. For the next thirteen years, the focus shifted to whether Arafat would enunciate certain "magic words." This political strategy, in my view, embraces political manipulation or suasion. For purposes of exposition, I shall use the terms "suasion" and "manipulation" interchangeably. Suasion involves "the act of persuading by appealing to one's sense of morality."⁶³ In this case, the relative virtues of Israel and the PLO underwent redefinition.

A political strategy related to decision making, both the practice and analysis of political manipulation is, admittedly, as much art as science. So, it is no surprise that scholars who study bargaining and decision making behavior in an effort to discover whether, and to what extent, political manipulation contributed to an outcome, find themselves constrained in the first place in defining the concept and, secondly, in actually trying to document its presence. Still, it is worth recalling that science is "systematized knowledge derived from observation"⁶⁴

William H. Riker has coined the neologism "heresthetics" to explain what he means by political manipulation. "Heresthetics," says Riker, "is about structuring the world so you can win."

...if choice depends in part on the way it was chosen, then politicians can reasonably expect to change the outcome if they can change the way that questions are posed, or the considerations that influence participants' judgement...⁶⁵

Political players do this by strategic decision making, controlling the agenda, and manipulating the dimensions of an issue. According to Riker:

⁶³ This definition of suasion comes from *Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language*, David B. Guralnik, Editor-in -Chief, Second College Edition, (New York: William Collins + World Publishing Co., inc., 1978). I shall use the terms suasion and manipulation interchangeably.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ William H. Riker, *The Art of Political Manipulation*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p. ix

“For a person who expects to lose on some decision, the fundamental heresthetical device is to divide the majority with a new alternative, one that he prefers to the alternative previously expected to win.”⁶⁶ For Riker, what comes out of the decision making process is “some unanticipated combination of the wills of participants and of the way the relevant politicians have set the machine to implement their own wills.”⁶⁷

The role of political manipulation in foreign policy decision making has been raised, in another context, by Zeev Maoz:

Do reasonably smart, politically experienced leaders sometimes make national choices that go against their own best judgement, even though they have not been forced into such decisions by higher authorities or by powerful external powers? Indeed yes: it is not at all infrequent that those who make foreign policy are manipulated into choices that they would not have made otherwise. ⁶⁸

Constraints like these are by no means uncommon. Indeed, they are part and parcel of how what journalist Hedrick Smith calls “the power game” is played inside the American political system.⁶⁹ The issue is one of degree. In this case study, suasion and agenda-setting play a pivotal role in the gradual decision making process. Indeed, one cannot, I argue, begin to appreciate the role of the organized American Jewish leadership as it sought to influence evolving U.S. foreign policy on the PLO without careful focus on how cross-cutting political manipulation contributed to changing perceptions.

The political manipulation approach is far less theoretically developed than the standard models for analyzing ethnic interest groups and U.S. foreign policy. “Manipulativeness is a connotation-laden notion,”

⁶⁶ Riker, op. cit., p. 143

⁶⁷ Riker, op. cit., p. 1

⁶⁸ Zeev Maoz, “Framing The National Interest, The Manipulation of Foreign Policy Decisions in Group Settings,” *World Politics* (October 1990): p. 143

⁶⁹ Hendrick Smith, *The Power Game: How Washington Really Works*, (New York: Ballentine, 1989).

Perceptual Evolution & Political Environment

<i>Milestone</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Level of Conflict</i>	<i>Perceived Arab Goal</i>	<i>Israel v. Palestinians as Crus</i>	<i>Solution?</i>	<i>PLO perceived</i>	<i>Am Jewish solidarity with Israel Gov?</i>	<i>Am Jewish empathy for Pal. Arabs</i>
Independence War	1948	state centered	zero sum	NO	Arabs absorb	--	high	Low
Sinai Campaign	1956	state centered	zero sum	NO	Arabs absorb	---	high	low
Six Day War	1967	state centered	zero sum	NO	Arabs absorb	pawn of Arabs	Israelolatry	Highlyable
War of Attrition	1969	state centered	< zero sum	NO	Arabs absorb	pawns of Arabs	Israelolatry	Hard left
Yom Kippur War	1973	state centered	<zero sum	NO	Arabs absorb	pawns of Arabs	Israelolatry	Hard left
Kissinger Disengagements Fez Arab Summit Appoints PLO	1974/5	state centered	<zero sum	<NO	Arabs absorb WB Arabs via Jordan	<pawns of Arabs	Israelolatry	Hard left & Peace Camp
Likud Victory Tacit Claims to Judea, Samaria	1977	<state centered	<zero sum	<YES	Israel will have to solve problem	<> autonomous —possibility of reform	Disassociation develops	>developing support for homeland, little for PLO
Operation Peace for Galille	1982	elements of communal disp. elements of state centeredness	non zero sum	YES	Autonomy	Having multiple personalities; terror & NGO Phoenixlike fixture	Tension	No longer limited to Peace Camp Internal Opposition
Magic Words	1988	mostly communal	Non Zero Sum	YES	Homeland/State	Undergoing transition to post terror group	Tension	Broad desire to "solve problem"

FIGURE 1

encompassing “strategic-mindedness, rule exploitation, situational advantage seeking, tampering with structure and context, and control of the action climate,” according to Allan W. Lerner.⁷⁰ But this handicap should not deter us from working with the most appropriate tools available.

Some of the scholarly work associated with the study of decision-making, bargaining and negotiation will also be drawn upon in grappling with the problem of “political manipulation.” In this connection, Oran R. Young asserts that bargaining can be defined “as the manipulation of the information of others in the interest of improving the outcome for one’s self under conditions of strategic interaction.”⁷¹

For Young, a manipulative bargaining model includes these characteristics: (1) The presence of strategic interaction; (2) imperfect information; (3) an ability to communicate; (4) a connection between manipulative activities and reality; (5) the provision of factual information offered based on a cost-benefit calculation; (6) “manipulative bargaining can occur in situations that range all along the spectrum from purely cooperative to purely competitive interactions;” and, (7) the levels of manipulation are asymmetrical.⁷² In a sense, the quadrilateral encounter surrounding the PLO-“talk” issue was a thirteen year long negotiation process (with the proviso that not all of the parties may have realized and consented to the bargaining

⁷⁰ Allan W. Lerner, *The Manipulators: Personality and Politics in Multiple Perspectives*, (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 1990), p. ix.

⁷¹ Oran R. Young, “The Bargainer’s Calculus,” in *Bargaining Formal Theories of Negotiations*, (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1975) p.364. Game theory is yet another sub-field which can offer useful insights into political manipulation, though I chose not to go down that path.

⁷² Point #1 is defined by Young elsewhere as: “A choice of action contingent upon that individual’s estimates of the actions (or choices) of others in the group, where the actions of each of the relevant others are based upon a similar estimate of the behavior of group members other than himself...Strategic *interaction*, then is simply the set of behavior patterns manifested by individuals whose choices are interdependent in this fashion.” Young, *op. cit.*, p. 6 Regarding Point #4, “Bargaining ultimately depends on success in manipulating the perceptions and expectations of others, there is an important link between these manipulative activities and reality...it is easier to persuade others that you are angry if you are in fact angry or to communicate an ironclad commitment if you have taken concrete steps or to make your commitment inescapable...” Young, *op. cit.*, p. 305

relationship).

In my estimation, there is a relationship between suasion and perception. This connection looms large in the present study and I offer evidence of a protracted shift from a zero sum to nonzero sum framework. The very term nonzero-sum to describe the nature of an encounter is associated with the scholarship of game theory and bargaining. I. William Zartman defines nonzero-sum as a situation where: "Each party wants the other to be satisfied too, not because they care about each other per se, but so that the other will make and keep the agreement that gives the first party its share."⁷³ In contrast, games "where the preferences of the players are diametrically opposed are called games of total conflict (or *zero-sum* games)..."⁷⁴ It is extremely useful to think of political suasion and changing perceptions in dialectical terms; by this I mean that it is necessary to "concentrate on looking for relationships, not only between different entities but between the same one in times past, present and future."⁷⁵

Analyses delving into suasion (or manipulation) combines work rooted in bargaining analysis with research done in social and political psychology. These disciplines alert us to the human factor in any bargaining relationship. This may involve persons not always acting in their own best interest and manipulating emotions to gain advantage.⁷⁶ The use of insinuation is an ingredient present in bargaining manipulation ("Some matters dare not be proposed formally"). This is also true of the appearance of flexibility.⁷⁷ There is also a martial-like element to manipulation which

⁷³ I. William Zartman, *The 50% Solution*, (Garden City, N.Y: Anchor Press, 1976), p. 10.

⁷⁴ Steven J. Brams, *Biblical Games: A Strategic Analysis of Stories in the Old Testament*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1980), p.17.

⁷⁵ Bertell Ollman, *Alienation*, Second edition, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p.52. I had been grappling with a way to describe the "interconnectedness" between perceptions and manipulation and could find no better single phrase that captures its spirit than dialectics. We need to understand manipulation in relation to perception and perception in relation to manipulation.

⁷⁶ Zartman, op. cit., p. 51-53

⁷⁷ Zartman, op. cit., p. 54 and 56

reminds us that the political tactic of divide and conquer is hardly novel. Zartman states that favorable outcomes are easier to obtain the more you can “isolate and deal separately with component members” of the other side.⁷⁸

There can be no political manipulation in the absence of a strategy.⁷⁹ Riker makes these generalizations about the willingness to engage in manipulation:

...The political world selects for people who want to win politically; that is, those who do not want to win are more likely than others to lose and thus be excluded from political decisions...Most participants have the same goal, namely, to win on whatever is the point at issue. Assuming they think seriously about how to achieve their goals, they may be expected to behave in similar ways. ...Participants ... are motivated to win and ... creatively adjust alternatives to arrive at minimal winning coalitions.⁸⁰

Riker notes that little is known “about the way alternatives are modified in political conflicts” and urges more study of “heresthetics” (manipulation) in an effort to discover the regularities that may be common. Among other things, he suggests we pay special attention to rhetorical stances.⁸¹ As will be seen in the pages that follow, semantics played a particularly important role in framing the way alternative options were posed.

The specific characteristics of Riker’s manipulation model that are applied throughout this case study are: (1) agenda control; (2) strategic choice selection and (3) actual manipulation of dimensions or purposely modifying the choice presented to achieve support.⁸²

⁷⁸ Zartman, op. cit., p. 121

⁷⁹ Riker, *APSR*, op. cit. See too his, *The Art of Political Manipulation*, (introduction)op. cit.

⁸⁰ Riker, *APSR* p 14-15

⁸¹ Riker, *APSR*, p. 15

⁸² Riker’s model is outlined in *The Art of Political Manipulation*, pp.142-151.

In his work in the foreign policy sphere, Maoz has written about the theoretical background, tactics, and conditions facilitating manipulation.⁸³ He reminds us that “political manipulation is a procedural device for influencing group choices.” In harmony with Riker, Maoz also calls attention to the importance of agenda setting and dividing the opposition. Another factor to be conscious of in analyzing individual decision making is the “salami tactic.” Maoz explains that most people and organizations abhor sharp departures from a course long followed, preferring to make decisions which only marginally deviate from previous decisions. “But if the group had known that each decision would lead to an other logical extension of the policy and that these decisions, taken together, were part of a pattern whose end was undesirable most of its members would not have supported even one decision in the chain.”⁸⁴ Situational conditions facilitating manipulation are generally associated with severe time constraints and a crisis, or a threat to some basic value.⁸⁵ In the course of this study, I endeavor to identify a number of instances where “salami tactics” and the use of crisis are exploited.

Next, Maoz turns to establishing the presence of manipulation in history:

...It is very difficult to establish whether the preferences..of group discussion are genuine or whether they were altered due to strategic considerations...in many cases political manipulation is indistinguishable from other types of group-induced shifts.⁸⁶

The key task identified by Maoz to ascertain the presence of manipulation, “is to determine who suggested what at what point of the process.” Other useful empirical indicators for which evidence can be

⁸³ Zeev Maoz, “Framing the National Interest, The Manipulation of Foreign Policy Decisions in Group Settings,” *World Politics*, Vol. 43. No. 1 (October 1990).

⁸⁴ Maoz, *World Politics*, p. 91

⁸⁵ Maoz, *World Politics*, p. 93

⁸⁶ Maoz, *World Politics*, p. 94

determined, are:

- agenda setting
- majority-splitting alternatives
- framing
- salami tactics

Research, says Maoz, "should focus on ruling out the possibility of political manipulation as a plausible interpretation of group decision by determining the *absence* of these traces in the historical case. The presence of these traces can do no more than suggest that political manipulation *may* have occurred, not that it is an exclusive or even the best explanation of the observed process and the resulting choice."⁸⁷

With this outline of the political suasion approach, I now turn to the role of perceptual factors which comprises the second theoretical leg of this paper.

Perception and Image

Plainly, "how an issue is perceived will influence what action is taken."⁸⁸ Robert Jervis has made the case that decision makers tend to fit information into existing images.⁸⁹ What happens when established images are called into question is an issue this case study explores.

Social psychologists define perception with regard to individuals as: "A person's immediate experience of other persons or objects, gained through the sense organs, but somewhat modified by the perceiver's personal

⁸⁷ Maoz, *World Politics*, p.96

⁸⁸ James F. Voss and Ellen Dorsey, "Perception and International Relations: An Overview," in *Political Psychology and Foreign Policy*, edited by Eric Singer and Valerie Hudson, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1992), p. 3.

⁸⁹ See for example, Robert Jervis, *Hypothesis on Misperception in World Politics*, (New York: Columbia, 1968).

characteristics and by social influences.”⁹⁰ Organizations do not, of course, have perceptions. “The organization’s ‘perception’ is affected by the perceptions of” individuals and “by the relations they have with each other.”⁹¹

Yet another useful definition of perception holds it to be:

An integrative process by which stimuli become interpreted by the individual, the process taking place via the integration of the stimulus events with the prior knowledge and beliefs of the individual. This definition assumes, one, that perception and interpretation are interwoven processes and essentially cannot be separated and, two, that individuals act to provide meaning to the environment (see Allport 1955). Furthermore, it is also assumed that individuals build mental representations of the world and that such representations provide coherence and stability to their interpretation of the complexities of the environment. Mental representations have been portrayed through the use of such concepts as images (R.W. Cottam 1977), schema (Axelrod 1977; Bartlett 1932) scripts (Schank and Abelson 1977), and mental models (Johnson-Laird 1983).⁹²

“Perception involves categorization,” Murray Edelman writes in his study of the language of poverty.⁹³ As we shall see, the status of the Palestinian Arabs was re-categorized by the organized Jewish leadership over time. Russett and Starr add: “The study of the images held by foreign-policy decision makers--the psychological environment of foreign-policy leaders--involves the study of their belief systems and the way the images they have of other peoples, states, leaders, or situations affect their decisions and other behavior.”⁹⁴ Voss and Dorsey offer a further definition of perception as, “an integrative process by which stimuli become interpreted by the individual,

⁹⁰ Lawrence S. Wrightsman, *Social Psychology in the Seventies*, (Monterey, California: Brooks/Cole Publishing, 1972), p. 607.

⁹¹ Joseph de Rivera, *The Psychological Dimension of Foreign Policy*, (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing, 1968), p. 49

⁹² Voss and Dorsey, op. cit. p 8.

⁹³ Jacob Murray Edelman, *Political Language: Words That Succeed and Policies That Fail*, (New York: Academic Press, 1977)

⁹⁴ Russett and Starr, op. cit., p.295.

the process taking place via the integration of the stimulus events with the prior knowledge and beliefs of the individuals.”⁹⁵

A sense of how actors involved in the foreign policy process perceive their environment can be discerned by systematically studying their general belief systems as reflected in their statements.⁹⁶ For instance, Nathan Leites sought to explain Soviet behavior by first attempting to establish the communist image of the political environment and “the rules which Bolsheviks believe to be necessary for effective political conduct.”⁹⁷ Leites (1953), George (1969) Walker (1977) and others have used operational code content analysis to study “beliefs of a decision maker that presumably are used to interpret particular political events and influence foreign policy decisions.”⁹⁸ On a more mundane level, this study pinpoints the beliefs held by the Jewish leadership, viewing them as harbingers of perceptual shifts.

A stimulus in the political environment leads to a perceptual response. Perception is, according to yet another interpretation, “a process by which an individual selects, organizes, and evaluates incoming information concerning the surrounding world.”⁹⁹ The perception of the stimulus is then interpreted based on the images already in the mind of the actor. “Decision makers, like all other human beings, are also subject to the wide variety of psychological processes that affect perception--defense mechanisms, reduction of anxiety, rationalization, displacement, repression--and many other psychological processes and characteristics that go to make up our individual personalities.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Eric Singer and Valerie Hudson, editors, *Political Psychology and Foreign Policy*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1992).

⁹⁶ Russett & Starr, op. cit., p. 296.

⁹⁷ Nathan Constatin Leites, *The Operational Code of the Politburo*, (New York: The Rand Corporation, 1951), p. xi.

⁹⁸ Voss & Dorsey, op. cit., p. 13. Ideally, they suggest that a protocol for study be done *a priori*.

⁹⁹ Russett & Starr, op. cit., p. 300

¹⁰⁰ Russett & Starr, *ibid*.

Some actors are more able to assimilate new or contradictory information (“open image”) while others are psychologically unable to absorb data incongruent with their original images (“closed image”). A collection of images held and used to orient the individual to the environment can be understood as a “belief system.”¹⁰¹

Misperception really means that images are screening out important signals in some way--either ignoring them completely, interpreting them incorrectly, or changing the information to fit already existing images. Images act as intervening variables, in that they mediate between the incoming information and the behavior based on that information.¹⁰²

There is also the problem of selective perceptions, or how to perceptually meld the lessons of the past with the realities of the present. For instance, to what extent can one apply the appeasement lesson taught by Munich 1938 to contemporary events?

Perceptions can also be affected by unclear messages which can be interpreted incorrectly depending on the image held by the receiver. Moreover, decision makers selectively perceive the world when they try to achieve cognitive *consistency* so that “the images they hold do not clash with or contradict each other.”¹⁰³ In thinking about how the organized Jewish community could shift from lobbying the U.S. against dealing with the Palestinian Arabs to urging Israel to be more forthcoming on the Palestinian question, it is hard to ignore the problem of cognitive consistency. Leon Festinger’s theory of cognitive dissonance offers insight into the behavior of people or organizations who take positions they know are contrary to “reality.”

Cognitive dissonance is a state of tension that occurs whenever an individual simultaneously holds two cognitions (ideas, attitudes, beliefs, opinions) that are

¹⁰¹ Russett & Starr, *ibid.*

¹⁰² Russett & Starr, p. 302.

¹⁰³ Russett & Starr, *op. cit.* p. 302

psychologically inconsistent. Stated differently, two cognitions are dissonant if, considering these two cognitions alone, the opposite of one follows from the other...The theory of cognitive dissonance does not picture man as a rational animal; rather, it pictures man as a rationalizing animal.¹⁰⁴

The potential applicability of this theory of self-justification to a Jewish community whose break with Israeli policies is incremental but steady becomes apparent from the narrative chapters that follow. Often, once a decision is made further objective information contrary to the decision is no longer sought out. The individual begins to spend more time with like-minded thinkers. Information which reinforces the decision is sought out while contrary data is dismissed or ignored. Once a decision becomes irrevocable chances are greater that an actor may engage in distortion. Elliot Aronson offers this example of how individuals think after they have made a major decision such as purchasing a house: "Once you had put your money down and you knew that you couldn't get it back, you would probably start minimizing the importance of the dampness in the basement, the cracks in the foundation, or the fact that it happened to be on the San Andreas fault."¹⁰⁵ Dissonance theory also helps us understand how people handle what they consider to be the inevitable. Understandably, "people attempt to make the best of things by cognitively minimizing the unpleasantness of the situation."¹⁰⁶

Still another way to appreciate the value of perceptual factors is to think in terms of the work done by scholars studying models which involve two enemy actors (the United States and the Soviet Union, for example). In the sense that the pronouncements of the Jewish leadership resulted as much from in-fighting as anything else and that they frequently lost sight of any

¹⁰⁴ Cited in Elliot Aronson, *The Social Animal*, (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1972), p. 92

¹⁰⁵ Aronson, op. cit., p. 105

¹⁰⁶ Aronson, op. cit. p. 132. Proponents of the image of a "reformed" PLO downplayed bellicose statements from key PLO actors when these statements clashed with the image of PLO moderation.

“big picture,” the perspective here is a variation of Graham T. Allison’s third model of decision-making applied to non-governmental actors. Jewish critics of Israeli policies, especially in the internal opposition, knew (or thought they knew) what they opposed. Allison’s Model III is summarized as follows:

Players...act in terms of no consistent set of strategic objectives but rather according to various conceptions of national, organizational, and personal goals...decisions (are made) not by a single, rational choice but by the pulling and hauling that is politics...Men share power. Men differ about what must be done. The differences matter...different groups pulling in different directions produce a result, or better a resultant--a mixture of conflicting preferences and unequal power of various individuals -- distinct from what any person or group intended...Politicking lacks intellectual substance...leaders have competitive, not homogeneous interests...¹⁰⁷

Indeed, this case study demonstrates the extent to which the Jewish response to events surrounding the PLO-“talk” issue qualifies as “incremental muddling as opposed to comprehensive choice.”¹⁰⁸

This study emphasizes the activities of individual Jewish leaders. Harold Lasswell reminds us that “Political movements derive their vitality from the displacement of private affects upon public objects.”¹⁰⁹ Obviously, there is a limit to the practical application of this idea. We simply do not have adequate psychological data about these actors to venture any propositions. Yet it is intriguing to ruminate about the extent their own insecurity, as Jewish emissaries to the corridors of U.S. power, led them to seek approval by ostentatiously breaking with the Likud Government. Furthermore, one might speculate that trans-national Jewish leaders, confronting one crisis after another, were subject to some of the same pressures and their

¹⁰⁷ Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision, Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971), pp. 144-148.

¹⁰⁸ Allison, *op. cit.*, p. 154. I make this argument in connection with the Presidents Conference and the internal opposition.

¹⁰⁹ Harold D. Lasswell, *Psychopathology and Politics*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1960 Viking Edition), p. 173.

consequences (hastily arrived at and ill-considered decisions) faced by government decision-makers.

To gain a fuller sense of the role played by the Jewish leadership in the US-PLO "talk" decision, I endeavor, within the limits of practicality, to describe the political environment during each major phase of the protracted process.

Political "environment" figures prominently in the work of Harold and Margaret Sprout. They explain that, "In ecological parlance, something is conceived to be surrounded, or encompassed--that is to say, environed--by something else in some sense that is deemed significant. The organizing concepts are thus *milieu* and *environed unit*, and ecological theory is concerned mainly with *relationships* between them."¹¹⁰ For the Sprouts:

What an individual perceives and how he reacts to it (that is, the composition of his psycho-milieu) may or may not correspond closely to his operational milieu, the complex of conditions and events that will determine the outcome of whatever he decides to undertake. He may react imaginatively or stupidly, rationally or irrationally, to what he perceives. But it is his percepts and reactions thereto, not the milieu as it is, or as someone else perceives it, that determines what is to be undertaken.¹¹¹

Elsewhere, they posit that: "With regard to moods, attitudes, preferences, choices, decisions, and undertakings, erroneous ideas of the milieu may be just as influential as ideas that conform to the 'realities' of the milieu."¹¹² Decision makers react psychologically to their perceptions of the environment:

¹¹⁰ Sprout & Sprout, op. cit. p. 202

¹¹¹ Sprout & Sprout, op. cit. , p. 207

¹¹² Sprout & Sprout, op. cit. p. 122

If we say, for example, that insularity has influenced the foreign policy of Great Britain, we are saying no more and no less than that through some period of time those persons who have made decisions in the name of the British state have perceived that their country is an island, and have reacted psychologically in specified ways to that image¹¹³

How is it that in the midst of a long standing struggle one of the contestants changes policy course? Joseph de Rivera indicates that changes in perceptions may be the result of actors seeking the positive approval of a valued other. He also reminds us that, "an organization does not really perceive events or make decisions; that is done by the individuals in the organization. On the other hand, an organization does exist in its own right--it is not simply the sum total of the individuals in it--and it does act."¹¹⁴

IMAGE

The image the Jewish leadership held of itself and of the PLO shifted, in part, under the influence of political suasion. Images of the enemy as acting in "bad faith" are generally self-perpetuating.¹¹⁵ Kenneth E. Boulding associates self-image with national myth. In the larger context, he explains:

We must recognize that the people whose decisions determine the policies and actions of nations do not respond to the 'objective' facts of the situation, whatever that may mean, but to their 'image' of the situation. It is what we think the world is like, not what it is really like, that determines our behavior.. It is always the image, not the truth, that immediately determines behavior. . . The 'image.' then, must be thought of as the total cognitive, affective, and evaluative structure of the behavior unit, or its internal view of

¹¹³ Sprout & Sprout , *op. cit.*, p. 206

¹¹⁴ Joseph de Rivera, *op. cit.*, p. 37. Arguably, for the Jewish establishment, the "valued other" was continued Administration contacts. They valued access to the State Department and White House and were conflicted by their unwanted role as Administration critics.

¹¹⁵ Ole R. Holsti, "Cognitive Dynamics and Images of the Enemy," in *Image and Reality in World Politics*, edited by John C. Farrell and Asa P. Smith, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967).

itself and its universe.¹¹⁶

Michael P. Sullivan notes that images do change: "The image, can also be an intervening variable that undergoes change, a variable that exists between the external elements that are perceived (and which themselves might account for behavior) and the behavior."¹¹⁷ Of course, as Boulding has pointed out: "Images can only be compared with other images and never with reality."¹¹⁸

Summary

The level of analysis of this descriptive case study is the American Jewish leadership. To understand their role it is vital to appreciate the leadership's inner divisions. Their actions are best understood from the vantage point of political suasion and changing perceptions.¹¹⁹ Toward that end, this study employs theoretical underpinnings which synthesize the work done by political scientists and political psychologists whose scholarship is concerned with bargaining, decision making, political perception and manipulation. The standard interest group approach is of limited utility in this case because it does not explicitly spotlight group inner dynamics.

¹¹⁶ Kenneth E. Boulding, "National Images and International Systems," in James N. Rosenau, *International Politics and Foreign Policy*, (New York: The Free Press, 1969), p. 423.

¹¹⁷ Michael P. Sullivan, *International Relations: Theories and Evidence*, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976), p. 53

¹¹⁸ Rosenau, op. cit.

¹¹⁹ While this study will focus on the intra-communal impact of image and perception (as well as its connection to political suasion), previous scholarship has acknowledged some of these issues, mostly on the macro level, as integral to the study of the Arab-Israel conflict. See for instance, Joanne B. Modlin wrote on *Political Cartoons and the Perception of the Arab-Israel Conflict*, (Ph.D dissertation, CUNY, 1987); Richard H. Curtiss, *A Changing Image: American Perceptions of the Arab-Israel Dispute*, (Washington DC: The American Educational Trust, 1982); Musa Ladan, *Zionist Perception of the Arab Palestinians And Its Impact on the Middle East Conflict*, (Masters dissertation, The American University, 1984); Of related interest are: Michael W. Suleiman, *The Arabs in the Mind of America*, (Brattleboro, Vermont: Amana Books, 1988). Suleiman's bibliography dealing with American views and reporting of the Arab-Israel conflict is extensive and valuable. Finally, there is the work of Peter Grose, *Israel in the Mind of America*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984).

Chapter 3

Historical/Perceptual Setting The Origins of the Palestinian Arab Cause 1948 to 1967

In other words, we must understand the struggle between Palestinians and Zionism as a struggle between a presence and an interpretation, the former constantly appearing to be overpowered and eradicated by the later. What was this presence? No matter how backward, uncivilized, and silent they were, the Palestinian Arabs *were* on the land.

-Edward W. Said¹

The psychological propaganda benefit derived by the Arabs from annexing the word "Palestinian," to designate only Arabs, is considerable..

-Joan Peters.²

This chapter summarizes the perceptual and historical setting governing the Arab-Israel conflict from the founding of the State of Israel in 1948 until the June 1967 Six Day War in which Israel captured the West Bank (including Old Jerusalem), Gaza and the Golan Heights. Reference to evolving perceptions provides a necessary framework for understanding American Jewish attitudes. The transformation of attitudes, I argue, influenced the community's role in the 1988 decision by the U.S. to open a diplomatic dialogue with the PLO. The ingredients comprising perceptions include: categorization of the conflict; self-image; influential milestone events; image of other; cognitive consistency; cognitive dissonance; key environmental factors and psychological needs.

Categorization of Conflict

Between 1948 and 1967, the perception of the Arab-Israel conflict was considerably unlike what it is today. Specifically, the Palestinian Arab dimension of the clash was not accentuated in the American media and most observers understood the struggle to be a zero-sum competition.

¹ Edward W. Said, *The Question of Palestine*, (New York: Vintage, 1980), p. 8

² Joan Peters, *From Time Immemorial: The Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict Over Palestine*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), p. 89n

As for the Palestinian Arabs, it is worthwhile noting that the *national* aspirations of the Palestinian Arabs (Palestinians) made its way sluggishly into the world's collective political consciousness. The 1948-1967 era was a period of state-building and pan-Arabism. The image of Arab "Palestinianism" arose first among the Palestinian Arabs themselves, then gradually made its way onto the intellectual and political agenda of the Arab world. Moreover, "Palestinianism" did not make much of a mark on the international political system or upon the United States' political agenda until well after 1967.

Perceptual factors aside, at the beginning and middle of the 1948-1967 era, the American Jewish leadership was not notably well-organized or particularly sophisticated politically. The self-image of the leadership was not anchored in its role of "*shtadlanim*," or intermediary in bilateral US-Israel relations.³ True, the narrow-based Zionist lobby contributed to a United States policy supporting the establishment and independence of a Jewish State. Nor was it mere happenstance that America was the first country to recognize Israel. But, in those early years the pro-Israel community exercised little recurring clout over developing U.S. policy on the Arab-Israel conflict. Mass pro-Israelism was also not a defining characteristic of U.S. Jewish life in general. Jewish leadership on the national level was confined to a very few prominent philanthropists and the organizations they used as their vehicles. Jewish political influence within the overall American political system was still nascent. At any rate, U.S. foreign policy was mostly focused elsewhere.

³ A German/Yiddish term with origins in the Medieval period, "Court Jews" served the prince and used their privileged position to act as *shtadlanm* or intermediaries on behalf of the Jewish community. See *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, (Vol. 5), p.1008. Jews have been active politically since the days of George Washington. Their involvement, as I read it, was grounded in insecurity and dependency. During the 1930s and 1940s, FDR promoted "court Jews" such as Bernard Baruch. FDR was adored by the Jewish masses and counted on the Jewish vote. But that does not change the fact that the Jewish "leaders" were in a patron-client relationship with the President. There is no more glaring proof of this than the leadership's failure, during WWII, to get the allies to bomb the rail lines leading to Aushwitz.

With little public fanfare, two opposing ideological camps --one pro-Arab, the other pro-Zionist-- zealously contested U.S. foreign policy over Palestine during the 1940's and 1950's. The disparate players of the pro-Arab camp included: oil company lobbyists, State Department Foreign Service career professionals, Christian missionaries, the New Left and the Old Right. The pro-Israel camp was comprised mostly of American Jewish supporters of Israel and their many non-Jewish allies. During the early 1950's, when the pro-Israel movement was budding, I.L. Kenen, the founder of the America-Israel Public Affairs Committee {AIPAC}, had difficulty raising sufficient funds to maintain his small Washington, D.C. office which served as the headquarters of the pro-Israel lobby in the United States.⁴ For their part, the Israelis were forced to cultivate a relationship with politically well-connected non-Zionists such as the AJCommittee's Jacob Blaustein. The organization vehemently opposed Ben Gurion's call for Jews to move to Israel and Blaustein fought against Israeli interference in Jewish domestic affairs. He opposed instances where Israel claimed to act on behalf of the Jewish people such as the kidnapping of Adolf Eichman from Argentina. The AJCommittee also privately took exception to various Israeli foreign policy moves. Nevertheless, leaders such as Blaustein used their political access to Israel's overall advantage.⁵

⁴I.L. Kenen, *Israel's Defense Line: Her Friends and Foes in Washington*, (Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1981), p. 107. Kenen points out also that: "AIPAC lobby never had the Hill to itself...At the outset, the Arab states had little need for their own instrument because they were championed by the American petro-diplomatic complex--the conglomerate of oilmen, diplomats, missionaries, and CIA agents. They were an impressive galaxy: James Forrestal, the Secretary of Defense; Harold B. Minor, chief of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs in 1946 and 1947 and subsequently an employee of ARAMCO; William A. Eddy, the U.S. minister to Saudi Arabia between 1944 and 1946; Wallace Murray, chief of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs for many years; Rusk; Byroade; Henderson; and many more." (p.114). For a more recent analysis see, Robert D. Kaplan, *The Arabists: The Romance of an American Elite*, (New York: The Free Press, 1993).

⁵ See, Bick Zablocki, op. cit.

U.S. Administrations
Prior to Prominence of Palestinian Cause

In order to better grapple with the role of the American Jewish community in the 1988 U.S. decision to negotiate with the PLO, it is helpful to synopsise U.S.-Israel relations between 1948 and the 1967 Six Day War. The predominant motif in U.S foreign policy after WWII was America's rivalry with the Soviet Union. It is virtually impossible to make any sense out of U.S. policy in the Middle East without taking this competition into account.

Overruling advice from the State Department, the Truman Administration voted in the United Nations for the partition of Palestine into a Jewish and Arab state with Jerusalem to be a "corpus separatum." On May 14, 1948, the State of Israel was declared. Eleven minutes later the Truman Administration granted the Jewish State *de jure* recognition. On May 12, 1949 the U.S. supported Israel's admission into the UN. It also granted Israel access into the U.S. Export-Import Bank, extending \$1 million in agricultural aid. In 1951 the U.S. Congress provided Israel with a \$65 million economic grant.⁶ "This was the first of many economic grants and loans (which continued until 1963 and eventually totaled \$1.2 billion), most of it in loans or the sale of surplus commodities. All loans were repaid on time."⁷ Aid in 1952 had been \$73 million in 1953 it was reduced to \$54 million.⁸ From the perspective of the 1990's it is striking that, after an early flurry of activity, the Arab-Israel conflict did not become a U.S. foreign policy priority during the Truman years.

The Eisenhower Administration was preoccupied with ending the war in Korea and managing the Cold War in the wake of Stalin's death. In 1953 the Administration quarreled with Israel over the use of water resources in

⁶ *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, (Vol. 15), pages 1657-1666

⁷ *Ibid.* p.1665

⁸ Kenen, *op. cit.*, p. 105

the Jordan valley. Subsequently, the U.S. tried and failed to mediate the water issue. Nevertheless, Israel completed its national water carrier system with American support in 1964. Another dispute, in 1954, involved Israeli opposition to the U.S. decision to sell weapons to Iraq as part of the Baghdad Pact. In the face of an arms flow from the Soviet Union to Egypt, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles turned down petitions from Keren's AIPAC to sell American weapons to the Jewish State. Israel purchased its weapons, during this period, from France. By the end of President Eisenhower's first term, Israel faced intensifying attacks from Arab *fedayeen* based mainly in Gaza. These attacks contributed to the outbreak of the 1956 Sinai Campaign in which Israel captured the Sinai and the Gaza Strip. Despite appeals from Jewish groups, the U.S. exerted heavy pressure to force Israel to withdraw from the captured territories.

U.S.-Soviet relations dominated the Kennedy Administration's agenda as exemplified by the Cuban Missile Crisis. Still, during the first several years of the Administration, the U.S. "tried to work out an elaborate proposal for the solution of the Arab refugee problem which would have obliged Israel to absorb a substantial number of refugees. This attempt came to nought due to the Arabs' refusal to enter any substantial negotiations."⁹ Indeed, in early 1961, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion and President-elect Kennedy met at the Waldorf-Astoria. Kennedy "kept asking what Israel could do for the Arab refugees, while Ben-Gurion kept insisting their return en masse would

⁹ *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, op. cit. .p. 1666

undermine Israel's security."¹⁰ Zablocki reports that: "American Jewish leaders worked together with Israeli officials to prevent American adoption of a plan for the refugees contrary to Israel's interest."¹¹ Another fundamental policy difference with the Kennedy Administration involved Israel's insistence on direct negotiations with the Arabs. Nevertheless, it was under President Kennedy that, in 1962, the U.S. first sold Israel military hardware. This first deal involved Hawk anti-aircraft missiles which the Israelis convinced Kennedy they needed to deal with the introduction of Tupelov-16 bombers into Egypt by the Soviet Union.¹² Several weeks prior to Congressional elections, Kennedy invited American Jewish leaders to the White House to preview his arms sale decision before publicly announcing it.¹³

The Johnson Administration's main foreign policy concern was, of course, conducting the war in Vietnam. Significantly, after the June 1967 Six Day War, the Administration opposed Arab, Soviet and UN demands for a complete and unconditional Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, the Golan, as well as Judea and Samaria. In fact, the U.S. helped craft the carefully nuanced UN Security Council Resolution 242 which would serve as the basis for future peace making efforts.

¹⁰ Kenen, op. cit., p. 164. A recently published biography of JFK offers the following caveat about JFK's meeting with Ben Gurion and his relationship with Jews: "They met against a background of suspicion. Jewish Democrats, particularly in New York, did not yet fully trust the son of a man who had been accused of being both anti-Semitic and pro-Nazi. Nor did John Kennedy, comfortably surrounded by Jewish staff members, trust all Jews, particularly New Yorkers. 'I had the damndest meeting in New York last night,' he had said to his friend Charlie Bartlett one day in the early fall of 1960. 'I went to this party. It was given by a group of people who were big money contributors and also Zionists and they said to me, 'We know that your campaign is in terrible financial shape!'...The deal they offered me was that they would finance the rest of this campaign if I would agree to let them run Middle Eastern policy of the United States for the next four years.'" Richard Reeves, *President Kennedy: Profile of Power*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993, p. 143. For a blistering review of the veracity of the book (though not a challenge of this particular quote) see Barton Bernstein, *Washington Post Book Review*, October 31, 1993. An exchange of letters appears in the December 26, 1993 *Book Review*.

¹¹ Zablocki, op. cit., p. 145

¹² *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, op. cit. p. 1666

¹³ Zablocki, op. cit, p. 195

Palestinian-Arab Cause Emerges

This cursory overview illustrates that throughout the first four U.S. Administrations after Israel's establishment, the national aspirations of the Palestinian Arabs were scarcely viewed as the crux of the Arab-Israel conflict. For American foreign policy-makers, the refugee problem was part of the larger dilemma of the Arab refusal to accept the existence of a Jewish State in Palestine.

From 1948 until the early 1970's--outside the context of their plight as refugees-- the United States did not substantively address the Palestinian-Arab component of the conflict. Simply put, the "Palestinian issue" did not really emerge onto the U.S. diplomatic agenda until after the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Globally, American Middle East policy was a side-show to the American-Soviet main event. Even the word "Palestinian" as it pertains to Arabs appears in *The New York Times* Index only twice in 1948 and 1949. Thereafter, it seldom materializes again until 1973.¹⁴ This absence from the prestige media spotlight could not but have had an impact on American Jewish perceptions.

Arguably, Palestinian national consciousness developed slowly starting in the 1920's. Arabs then living in Palestine considered themselves

¹⁴ The term Palestinian as it pertains to Arabs does not appear in 1950, 1951, 1952. It appears once in 1953 in connection with a pan-Arab conference and then not at all during 1954, 1955, and 1956. In 1957 the Times ceased using the term in its index. The phrase does not appear in 1958 (except in connection with the American Christian Committee for Palestine), 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962, and 1963. In 1964 the founding conference of the PLO is referenced under Middle East. Afterwards, the PLO appears regularly. After Israel captured Jerusalem in 1967 the Arabs there are referred to as "East Jerusalem Arabs." (August 8, 1967. Later in the year they begin to be referred to as "Palestinian-Arabs." (September 9, 1967). While there continue to be many subsequent references to the PLO there are few references to "Palestinians." One in 1971 regarding a Palestinian student organization and a proposal for a Palestinian state. This absence ends in 1973 (in academia the appearance of the Kuwait funded pro-PLO *Journal of Palestine Studies* contributes to elevating the Palestinian cause in the scholarly community. For a discussion of how the term "Palestinian" came to be applied to Arabs see, Joan Peters, *From Time Immemorial*, Harper & Row, 1985, particularly pp. 89n, 139-140 and 149-50

“part of a broadly defined Syria.”¹⁵ Palestinian nationalism emerged during this period largely in response to the immigration of Jews to Palestine. It was not until the outbreak of the First World War that Arab nationalists began using the description ‘Palestinian.’¹⁶

Before, during and immediately after the establishment of the State of Israel--between December 1947 and September 1949-- some 600,000 Palestinian-Arabs became refugees. Benny Morris, former diplomatic correspondent for the *Jerusalem Post* , comments:

The Palestinian refugee problem and its consequences have shaken the Middle East and acutely troubled the world for the past four decades. The question of what caused the refugees to become refugees has been a fundamental propaganda issue between Israel and the Arab states for just as long. The general Arab claim, that the Jews expelled Palestine’s Arabs, with predetermination and preplanning, as part of a grand political-military design, has served to underline the Arab portrayal of Israel as a vicious, immoral robber state. The Israeli official version, that the Arabs fled voluntarily (not under Jewish compulsion) and/or that they were asked/ordered to do so by their Palestinian and Arab states’ leaders, helped leave intact the new state’s untarnished image as the haven of a much-persecuted people, a body politic more just, moral and deserving of the West’s sympathy and help than the surrounding sea of reactionary, semi-feudal, dictatorial Arab societies.¹⁷

The numbers of refugees, the reasons for their dispersal and the fact that their plight was exploited by the Arab states (who segregated them in

¹⁵ Ann Mosely Lesch, “The Palestine Arab Nationalist Movement Under the Mandate”, in *The Politics of Palestinian Nationalism* by William B. Quandt, Fuad Jabber and Ann Mosely Lesch, (Berkeley: University of California Press, A Rand Corporation Research Study, 1973), p. 14.

¹⁶ Conor Cruise O’Brien, *Ibid.*, p.119

¹⁷ Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p.1. Ultimately, after careful examination of the data, Morris concludes: “the Palestinian refugee problem was born of war, not design, Jewish or Arab. It was largely a by-product of Arab and Jewish fears and of the protracted, bitter fighting that characterized the first Israeli-Arab war; in smaller part, it was the deliberate creation of Jewish and Arab military commanders and politicians.” See page 286. Parenthetically, Morris became the 38th Israeli jailed for refusing to do his IDF reserve duty in the Territories and was sentenced to 21 days in jail. *FBIS*, September 19, 1988. Peters, *op.cit.*, reprints a secret British military memorandum reporting on Jewish efforts to urge the Arabs not to flee (her Appendix II, p. 416) .

refugee shanty towns) all contributed to certain American Jewish perceptions.¹⁸ For the U.S. Jewish community, it was effortless to categorize the conflict as zero sum, state centered and Israel versus Arab.

In 1967, King Hussein challenged a Georgetown University audience by asking when Israel would “recognize the right of the Arabs to exist.”¹⁹ But such a challenge found little resonance. Eight years later, Hussein could pose the matter differently. Israel could find peace if it recognized “the legitimate rights of the Palestinians.”²⁰ Kahn and Murray note:

The very currency of the term “Palestinian” to mean Arabs exclusively is a propaganda triumph of the first order. Palestine is the geographic term with which the West is familiar; one assumes France belongs to the French, and England to the English; it does indeed then seem as if Palestine belongs to the Palestinians. If the “Palestinians” claim Palestine, there must be a struggle between the native population and foreign invaders.²¹

The Arabs who remained in Israel after 1948 came to be known as “Israeli Arabs” and citizens of the Jewish State. The Israeli Arabs vacillated between apolitical economic self-interest and association with communist or Arab nationalist Knesset parties.²² The Arabs in the Gaza Strip preserved their Palestinian identity living under the hardships of Egyptian rule. In Judea and Samaria, many Palestinian Arabs were violently opposed to the incorporation of the “West Bank” into Jordan. Ultimately, “It was Jordan that was being

¹⁸ Some figures put the number as low as 472,000. The PLO claims one million Arabs became refugees in the wake of Israel's creation. The number of Jews fleeing Arab countries were roughly the same as the number of Arabs who fled Israel. *Myths & Facts, A Concise Record of the Arab-Israel Conflict*, edited by Mitchell Bard and Joel Himmelfarb, (Washington, D.C.: Near East Report, D.C., 1992), p. 120.

¹⁹ *New York Times*, November 7, 1967, cited in Arthur Kahn and Thomas F. Murray, *The Palestinians: A Political Masquerade*, Americans For A Safe Israel, (pamphlet), 1977.

²⁰ *Ibid.* Kahn and Murray go on: “For supporters of the Arabs in this country the redefinition of the conflict provided a way of justifying that support. Thus Senator James Abourezk said: ‘During the Mid East war in 1967 I can remember cheering for the Israelis. But my support for the Israeli underdog eventually turned to a sense of rage over the way they have treated the Palestinians.’ Redefinition of the conflict was indeed the public relations coup of the century.” p. 17

²¹ Kahn and Murray, p. 20

²² *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 9, p. 466.

Palestinianized,' rather than the opposite."²³

The Zionist right has long argued that Israel is Jewish Palestine and Jordan is Arab Palestine. The argument, as Sidney Zion makes it, goes as follows:

In 1920, the World War I Allies conferred on Britain a Mandate to govern Palestine, an area on both sides of the Jordan River that had been part of the Ottoman Empire. This Mandate, confirmed by the League of Nations in 1922, remained unchanged during the League's lifetime. Though the Mandate incorporated Britain's 1917 commitment to provide a homeland in Palestine for the Jews--the Balfour Declaration-- the Mandate did not provide a homeland for Arabs living there, though it did protect their "civil and religious" but not political rights. Two months after the League approved the Mandate, the British Colonial Secretary, Winston Churchill, changed the rules and the picture. He created the Emirate of Transjordan, installing the Hashemite Abdullah, Hussein's grandfather, as Emir of all the land east of the Jordan River...

Is Jordan Palestine? Yes, but not all of Mandated Palestine. Israel holds a little more than 20 percent of the Mandate's Palestine, including the 5 percent known as the West Bank and Gaza. Jordan is not only de facto Palestine because all who have lived there except for Bedouins and the King's family are Palestinian; it is de jure Palestine.²⁴

While tens of thousands of Palestinian Arabs prospered in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, thousands more lived in refugee shanty towns in Lebanon, the West Bank and Jordan. With the singular exception of Jordan, the Arab states had political reasons to exploit the Palestinian refugee

²³ Ibid. page 467

²⁴ Sidney Zion, "Is Jordan Palestine? Of Course," *New York Times* Op Ed October 5, 1982; see too his essay "The Palestine Problem: It's All in a Name," *New York Magazine*, March 13, 1978. For additional background material see, Michael A. Zimmerman, "What's in a Name?" *Midstream*, (November 1982); Ronald Sanders, *The High Walls of Jerusalem: A History of the Balfour Declaration and the Birth of the British Mandate for Palestine*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York, 1984; Bernard Wasserstein provides a critique of the Jordan is Palestine case in, "Is Jordan Really Palestine?" *Jerusalem Post*, June 17, 1983.

problem and opposed their permanent re-settlement and absorption.²⁵

PLO Established

That the PLO was established by the Arab states in January 1964 at an Arab summit called for that purpose by Egyptian president Nasser contributed little to a change in American Jewish perceptions. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was created to enable the Palestinians "to play their role in the liberation of their country and their self-determination."²⁶ Ahmed Shukeiry, the son of a Moslem religious leader in Acre, who had gained diplomatic experience working for Syria, Saudi Arabia and the Arab League, was chosen to head the new organization. The PLO was seen as yet another tool in the Arab arsenal against Israel. Little was known about dissident groups in the Palestinian-Arab community who opposed Shukeiry's leadership on the grounds that he lacked independence from the Arab states. Shukeiry's virulent oratory made clear to American Jewish observers that the Arab world was engaged in a zero-sum struggle. It was Shukeiry who proposed "driving the Jews into the sea."²⁷ In 1963, he told the *New York Times* that the Palestinian-Arabs would have to create their own military force to achieve their goal.²⁸

²⁵ Israel's early position toward the refugee issue is captured in these remarks by Ben-Gurion: "When the Arab states are ready to conclude a peace treaty with Israel this question will come up for constructive solution as part of the general settlement, and with due regard to our counter-claims in respect of the destruction of Jewish life and property, the long-term interest of the Jewish and Arab populations, the stability of the State of Israel and the durability of the basis of peace between it and its neighbors, the actual position and fate of the Jewish communities in the Arab countries, the responsibilities of the Arab governments for their war of aggression and their liability for reparation, will all be relevant in the question whether, to what extent, and under what conditions, the former Arab residents of the territory of Israel should be allowed to return." Quoted by Howard Sachar, *A History of Israel*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), p.335

²⁶ Helena Cobban, *The Palestine Liberation Organization, People, Power and Politics*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 29

²⁷ *New York Times*, February 27, 1980 (obituary)

²⁸ *New York Times*, October 13, 1963

Then, in the old City of Jerusalem, on May 28, 1964, 350 delegates, under Shukeiry's leadership, met in a Palestine National Congress. The gathering issued the Palestine National Charter, which called for the destruction of Israel.²⁹ "Armed struggle is the only way to liberate Palestine. Thus it is the overall strategy, not merely a tactical phase. The Palestinian Arab people assert their absolute determination and firm resolution to continue their armed struggle and to work for an armed popular revolution for the liberation of their country and their return to it."³⁰ Even though King Hussein personally opened the Congress, Shukeiry made it clear that he viewed Jordan as part of Palestine.³¹

On August 31, 1964, Shukeiry presented the Arab Foreign Ministers meeting in Cairo with a 15-point program for "the final liquidation of Israel." The following month the Arab League approved the creation of a Palestine Liberation Army.³² The PLA was to be under the supervision of a unified Arab command. "This was interpreted as an attempt to control the emerging military force and 'keep it from getting into the hands of firebrands so as to increase the likelihood of open war with Israel.'"³³

Early on, American friends of the Arab cause understood the need to place the Palestinian issue, qua "Palestinian," in the forefront of public opinion. Shukeiry's fulminations did not win any American Jewish converts but they did help bring the Palestinian-Arab cause to prominence. The Palestinian issue had to be separated and transformed away from the greater Arab struggle into a parochial movement against Zionism. Hani al-Hassan, a close Arafat advisor, reported years later that "Shukeiry told me that George Ball had said there should be a voice of the Palestinians to speak for them. He

²⁹ Janet Wallach & John Wallach, *Arafat In the Eyes of the Beholder*, (Rocklin, CA.: Prima Publishing, 1992), p.131.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 131

³¹ *The Palestine Liberation Organization: A Survey* (July 1966) monograph by Joseph B. Schechtman, issued by the Information Department of the Jewish Agency

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.* See too, *The New York Times*, September 11, 1964.

told me that Nasser and the Arabs, in cooperation with George Ball, have helped to create this organization.”³⁴

FATAH

Before there was a PLO there was Fatah. In the early 1950's, Khalid al-Hassan, Khalil Wazir (Abu Jihad) and Yasir Arafat-- young Palestinian Arab professionals based together in Kuwait-- created their own group, El Fatah. The establishment of a Palestinian movement, independent of the Arab states, and dedicated to uniting the Arabs of Palestinian origin with the long term strategic goal of returning them to Palestine was accomplished through the tireless dedication of Arafat and several of his closest colleagues. Constructing the movement required no small amount of intrigue and subterfuge, combined with financial, organizational and political acumen of the first order. It would take Arafat many years to transform El Fatah (and later the PLO) into a major international player. An early milestone event took place in April 1963 when, with the help of Algeria, Arafat and Wazir traveled to the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) to promote the Palestinian-Arab cause. The value of the trip was only partly diminished because they were unsuccessful in making contact with high-level Chinese officials.

Arafat reacted negatively when Nasser created the PLO and placed Shukeiry in-charge. “It was obvious from the very beginning that the PLO was to be nothing but a paper tiger, a tool of the Egyptians to keep us quiet,” Arafat later said.³⁵ Competition for control of the Palestinian cause between Arafat and Shukeiry persisted for several years. An alliance with Syrian intelligence bolstered Arafat's position against the PLO. Clearly, to build his movement Arafat would make tactical deals with anyone who could get him to the next step. But he was determined that the future of the Palestinians would not be left to the Arab states.

³⁴ quoted in Wallach and Wallach, op. cit., p.130.

³⁵ Thomas Kiernan, *Arafat, The Man & the Myth*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1976), p.234.

Previously, Arab terror organizations had served as tools for sovereign states.³⁶ Though it received financial and military aid from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Kuwait and Syria (and over the years would align with this or that Arab or non-Arab benefactor), Fatah's strategic direction was completely independent. Its fighters were first and foremost Palestinians. By launching scores of cross-border raids into Israel, between 1965 and 1967, Arafat was able to build-up his stature in the Arab world.

Summary

The 1948-1967 period was one in which American Jews could easily perceive the conflict in state-centered, zero-sum and Pan-Arab versus Israel terms.³⁷ The U.S. role in the Arab-Israel conflict was not especially prominent nor was pro-Israelism a defining feature of American Jewish life. Starting in 1964 there was an organization dedicated to the liberation of Palestine from Jewish control, but American Jews could hardly be expected to muster affinity for the PLO. The image of the conflict established within the Jewish community was that of Israel's legitimacy being challenged on a pan-Arab level and her existence being threatened on a state-centered basis. Calls for "armed struggle" to "liberate Palestine" reinforced these Jewish perceptions. The driving cognitive consistency for the U.S. Jewish leadership was to insure Israel's survival in the face of the destruction of European Jewry during the Second World War. For the mobilized leadership elites the consistent goal

³⁶ Arafat has been so closely associated with "terrorism" that it is worth defining the term. Terrorism is, according to *Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language*, 2nd Edition (Collins), "1. the act of terrorizing; use of force or threats to demoralize, intimidate, and subjugate, esp. such use as a political weapon or policy 2. the demoralization and intimidation produced in this way." For my purposes, in this study, I use the term to connote a policy of premeditated violence against non-military targets. For background on irregular warfare in the tradition of Arab combat see Zeev Schiff and Raphael Rothstein, *Fedayeen: Guerrillas Against Israel*, (New York: David McKay Company, 1972).

³⁷ While I limit discussion to the post-1948 era, obviously, American Jewish perceptions about Arab intentions were also grounded in their reading of the pre-State Yeshuv's history. See for example, Maurice Samuel, *Harvest in the Desert*, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1944).

was to obtain American military, diplomatic and economic backing to secure that same end. They opposed U.S. diplomatic pressure on Israel to withdraw from the Sinai (to no avail) and with regard to Jordan River water arrangements. In vain, the Jewish leaders championed the idea of direct talks between the Arabs and Israel. Perceptions were also influenced by such factors in the political environment as the US-USSR rivalry; the unfriendly Eisenhower Administrations (1952-1960); the Baghdad Pact; 1956 War; creation of the PLO and FATAH as well as bloody Fedayeen raids against Israel. The fate, prestige and prominence of the American Jewish leadership was not dependent on their pro-Israel work. And, while Jews have traditionally sought the approval of their neighbors and fellow citizens, one would be hard pressed to argue that Jewish actions (one way or the other) during the 1948-1967 era were based on a psychological need for the approval of the larger society. Given all this, there was no likelihood that Jewish perceptions about the Palestinian- Arab cause would change appreciably. The Jewish belief system called for a closing of the ranks to assure Israel's survival.

Chapter 4

The Structure of Organized Pro-Israelism

What American Jews have done for Israel is well known. What Israel has done for American Jews is perhaps less obvious, but hardly less important. The need to create Israel, and the need to sustain it, obliged the Jews of America--from the Biltmore Conference of 1942 on--to seek, find and wield political power at the national level, for an international purpose.¹

Starting in 1967 an increasing number of Jews defined their Jewishness in terms of Israel. The nature of Israel-based Jewish identity has been evolving ever since. The story of that evolution is manifested in Jewish organizational life. That the American Jewish community is highly organized is universally apparent. What most people do not instantly fathom is that the degree of organization results from an equally high level of diversity. There are so many Jewish organizations because the community is deeply divided on a wide range of issues. Since the causes of the fragmentation cannot easily be solved differences are bridged with layers of organizations and umbrella organizations.

Still, no one speaks for the 6 million Jews of America.² Similarly, the

¹ Conor Cruise O'Brien, *The Siege*, (New York: Touchstone, 1986), p. 376. The turning point came at the May 1942 Biltmore Conference. (The destruction of European Jewry was in progress. By June 1942 news of the killings had already been published; See Walter Laqueur, *The Terrible Secret*, (New York: Penguin, 1982). It was at the Biltmore Conference that the World Zionist movement determined that the British authorities in Palestine could not be counted upon to fulfill the Balfour Declaration of 1917 which called for the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine. At Ben Gurion's behest, they agreed that the need for immigration and settlement required Jewish authority in Palestine. Parenthetically, Ben Gurion had decided that Zionist self-sufficiency alone in settlement, immigration and self defense would not bring about Jewish sovereignty in Palestine. What was needed, he believed, was the cultivation of ties with the United States because big power backing would be essential for success. "Ben-Gurion aimed to achieve the latter objective through the mobilization of U.S. Jewry itself. With the help of the leaders of American Zionism, he intended to turn the community into a force that could sway the minds of presidents, and thus deliver the international guarantees that would underwrite the evolving Jewish state in Mandatory Palestine," writes Andrew Spyer in a review of *David Ben-Gurion and the American Alignment for A Jewish State*, by Allon Gal (Indiana: Magnes Press, 1992). See book review, *Jerusalem Post International Edition*, August 1, 1992, p. 12C.

² *American Jewish Yearbook*, (published by American Jewish Committee, New York:1988), p. 226; see too, "Where the Jews Are," *The Reporter ORT*, (Summer 1992) which reports that there is a "core" Jewish population of 5.5 million.

1.6 million Jews of metropolitan New York, the most well known Jewish community in the country, are divided along religious, social and political lines.³ Outsiders seldom appreciate the cross-cutting cleavages that make a mockery of the myth of Jewish unity. These schisms have direct bearing on the role the Jewish community plays in the American political system.⁴

The purpose of this chapter is to present a broad overview of the structure of Jewish organizational life in the United States in order to place the groups that will be referred to later on into an overall context. This taxonomy will highlight, although not be limited to, groups whose leadership played a prominent role in the US-PLO dialogue issue. For purposes of exposition, groups of a more ad hoc nature established to foster a US-PLO dialogue will be described in the following chapter.

Support for the idea of a Jewish State within the American Jewish community is, nowadays, taken as a given. In fact, the attitude of the American Jewish leadership toward Zionism has not always been sympathetic. Since the *Shoah* (destruction of European Jewry during WWII), however, even ideological opponents of Jewish nationalism and Zionism

³ For additional demographic data see: *New York Jewish Week*, January 24, 1992 and *New York Jewish Week*, October 22, 1993 as well as "Statistics War," *The Jerusalem Report*, December 12, 1991

⁴ For background information, on the political and philosophical differences within American Zionism, written from a Left wing viewpoint, see: Mitchell Cohen, *Zion & State*, (Colchester, Vt.: Basil Blackwell, 1990); and Ehud Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); For the alternative perspective see: Menechem Begin, *The Revolt*, (Jerusalem: Steinmetsky Press, 1951); Ben Hecht, *Perfidy*, (New York: Julian Messner, Inc., 1961); Joseph Schechtman, *The Jabotinsky Story*, 2 Volumes, (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1956) and Shmuel Katz, *Jabo: A Biography of Ze'ev Jabotinsky*, 2 Volumes, (Tel Aviv: Dvir 1993). A generally balanced overview is available in Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism*, (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

became generally supportive, and in some cases, outright pro-Zionists.⁵ From 1945 until around 1949 (when the War of Independence ended) Jewish involvement with Israel was at its zenith. Afterwards, for about eighteen years interest in Israel waned.

Pro-Israelism, as a defining characteristic of American Jewry, developed in the wake of the June 1967 Six Day War. Groups which had not previously been devoted to pro-Israel work abruptly shifted gears to pursue pro-Israel activism. The 1967 war reinvigorated the pro-Israel community. In the face of Arab bellicosity and the possible destruction of Israel, the community raised several hundred million dollars in contributions along with \$75 million for Israel Bonds during and immediately after the war. Pro-Israel consciousness was further mobilized among American Jews as a response to anti-Zionist propaganda emanating from the American Left. Another factor was anti-Semitism associated with African American militants starting in the 1960's.⁶ Arthur Hertzberg, historian and Zionist practitioner, explained pro-Israelism as: "The sense of belonging to a worldwide Jewish people, of which Israel is the center, is a religious sentiment, but it seems to persist even among Jews who regard themselves as secularists or atheists. There are no conventional theological terms with which to explain this..."⁷ So, while only twenty-percent of American Jews have formal ties with a Zionist organization Jewish

⁵ See Henry L. Feingold, *Zion in America - The Jewish Experience From Colonial Times to the Present*, (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1974). Zionism is the desire, on the part of the Jews, to return to the Land of Israel. Observant Jews pray three times a day for a return to Zion. However, political Zionism (a product of the Enlightenment) based on Jewish self-help did not catch on instantly either in Europe or the United States. Feingold explains: "American Zionism was a slow-starting affair. In the 1880's and 1890's it affected only a small number of Jews. After the defeat of Turkey in the Russo-Turkish war in 1877 there was some hope among the small group of American Zionists that America or Britain would receive a protectorate for the area...the first 'Lovers of Zion' chapter was organized in 1884...The name Herzl was largely unknown." p. 200. The established (mostly German) Jewish leadership in the United States sought to help assimilate new immigrants to the country. The last thing they wanted was to promote a nationalistic creed.

⁶ *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 15, p. 1647

⁷ Arthur Hertzberg, "Israel and American Jewry," *Commentary*, (August 1967), quoted in O'Brien

identity, since 1967, has become closely linked with the fate of Israel.⁸

Jewish Organizational Life

There are *hundreds* of national Jewish organizations in the United States, large and small. Their activities run the gamut from religious and charitable work to international nonsectarian philanthropy to Zionist and pro-Israel political activism to improving human relations.⁹ Three main religious congregational branches (Reform, Conservative and Orthodox) add to the organizational blend.¹⁰

While the Jews of Canada are represented by the Canadian Jewish Congress and the Jews of Britain are represented by the Board of Deputies of British Jews, there is no single address of the organized Jewish community in the United States, though the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, commonly known as the Presidents Conference, comes close.¹¹ The late Wolfe Kelman, a prominent Conservative rabbi, explained: "What actually happens in the American Jewish community is that insofar as there is a recognized comprehensive structure, it tends to be local. The smaller the community, the easier it is to have a structure which everyone recognizes, where the people they represent have a direct relationship to the people who speak for them."¹²

⁸ Lee O'Brien, *American Jewish Organizations & Israel*, (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1986), p. 15. See also, Melvin I. Urofsky, *We Are One! American Jewry and Israel*, (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1978).

⁹ See for example *American Jewish Organizations Directory*, Twelfth Edition, (New York: Frankel Mailing Service, 1987) and Michael N. Dobkoski, editor, *Jewish American Voluntary Organizations*, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1986).

¹⁰ Will Maslow, *The Structure and Functioning of the American Jewish Community*, (booklet, New York: American Jewish Congress and the American Section of the World Jewish Congress, 1974)

¹¹ For data on the representative nature of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, as it is officially called, see *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 4, p. 1150.

¹² Wolf Kelman, "Organized Decentralization: Trends in United States Jewish Communal Life," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 1986-87 Year Book.

The organizations described in this chapter, except where noted, comprise what is generally considered to be the Jewish establishment. Within the establishment, the Presidents Conference, American Jewish Congress, American Jewish Committee, National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations played a vanguard role in reflecting and promoting changing perceptions of the Arab-Israel conflict.

The President's Conference

To the extent that the American Jewish community ventures to speak with one voice-- to other actors in the American political system, as well as within the larger IR system--its mechanism is the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. By tradition, "whoever is serving as chairman of the Presidents Conference, at any time, is recognized as the spokesman of the American Jewish community on Israel-related issues by the American government..."¹³ The Presidents Conference does not generate its own political power so much as it evinces the cumulative political influence of its constituent agencies.

Like most of the influential Jewish organizations the Presidents Conference is headquartered in New York City.¹⁴ Until 1990, the Presidents Conference was located at 515 Park Avenue at 60th Street. When the Jewish Agency sold this stately building to raise funds for Operation Exodus (the resettlement of Soviet and Ethiopian Jews to Israel) the President's Conference moved around the corner to its present modern quarters at 110 East 59th Street. It is not uncommon for Israeli prime ministers, cabinet ministers and

¹³ Kelman, op. cit. p107. He makes this comment after noting the extent of fragmentation in the community. He notes that the supreme spokesman on Soviet Jewry issues in the 1980's was the Chairman of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry (a member of the COPOMAJO)

¹⁴ AIPAC maintains satellite offices across the country including one in New York but for obvious reasons AIPAC is headquartered several blocks from Capitol Hill.

Knesset members, high level American government officials, presidential candidates, political aspirants, foreign leaders, ambassadors and other notables, to be seen at the offices of the Presidents Conference. Dignitaries come to communicate expressly with American Jewish leaders or to indirectly signal Israeli decision makers. Not a few world leaders assume that they can promote their country's standing with Congress through an appearance before the Presidents Conference. The Presidents Conference does not attempt to dispel the aura of Jewish political influence.

Unlike an earlier ill-fated umbrella organization, the WWII-period American Jewish Conference, decisions of the Presidents' Conference are reached in private by consensus. No votes are taken.¹⁵ Because they set the agenda, the Chairman and Executive Director wield formidable influence over what issues come before the representatives for discussion. The real decisions are made prior to formal meetings through discreet contacts with leading organizational representatives. They know the players, positions, ideologies and cleavages. Certain areas of discussion, because they are divisive, are simply avoided if at all possible since they project precisely the image that the Presidents Conference has institutionally sought to avoid: disunity.

Structurally, the Presidents' Conference is the paramount coordinating body of the organized American Jewish community.¹⁶ O'Brien has identified three main functions of the Presidents Conference. They are:

To interpret and convey the position of American Jewry to the U.S. government, policy makers, and the media, to the Israeli government, and to other countries and international bodies; second, to interpret and convey the U.S. government and public's position to the Israeli government and the American Jewish community; and third, to present the Israeli position to the U.S. government, the American Jewish community, and the general public.¹⁷

¹⁵ Interview with Rabbi Hershel Schacter, April 23, 1991

¹⁶ *The Washington Lobby*, 5th edition (Washington D.C.,: Congressional Quarterly, 1986)

¹⁷ O'Brien, op. cit., p. 193

But more importantly, for our purposes, the Presidents Conference is the single best indicator of the political direction and level of cohesiveness of the American Jewish leadership. For the outside analyst, seeking to assess the Conference of Presidents center of power is akin to a former Soviet specialist engaging in Kremlinology. As an approach, it has legitimate analytical value and produces fruitful insights, but it is necessarily based on elliptical evidence about hidden internal struggles and the wording of public pronouncements.¹⁸

The Presidents Conference was formally organized in 1955.¹⁹ In 1954 an

¹⁸ This description of Kremlinology is taken from Stephen F. Cohen, *Rethinking the Soviet Experience. Politics & History Since 1917*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp.29-30.

¹⁹ There are different stories told about how the Presidents Conference came to be founded. State Department official Henry Byroade (or in another version Secretary of State Alan Dulles himself) complained to Jewish leaders that too many disparate requests from Jewish groups had arrived at the White House seeking audiences with President Eisenhower. (See, O'Brien, op. cit.) The Dulles version was retold to me by Rabbi Herschel Schacter, a former Presidents Conference chairman. Historian Howard M. Sachar provides this background to its founding: "Late in 1953, Assistant Secretary of State Byroade, beleaguered by an endless string of visiting American-Jewish spokesmen, observed wistfully to Nahum Goldman that it might be useful if these various Jewish intercessors combined in a single deputation for talks with the Department. The idea registered on Goldmann, who discussed it with Philip Klutznick. It was Klutznick then who negotiated the establishment of the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, a group that included Zionist and non-Zionist leaders alike. The purpose of the 'Jewish Presidents Conference' was exclusively to find appropriate ways of defending Israel's cause. No other issue was involved during the group's intermittent meetings, nor was a formal vote ever required. Even the American Jewish Committee, which had been humiliated in its earlier, wartime experience with the American Jewish Conference and as a matter of principle now declined to join the Jewish Presidents Conference maintained an 'observer' relationship with the new entity, and basically associated with its pro-Israel activities." Sachar, op. cit., p. 726

Goldman had, at any rate, wanted to buttress his own American power base and foster the image of Jewish solidarity. (See, Edward Tivnan, op. cit., p. 40.) Tivnan suggests that Dulles and Goldmann were both maneuvering politically. Dulles may have believed that Jewish leaders unable to agree among themselves would at least stop pestering him. Goldmann was accused by some of being a carpetbagger, because he seemed to be an executive director in search of an organization. Tivnan writes: "Dulles certainly recognized that all these groups, Zionist, non-Zionist, right, left, and moderate, could agree on little. That every Jewish leader was eager for access to the secretary of state was axiomatic--indeed his prestige depended upon it--and Dulles was adept at exploiting splits among the Jewish leadership. Blaustein's (leader of the American Jewish Committee) public battle with Ben -Gurion as well as the American Jewish Committee's dogmatic non-Zionist stance were symptomatic of how easily American Jewry could turn critical of Israel, and thus undermine its case on Capitol Hill. An experienced international diplomat, Goldmann was well aware of the political advantages of forcing his fellow Jewish leaders to hold their tongues on every issue until they could come to a consensus..." p. 40-41.

ad hoc group of sixteen executive directors or presidents had come together for informal consultations.²⁰ In the early years there was no staff, budget or permanent address.²¹ In 1966, the Presidents Conference formally became a representative body of its member groups.²² Also in 1966, the Presidents Conference “decided to establish and maintain ongoing contacts with world Jewish bodies to facilitate the exchange of information, opinions and ideas.”²³

The criteria for membership in the Presidents Conference are that “an

²⁰ O'Brien, op. cit. She lists the sixteen members as: American Jewish Congress, American Trade Union Council for Labor Israel, America Israel Committee for Public Affairs (later AIPAC), American Zionist Council (later disbanded), B'nai B'rith, Hadassah, Jewish Agency-American Section, Jewish Labor Committee, Jewish War Veterans, Labor Zionist Organization of America, Mizrahi Organization of America, National Community Relations Advisory Council, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, United Synagogue of America, and the Zionist Organization of America.

²¹ Tivnan, op. cit., p. 41

²² O'Brien, op. cit., p. 191.

²³ *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 5 p 871

Goldman, very much the iconoclast, was to remain a major figure in Jewish life into the late 1980's. He played a behind the scenes role in promoting a U.S.-PLO dialogue. Together with several other former

Presidents' Conference chairmen, Goldman became antagonistic toward placing Israel on a pedestal as the supreme Jewish interest, or what Daniel Elazar labeled “Israelotry.” *Sachar*, op. cit., p. 726

Born in Lithuania in 1895, Goldman became active in the Zionist movement at an early age. He maintained that Israel, for various reasons, would not be the homeland for the majority of world Jewry. The Jewish State should, nevertheless, serve as a beacon of Jewish continuity and cultural renaissance, according to Goldmann. After WWI, he represented the Jewish Agency at the League of Nations and, with Rabbi Stephen Wise, founded the World Jewish Congress. He would remain a WJC leader until his death. After the outbreak of WWII, Goldman moved to New York where he established the Zionist Emergency Council. He strongly supported the establishment of a Jewish state. After Israel's creation in 1948, he took on various Zionist leadership roles. In 1962 Goldman moved to Israel but soon began to spend much of his time between Israel and Switzerland (where he obtained citizenship). After 1967 he became critical of Israeli diplomatic policies and the Jewish State's attitude toward Diaspora Jews. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 7 pp. 723-726. And, after the Yom Kippur War it was rumored that Goldman was secretly financing Breira (which advocated the creation of a PLO-controlled state alongside Israel). *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 1973-1982 *Decennial Yearbook*, p. 606. He publicly appealed to U.S. decision makers to pressure Israel into withdrawing from the West Bank. *Sachar*, op. cit., p. 890. As will be noted later on, Goldmann helped legitimize the non zero sum nature of the struggle, in part, through influential Op-Ed essays such as the one published in the *Washington Post* in 1976. In 1981 he reiterated his view that a Palestinian-Arab state was essential for an Arab-Israel peace.

organization must be national in scope, have an independent budget, at least one staff member dealing with national affairs, and make its own policy independent of others.”²⁴ The Chairmanship of the Conference changes, usually, every two years. The Executive Vice President of the Presidents Conference from its founding until his death in 1986 was Yehuda Hellman, “a close friend of Nahum Goldman.” Perhaps more than anyone else Hellman, as its full time paid head, shaped the orientation of the Conference from behind the scenes.²⁵ After Hellman’s death Malcolm Hoenlein, who had been Executive Director of the New York Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) since 1976, became the second Executive Director of the Presidents’ Conference.²⁶

Goldmann and another key figure of the organization’s early days, Philip Klutznik, left the Jewish establishment and became associated with

²⁴ O’Brien, op. cit., p. 192

²⁵ O’Brien, op. cit., p. 92. Hellman was born in 1920 in Latvia. He attended the American University in Beirut when he was in his early 20’s. He received a B.A. Hebrew University in Jerusalem and became a correspondent for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (the Jewish wire service). Hellman appears to have been very much a protege of Goldmann. When, for example, Goldman founded the World Conference of Jewish Organizations (COJO) in Rome in 1958 as a consultative body, Hellman became its Secretary General. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 16, p. 636. COJO continued to hold semi-annual meetings into the early 1970’s. He started working for Goldmann at the newly formed Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations in 1959. From then until his death in St. Louis while addressing a meeting of Jewish organizational leaders, Hellman participated in virtually every important activity of the organized Jewish community. Various sources including obituary notices in *The New York Times*, May 18-20, 1986

²⁶ Hoenlein was “promoted” to Executive Vice Chairman of the Presidents Conference with the election of Lester Pollack as Chairman in early 1993. This was seen as a vote of confidence in Hoenlein whom some had accused of leaning too far in the direction of Likud. A political scientist by training, Hoenlein was born in Philadelphia and has spent his entire professional life in Jewish communal service, initially in Philadelphia and starting in 1972 with the Greater New York Conference on Soviet Jewry. *New York Jewish Week*, December 12, 1992

what I have identified as the outside elite.²⁷ Klutznick became a supporter of a U.S.-PLO dialogue through his affiliation with the International Center for Peace in the Middle East (ICPME). It is enough to note, at this stage, that together with Goldmann and several other Presidents Conference chairmen, Klutznick opposed "Israeldoltry." As a former World Jewish Congress president, former Chairman of the Presidents Conference and Cabinet member in the Carter Administration, Klutznick was one of the first mainstream Jewish leaders to work actively at bringing the PLO into the diplomatic process.

The unremitting media attention Israel received after the Six Day War and especially after the 1973 Yom Kippur War helped catapult the chairmen of the Presidents Conference into the domestic and international political spotlight.²⁸

Internal Opposition

The Presidents Conference is both an actor and a venue. Within the Presidents Conference the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress and National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council comprised the hub of the internal opposition. This vanguard force led the opposition to Likud policies from within the establishment, sought to separate support for Israel from support for Israeli security policies in the Administered areas

²⁷ Born in Missouri in 1907, Klutznick started his career as a lawyer and community planner. Later, he became chairman of American Community Builders based in the suburbs of Chicago. Klutznick held various governmental posts as well as prestigious positions in Jewish communal affairs. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 10, p. 1111. The wealthy Klutznick had just taken over as President of B'nai B'rith when Goldmann broached the subject of creating an umbrella organization. Klutznick was receptive so long as the "majority rule" mistake of the American Jewish Conference was not repeated. Klutznick's political fortunes inside and outside the Jewish community would continue to rise.

²⁸ A list of the individuals who held the position of chairman appears in the appendix. The first and only female head of the organization was Shoshana Cardin who served between 1990-1992.

("disassociation") and strongly supported the Labor opposition.

The major branches of Judaism are represented in the Presidents Conference.²⁹ The Reform movement is the most politically engaged and organized. It is also the largest branch of Judaism in the United States. In the metropolitan New York area, one-third of adult Jews identify themselves as Reform.³⁰ The Reform movement is represented at the Presidents Conference by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations of America (UAHC) headed by Rabbi Alexander Schindler (and until his recent retirement by Schindler's number-two Albert Vorspan). Under their leadership, the UAHC has been a pillar of the internal opposition. Schindler is one of the most influential Jewish establishment figures in the country and has served as a chairman of the President's Conference.

The premiere Jewish establishment organization is the American Jewish Committee. In the pantheon of Jewish establishment groups, the AJCommittee together with the AJCongress and the Anti-Defamation League comprise a "prestige three." Both AJC's were a driving force in opposition to Israeli policies.

²⁹ Briefly, and simplistically, for purposes of background, Orthodoxy supports unmodified tradition, "it is here that the Jewish past finds its contemporary embodiment." The Conservative movement represents "right wing modernism." Reform embodies left modernism. These descriptions come from Milton Steinberg's *Basic Judaism*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1947).

Reform's UAHC's has repeatedly come under criticism for its political leanings under Schindler and Vorspan. See for example: "UAHC is Assailed on Joining March," *The NY Jewish Week*, August 12, 1983.

There are also other smaller theological movements one of which, Reconstructionism, is worth singling out because several of its leaders (e.g. Howard Squadron and Ira Silverman) played a role in the US-PLO issue. Reconstructionism views Judaism, not as an otherworldly concept with a supernatural God, but as a broad civilization which gives meaning to Jewish peoplehood. Graduates of the small Reconstructionist college have assumed important professional positions in Jewish community work. Politically, they tend to embrace left-liberal causes (nuclear freeze during the late 1980's, etc.) For general information about Reconstructionist theology see Howard M. Sacher, *A History of the Jews in America*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), pp.703-705

³⁰ *New York Jewish Week*, October 22, 1993

Like much of the internal opposition, with the exception of the Reform movement, the AJCommittee wields power disproportionate to its membership numbers.³¹ The late Prime Minister of Israel David Ben Gurion once asked Morris Abram, then-AJCommittee president, how many members the organization had. Abram responded: "We don't count AJC members, Mr. Prime Minister, we weigh them."³² In fact, the AJCommittee was not formally a member of the Presidents Conference until March 1991. The AJCommittee had held official observer status since 1968.³³

Established in New York by affluent acculturated "uptown" German Jews in 1906 in reaction to the bloody Kishinev (Russia) pogroms, the AJC sought, out of a sense of *noblesse oblige*, to protect their Jewish co-religionists abroad. AJCommittee leaders, including Jacob Schiff, Mayer Sulzberger and Louis Marshall, discretely sought U.S. diplomatic intervention with foreign rulers, "to prevent the infraction of the civil and religious rights of Jews, in any part of the world."³⁴

Prior to 1948 the AJCommittee was the leading non-Zionist (often anti-Zionist) Jewish organization. Its leaders viewed Judaism as a religious or cultural movement and opposed the idea of "Diaspora nationalism." If Jews pursued an identity as a distinct people what would become of their status in a pluralistic United States, the group's leaders worried. Nevertheless, the Committee endorsed the Balfour Declaration in 1917. In 1942, however, it

³¹ AJCommittee claims 50,000 members (see JTA Community News Reporter March 22, 1991). However, it is not, strictly speaking a membership organization. Actual power within the organization is wielded by a board of wealthy directors.

³² Henry L. Feingold, "A Jewish Survival Enigma. The Strange Case of the American Jewish Committee," AJC booklet, May 1981 cited in O'Brien, op. cit.

³³ JTA Community News Reporter, March 22, 1991. The group claims a membership of 50,000. In announcing that it would become the 47th group to join, its President Sholom Comay said, the decision "in no way compromises the agency's ability to speak out clearly and independently." In fact, on Israel related issues, the AJCommittee's agenda is virtually indistinguishable from most other establishment groups.

³⁴ *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 2 p 822. Kishinev later became the capital of the Moldavian SSR. Major pogroms occurred there during Czarist times in 1903 and 1905.

opposed the Biltmore Program. In response to the problem of displaced European Jewish survivors of WWII, the AJCommittee somewhat hesitatingly supported the creation of Israel. The AJCommittee did not make Israel's survival a key agenda item until after the 1967 war. Much of their public work had been dominated by domestic concerns such as Negro civil rights. These days, AJCommittee activities include: monitoring public attitudes toward Israel; promoting US-Israel relations; sponsoring professional polling of U.S. public opinion (some of which is never made public); holding private as well as public meetings with key policy makers; maintaining important contacts with labor, ethnic, Christian and African American communities; and developing "think-tank" reports on issues of concern to American Jews and the pro-Israel community. The group has carved a special niche for itself (largely through the path-breaking work of the late Rabbi Marc Tennenbaum) in Christian-Jewish relations. In order to get a sense of the political pulse inside the Beltway, the group maintains an office in Washington, D.C. (until recently headed by Hyman "Bookie" Bookbinder). It also maintains offices in key international cities as well as in Jerusalem.³⁵

The AJCommittee raises funds through direct fund raising from wealthy patrons, endowments, bequests, legacies, and, as a beneficiary of UJA/Federation. It maintains a wide range of activities in support of a progressive-liberal domestic agenda.

The most audacious of the internal opposition groups is the American Jewish Congress. Originally started as an anti-elitist and Zionist alternative to the AJCommittee, the AJCongress was formed in 1918 by prominent Zionists including Louis D. Brandeis and Stephen Wise. Their intent was the create an

³⁵ The AJCommittee is also behind the publication of the neo-conservative *Commentary* magazine. However, under the editorship of Norman Podhoretz, *Commentary* has evolved an editorial orientation toward Israel that is decidedly to the right of the AJCommittee. Not surprisingly, the AJCommittee no longer funds *Commentary*.

ad hoc umbrella organization to represent Jewish interests at the Peace Conference in Versailles. In 1928 the AJCongress reconstituted itself as an independent membership organization. During the 1930's, when the AJCommittee favored quiet diplomacy the AJCongress under Rabbi Wise sponsored a mass rally in Madison Square Garden against Nazi Germany.³⁶

After the war the AJCongress pursued a liberal-progressive domestic agenda and, like the AJCommittee, became active in the civil rights movement.³⁷ The AJCongress was also an early opponent of the war in Vietnam. It did establish a special niche for itself in the 1960's, within the Jewish community, by opposing the Arab economic boycott of Israel. Since the 1970's the Congress and the Committee have been so indistinguishable that they episodically consider merging. Personality rather than policy differences have kept this from happening.³⁸ These days, the AJCongress says it "works to foster the creative cultural survival of the Jewish people; to help Israel develop in peace, freedom and security; to eliminate all forms of racial and religious bigotry to advance civil rights, protect civil liberties, defend religious freedom and safeguard the separation of Church and State."³⁹

Smallest of the three prestige organizations, the AJCongress raises much of its funds through wealthy patrons and and from UJA/Federation allotments. A significant portion of its "membership" is comprised of individuals who have participated in AJCongress sponsored tours (long strapped for funds, tours have been an important money source). Real decision-making power is concentrated in the hands of its President Robert

³⁶ Public agitation on behalf of Europe's Jews was largely suspended during the war. Along with the entire Jewish establishment, Wise in particular has been criticized for his role during the destruction of European Jewry. See Arthur D. Morse, *While Six Million Died*, (New York: Ace Publishing, 1968).

³⁷ See *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 2p 825

³⁸ *Forward*, March 5, 1993

³⁹ *American Jewish Year Book*, 1990, p. 536

Lifton, a lawyer-financier, and the group's top professional, Henry Siegman.⁴⁰

Lastly, internal opposition pressure at the Presidents Conference came from the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council (NJCRAC pronounced "nat-rack"). An umbrella group, rather than a program group, NJCRAC was founded in 1944 to loosely coordinate 102 community relations councils (local umbrella groups). It also includes eleven national organizations whose emphasis is, supposedly, community relations.⁴¹ NJCRAC members include the AJCongress, AJCommittee, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, and Hadassah. The bulk of NJCRAC organizations are community councils. The New York Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) is a member of NJCRAC. The JCRC is itself comprised of over 70 local New York City organizations. NJCRAC seeks to avoid duplication of communal efforts. But in practical terms it has no enforcement power.

NJCRAC devotes a significant portion of its energies to coordinating pro-Israel work among its constituent agencies. At its annual conference attended by American Jewish communal leaders and important Israeli political figures, NJCRAC issues the annual Joint Program Plan on Israel.⁴² Under the leadership of Ted Mann, who has served as Chairman of the Presidents Conference, NJCRAC helped redefine pro-Israelism. Mann has been a vigorous spokesman for internal opposition policies.

With incumbency the chairman of the Presidents Conference is expected to project an image of judicious non-partisanship. Even outright

⁴⁰ *New York Jewish Week*, September 4, 1992. Both retired in April 1994. See JTA, April 12, 1994.

⁴¹ Edward Bernard Glick, *The Triangular Connection: America, Israel and American Jews*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), p.96

⁴² O'Brien, op. cit.

**US-PLO Dialogue
Guide to American Jewish Political Spectrum**

American Council of Judaism & Satmer (Neturei Karta)

•Share opposition to existence of Jewish State; ACOJ (now largely defunct) on grounds that Judaism is not a nationality. In the case of the ultra-Orthodox hereditim of Satmer/Neturei Karta, on grounds that only the Messiah can re-establish Jewish sovereignty in the form of a theocracy. Neturei Karta maintains ties with the PLO.

Peace Camp

•Share progressive politics; supports both Arab and Jewish State in Western Palestine (Judea & Samaria). Ties to PLO.

Outside Elite

•Share Establishment politics; support Palestinian-Arab state alongside Israel in Judea and Samaria. Ties to PLO

Orthodox Independent (Agudath Israel)

•Non-Zionist; politically and socially conservative; occasional voice against US-PLO dialogue.

Zionist Right

•National Camp - plays vanguard role in opposing drift in American Jewish support for Israel; favors Jewish sovereignty over all of Western Eretz Israel

Inside Arc

Presidents Conference

•The "establishment" or "mainstream." Includes most national Jewish groups. Tends to be functionally oriented and apolitical on issues dividing community. Several (AIPAC, ADL and ZOA) held the "middle ground" in wanting the Presidents Conference to support the Israeli government and "let Israelis decide" security issues.

Internal Opposition

•Vanguard force within Presidents Conference. Leads opposition to Likud policies and promotes disassociation. Works with Israeli Labor Opposition.

opponents of Likud policies such as Ted Mann did not use the office to publicly champion Labor over Likud.⁴³ So, by etiquette and tradition it devolved to the Chairman to hold the internal opposition in check and to uphold the standards established by his predecessors.

The political spectrum within the Presidents Conference is far too complex to delineate in terms of "left" and "right." In the context of the US-PLO dialogue, the internal opposition was held in check by the restraining influence of the chairman and political pressure from centrist organizations. The bulk of constituent members were not actively engaged in the the issue (one way or the other) and moved from the periphery only episodically or not at all.⁴⁴ The two organizations that held the center were AIPAC and ADL.

During much of the period under study, AIPAC's leadership came to be accused of adopting the Likud foreign policy line. AIPAC was also charged with favoring Republican candidates over its traditional liberal Democratic friends. These criticisms are simplistic and miss the point. AIPAC takes a purely pragmatic approach to pro-Israel work. Its leadership aspires to do what is best for US-Israel relations at a given time.⁴⁵ And AIPAC tends to

⁴³ Mann waited several days after leaving the chairmanship before calling a news conference to criticize Likud policies.

⁴⁴ This is true for a variety of reasons. Some groups strive to remain apolitical because of their philanthropic roles. In other instances inactivity resulted from internal divisions within the constituent agency. Some groups which did have a point of view carried little weight because they were viewed as organizationally (and therefore financially) unsubstantial.

⁴⁵ For AIPAC's origins and early history see I. L. Kenen, *Israel's Defense Line: Her Friends and Foes in Washington*, (Buffalo, New York: 1981); For a critical assessment of its work in the 1980's see Edward Tivnan, *The Lobby: Jewish Political Power and American Foreign Policy*, (New York: Simon & Schuster/Touchtone, 1988). Political changes in Israel and the United States led to a change in AIPAC's orientation and leadership. In 1993, AIPAC's selected a new president, Lawrence Grossman, who has strong ties with the liberal wing of the Democratic party and had been a supporter of Peace Now.

reflect the prevailing political line Israel is taking.⁴⁶

While legions of Jewish and Zionist organizations are politically active, most of them are too small, unprofessional, underfunded or spread too thin to influence policy. Of those that are taken seriously, few have the standing, professionalism, clout and prestige of the America-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). AIPAC is registered as an American, not a foreign lobby.⁴⁷ AIPAC is best known for lobbying on Capitol Hill. But it also now works at the state, local, and even precinct level. As Mitchell Bard points out, AIPAC is a "formal" lobby because it seeks to directly influence policy makers. "In addition," Bard writes, "there is a large component of Jewish political influence that is unorganized--Jewish voting behavior and public opinion. These indirect means of influence may be designated the informal lobby."⁴⁸

Founded in 1959, AIPAC was built through the indefatigable efforts of the late Si Kenen. Today, AIPAC's well-attended Annual Policy Conferences bring together a vast array of political activists, Israeli politicians, Washington insiders and those who want to be seen in their presence. AIPAC strives to closely coordinate its activities with other establishment groups. Formally, AIPAC is a member of the President's Conference and the Presidents Conference is a member of the AIPAC Executive Board. As AIPAC's Executive Director, Tom Dine consulted frequently, often speaking by telephone several times a day, with Malcolm Hoenlein at the

⁴⁶ AIPAC's current President is businessman Steve Grossman, a liberal Democrat, who had close ties with Peace Now. The AIPAC line on the Rabin-Arafat accord of September 1993 is identical to the Israeli Government position.

⁴⁷ Hendrick Smith, *The Power Game. How Washington Works*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1989), see pages 218-229 in particular.

⁴⁸ Mitchell Bard, "The Influence of Ethnic Interest Groups on American Middle East Policy," in Kegley & Wittkopf, op. cit. p. 58. AIPAC is not, incidentally, a political action committee. It wields indirect financial clout because its leaders often sit on various pro-Israel PACS and/or because AIPAC data is used by pro-Israel PACS. See *Washington Post*, November 14, 1988 and *Wall Street Journal*, August 3, 1983

Presidents Conference.⁴⁹

Alongside AIPAC, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith held the political center within the Presidents Conference on the US-PLO dialogue issue. ADL was founded in 1913 as an arm of B'nai B'rith. The parent group had been established in 1843 on the Lower East Side of New York. Unlike the AJCommittee, B'nai B'rith is staunchly pro-Zionist and established its first chapter in Jerusalem in 1888.

ADL is primarily concerned with domestic sources of racism and Jew-hatred. Unlike the AJC's, ADL has consistently and actively (outside critics charge too energetically) invested its resources in "fact-finding" -- original research and investigation of racist, Jew-hating and, more recently, anti-Zionist groups. It did not become active in pro-Israel political activities until after the 1967 war. Since then, the ADL has sought to establish a strong link between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. It has issued reports on the radical left, radical right, Arab propaganda in the United States and on the well-spring of Jew-hatred among certain African American groups.

ADL is led by Abraham Foxman, a survivor of Hitler's war against the Jews of Europe. ADL pursues a "centrist" line along the Jewish political

⁴⁹ Dine is often described as the consummate Washington insider. He has always been, what journalist Michael Kelly calls, "Gergenized," so that image is always more important than a systematic and cohesive framework for approaching politics. Kelly explains: "The career of David Gergen represents the triumph of image. The character of David Gergen represents the apotheosis of the insider. The two are rolled up in him together, in a shining, seamless roundness whose mirrored surface reveals nothing but the political scene rolling by. In himself, Gergen has conflated all the old distinctions." (*New York Times Magazine*, October 31, 1993) Much the same can be said for Dine who could be thought by some to be a Likud fellow traveler and described by Hauser as someone that with a wink and a nod encouraged her to pursue ICPME's efforts to get Arafat to say the magic words. Dine left AIPAC under a cloud in 1993, ostensibly because of unflattering remarks he made about Orthodox Jews in the book *Piety & Power: The World of Jewish Fundamentalism* by David Landau (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), pp. 24-25. The current AIPAC director is Neil Sher. Dine now works for the U.S. Agency for International Development. For his part, Hoenlein has largely managed to stay out of the secular media's limelight. Inside the Jewish community he is widely respected as someone who maintains good contacts with various elements in the community. Perhaps because he is an observant Orthodox Jew, Hoenlein had been accused of having held pro-Likud tendencies.

spectrum. This means that ADL consistently, regardless of changing circumstances, opposes American Jewish criticism of Israeli policies (from either direction). Rael Isaac, of Americans For A Safe Israel, asserts, that after taking over from Nathan Perlmutter, Foxman re-directed ADL policy leftward: "The Permuter ADL and the Foxman one are very different organizations."⁵⁰ In recent years ADL's domestic niche has been challenged by the California-based Simon Wiesenthal Center. Still, Foxman successfully staked out a claim for ADL as the most vocal establishment critic of Black anti-Semitism. The group's funds come from direct mail solicitations, support from wealthy patrons and allocations from the CJF's Large City Budgeting Conference (described below).⁵¹

Money

All establishment groups cultivate relationships with wealthy benefactors. For obvious reasons they target most of their "development" efforts on big givers. Nevertheless, the business and culture of philanthropy permeates all organized Jewish life. This dominion is managed, in almost 200 American cities, by local Federations. Beneficiaries of Federation money agree not to further fund raise without Federation approval. The local federations are tied to the Council of Jewish Federations (CJF), an umbrella group, founded in 1932, through the Large Cities Budgeting Conference (LCBC).⁵² CJF does not actually raise money but coordinates how local

⁵⁰ Correspondence from Professor Isaac, March 29, 1994.

⁵¹ Information on the CJF is drawn from O'Brien, p. 96 and *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 4 p1143-1150. For more on the funding and tasks of the prestige three see, "U.S. Jewish Organizations Take on Specific Tasks," *NY Jewish Week*, March 18, 1983. In the liberal belief that public exposure can kill the virus of anti-Semitism, ADL took out full page newspaper advertisements to spotlight Black Muslim Jew-hatred (*New York Times*, January 16, 1994). However, as hatred of Jews has metastasized throughout much of the African-American body-politic, the ADL has itself become the focus of black counter-elites and demagogues. See, *Forward*, April 2, 1994.

⁵² Maslow, p. 20. A reassessment of the overall philanthropic mechanism of CJF allocations began in early 1994. See for example, *JTA*, March 21, 1994

federations spend it. In addition, CJF tries to provide national support and coordination (administrative, human resources and planning) to local welfare and community centers (which raise their funds locally). Reflecting the interlocking directorate that is the Jewish establishment, CJF leaders sit on the board of United Jewish Appeal / Federation of Jewish Philanthropies Joint Campaign. They participate in the allotment of financial resources raised by the Jewish community. As Maslow explains: "As coordinator of the local Jewish federations and their affiliates, CJF acts as the overall budgetary, planning, allocating, and supervisory body of the organized American Jewish community."⁵³

CJF trustees work closely with United Jewish Appeal (UJA), United Israel Appeal (UIA) and the Joint Distribution Committee (the Joint or JDC) in making recommendations to the Jewish Agency. The bulk of all Federation allocations for Israel are allocated via the Jewish Agency.⁵⁴ Here too, an interlocking directorate serves both the CJF and the Jewish Agency.⁵⁵

Through the CJF-Large City Budgeting Conference dollars are also funneled to national groups including the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith, American Jewish Committee and American Jewish Congress. Power is diffuse within the Jewish community. But certainly the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds Annual Assembly brings together a multitude of Jewish establishment power brokers under one roof. The late

⁵³ O'Brien, op. cit., p. 57

⁵⁴ The World Zionist Organization (WZO) is a NGO created in Article 4 of the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine. The WZO was charged with establishing an "agency" to represent Jews (Zionist and non-Zionist) who wanted to help build the Jewish homeland. In the 1950's the Jewish Agency-American Section was created. And, in 1971 the Jewish Agency was further reorganized to give Diaspora Jewry a greater say in how funds were allocated as well as to protect the tax-exempt status of the UJA. Henceforth, the 50% of Diaspora representation was appointed by the UIA. For its part, the WZO-American Section is charged with promoting aliya (immigration) to Israel and the functions of the Jewish National Fund (JNF) in Israel. See O'Brien, p19-23

⁵⁵ The relationship between the Israel and Diaspora based Zionists and the American fund-raisers is complicated by disputes over who has policy primacy. See for example, *JTA Daily News Bulletin*, February 23, 1993

Wolf Kelman explained that these meetings:

...become the venue for the three thousand or more representatives of the Jewish communities gathered to meet one another, to hear various reports, and to recruit personnel, and generally comes closest to serving as a Jewish "parliament" without any legislative authority, in the organized North American Jewish community. Its Large City Budgeting Conference makes recommendations about how much each federation should give to a particular national agency which depends on the federation for their support. Its primary purpose is as a manifestation of Jewish solidarity and concern.⁵⁶

By the mid-1980's, this quintessential Jewish establishment body, under pressure from the internal opposition, began to debate (but did not approve) political resolutions calling for a freeze in Jewish settlement of the Administered Territories.

Money for Israel

The American Jewish philanthropic relationship with the Jews of Palestine dates back to the colonial period.⁵⁷ These days, the "official" building money transferred directly to Israel is raised by the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) (in conjunction with the various Federations). The United Israel Appeal (UIA) then serves as a conduit channeling UJA funds to Israel.

Beyond raising money for Israel through donations to the United Jewish Appeal, the American Jewish community lends money to Israel through the Israel Bond Organization. Additionally, many Israeli charitable institutions (hospitals, religious schools, orphanages, Israel's version of the Red Cross and USO, etc.) raise funds independently in the United States.

⁵⁶ Wolf Kelman, *Encyclopaedia Judaica Year Book 1986-87*, p. 109

⁵⁷ Marshall Sklare, *American Jews*, p. 212. There has virtually always been a Jewish presence in Palestine. For more on the background and history of Jewish philanthropy see Abraham J. Karp, *To Give Life; The UJA in the Shaping of the American Jewish Community*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1981).

The Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) or “Joint” is one of the oldest organizations dedicated to “rescue, relief and rehabilitation of distressed Jews abroad.” Established in 1914 in an attempt to unify Jewish self-help efforts on behalf of the Jewish communities of Europe, the JDC is today a beneficiary of UJA funds.

After the First World War there were divisions within the community over the allocation of dollars for the Yishuv (Palestinian Jewry). The Zionist minority broke away to create, in 1925, the United Palestine Appeal. Later, to bridge the Zionist/ Non-Zionist gap, in 1929, Chaim Weitzman invited the non-Zionist U.S. Jewish leadership to serve on the Jewish Agency board. However, financial support for the Palestinian Jewish community was hard to come by.

In 1937, the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Board brought the Joint and the Jewish Agency together so that fund raising could be better coordinated. As the threat Hitler posed to Jewish survival in Europe became apparent, by 1939, the Joint, United Palestine Appeal and the National Coordinating Committee Fund joined forces to create the United Jewish Appeal for Refugee and Overseas Needs (UJA).

Eventually, the local federation system was put in-place. That system is today comprised of UJA, UIA, JDC (“Joint”) and the Jewish National Fund (JNF). JNF funds are spent for afforestation, land reclamation and development in Israel.⁵⁸ Once the Jewish Agency outlines its budgetary needs, the UJA raises the funds with the support of the CJF. The UJA conducts its fund raising activity jointly with the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies.

⁵⁸ While money is fungible, one of the ways the internal opposition has resisted Israeli control over the West Bank is by withholding funds from projects over the “green line.” JNF and UJA will not spend dollars on the West Bank and Gaza. See, *Washington Post*, July 2, 1988.

Afterwards, as O'Brien summarizes:

The UJA hands over about 80 percent of that amount to the UIA, which in turn moves that money...to the Jewish Agency for allocation to Israel. Of the remaining part of the UJA's share, 10 to 12 percent is allocated to the JDC and about 3 percent to the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) and the New York Association for New Americans (NYANA)...the JDC spends about 32 percent in Israel...On the average, therefore, about half of the total funds raised by the UJA-Federation joint... campaign goes to Israel.⁵⁹

"...The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime."⁶⁰

In November 1982, a group of Orthodox rabbis constituted themselves as a Beth Din (supreme rabbinical court) and excommunicated Noam Chomsky, all members of the New Jewish Agenda, which favored a US-PLO dialogue, and others who had signed an anti-Israel advertisement in *The New York Times* earlier in the year.⁶¹ A month after the Rabin-Arafat accord of September 1993, another group of Orthodox rabbis led by the revered Rabbi Aaron Soloveitchik traveled to Jerusalem to personally tell Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin that they opposed the Labor Government's deal with the PLO.⁶² These events are noteworthy because they are atypical. Those Orthodox Jews who favored Jewish sovereignty over *Eretz* Israel did precious little, in the period under study, to politically advance their position. Their organizations

⁵⁹ O'Brien, op. cit., p. 115

⁶⁰ "The dog did nothing in the nighttime."

"That was the curious incident," remarked Sherlock Holmes. *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* [1894]. *Silver Blaze* (by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle).

⁶¹ *New York Times*, November 26, 1982

⁶² JTA, October 6, 1993

entered into the fray only ineptly and episodically.⁶³

The Orthodox branch of Judaism is the least organized and most fragmented.⁶⁴ It is "represented" by a number of groups, most prominently Agudath Israel (which is not a Presidents Conference member by choice) and the more "modern Orthodox" Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America (popularly known as the "OU") and the National Council of Young Israel (NCYI). Julius Berman of the OU served as chairman of the Presidents Conference during the Lebanon war.⁶⁵ Though one might have expected otherwise, none of these groups played a consequential role in the US-PLO dialogue issue.

⁶³ A significant portion of Orthodox Jewry (including some followers of *Chasidism* and some of those who consider themselves opponents of *Chasidism*, or *Mitnagdim*) are non Zionist. Like the militant anti-Zionist Chasidim of the Satmar dynasty, many Orthodox Jews oppose a secular democratic state brought about via temporal means. Satmar Grand Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum taught that until the "Jewish people repented and followed all the laws of the Torah, actual redemption would be delayed, and the Messiah would not come. Only the Messiah could redeem and create a Jewish state." Yale Strom, *The Hasidim of Brooklyn*, (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson publishers, 1992), p. 21. On the other hand, Lubavitch Chasidim based in Crown Heights, Brooklyn are staunch religious Zionists seeing the re-establishment of Israel in 1948 as a stepping stone to the final redemption of the Jewish diaspora.

⁶⁴ As with all generalizations a word of caution is in order. Orthodox Jews are theologically heterogeneous within the parameters of *Halacha* or Torah derived Jewish law. There is no Chief rabbi of Orthodox Jews. Many Orthodox synagogues are free standing. Politically, Orthodox Jews tend to mobilize at the local level since most of them are concentrated in urban centers. Politically and socially they tend to hold conservative views.

⁶⁵ The O.U. and NCYI have sought, episodically, to play a political role. Their efforts have been hampered by lack of leadership and resources. In 1990, the O.U. established an Institute for Public Affairs and hired an ex-AJC staffer to head it. The IPA was intended to give it the O.U. political presence. In the two years he was with them, William E. Rapfogel did help put the O.U. back on the map politically. Rapfogel left in the O.U. two years later. His replacement is, Betty Ehrenberg, a former aide to the Labor appointed former Israeli General Counsel in New York (Uri Savir, now director general of the Foreign Ministry under Peres). Ehrenberg's speciality is, nevertheless, domestic affairs. At least one member of the OU leadership is uncharacteristically dovish. The OU leadership became more vocally critical of Israeli policies after the Rabin-Arafat accord of 1993. The Young Israel movement has been less successful in articulating a political stance, perhaps because many of its best and brightest have emigrated to Israel. Both groups tend to be moderate/centrist on the Jewish political spectrum. Perhaps the most savvy of orthodox political groups, Agudah Israel, (right-wing orthodox) concerns itself with mostly with domestic issues and obtaining government aid for its projects.

Of the three main branches of Judaism the Conservatives are the most theologically comfortable with Zionism. Nevertheless, Conservative Jews tend to be political liberal. Institutionally, the Conservative branch avoided the kind of critical activism undertaken by the more progressive Reform Jewry, and entered the political fray to criticize Israeli policies relatively late in the game. Conservative synagogues are linked nationwide by United Synagogue of America. In a private capacity, Conservative leaders, like Rabbi Wolf Kelman, were active in the internal opposition and most Conservative rabbis (with a few notable exceptions) ordained by the Jewish Theological Seminary tend to be supportive of the Israeli left.

The American Jewish Right

The Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), organized in 1897, consistently opposed the internal opposition. Of the major "establishment" groups with a political orientation, it was the most naturally sympathetic to the Likud policies. Although a Presidents Conference member, ZOA could not muster the influence, clout or leadership to seriously challenge the direction of the more prestigious and powerful groups.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ While many of the groups mentioned in this study suffered financial problems, ZOA was perhaps among the worst off. Its financial situation combined with ideological ambivalence (its top professional Paul Flacks was considerably to the right of the lay leadership) kept it from having much influence on the US-PLO dialogue issue. One drain on its resources was a civil suit filed against it as a result of an accident in a ZOA sponsored camp. ZOA has borrowed a great deal of money against its largest asset, a building on East 34th Street in Manhattan. Politically, ZOA--while to the right of the AJC's for example--traces its ideological roots to the General Zionists of Chaim Weitzman. Though never wholly comfortable on the Jewish right, there was talk of a merger with Likud USA prompted by financial considerations. This talk received impetus after Likud became a tenant in the ZOA building. With the change in Israeli government in 1992, the ZOA leadership began a gradual shift away from the center-right. However, after the Rabin-Arafat pact of September 1993, (in a campaign spearheaded by Dr. Ernest Bloch of Pro-Israel which he formed in 1992) grass roots ZOA members successfully mobilized to "take back" the organization. In December 1993, its membership elected Mort Klein president. Klein had led the futile battle to keep Peace Now out of the Presidents Conference. It was admitted in the summer of 1992.

The central address of the Jewish right during much of the period under study was outside the Jewish organizational "establishment." Americans For A Safe Israel (AFSI) played the gadfly role in strenuously objecting to a redefinition of the Arab-Israel conflict along non zero-sum terms. AFSI, which was formed in 1971, opposes "land for peace," favors "peace for peace," and frontally challenges the idea that the conflict has shifted to a non-zero sum struggle. It strongly supports the formal incorporation into Israel proper of the lands captured in June 1967. AFSI's overall scant influence is attributable to several factors including: operating in a media-hostile environment, lack of resources and an almost Leninist refusal to allow internal democracy or organizational cooperation with ideologically compatible groups.⁶⁷ Politically, AFSI aligns itself with the Israeli settlement movement.⁶⁸

Originally begun as a "think tank" AFSI went through several organizational incarnations and claimed a mid-1980's membership of 6,000 in 12 chapters across the United States.⁶⁹ As a media monitor, AFSI successfully

⁶⁷ AFSI is tightly controlled by businessman Herb Zweibon who has real estate interests in the United States and Israel. Its policy is developed by Zweibon, AFSI founder Professor Rael Issac, and Ruth King, a Manhattanite with ties to the Neo-Conservative salon. Funding comes from the Mattus Foundation, Dr. Irving Moskowitz of Miami and a few other wealthy patrons (Zweibon has given countless hours of his own time and money to the cause). The impetus for AFSI's creation came from Shmuel Katz, a longtime compatriot of Menachem Begin. See too, *JTA* June 16, 1971. Rael Isaac asserts that it is unfair to characterize AFSI as having been unwilling to take part in a united front of the American Jewish right. Zweibon, she says, "finds them (other groups) reluctant because we are too 'hardline' for them insofar as image is concerned and they are afraid the connection to us will hurt them." *Correspondence from Professor Isaac*, March 29, 1994.

⁶⁸ AFSI was closely associated with Yuval Neeman and the Israeli Techiya party. Techiya's U.S. representative, Michael Teplow, sat on the AFSI's Executive Board. Teplow moved to Israel and Techiya was wiped out in the 1992 elections. The subsequent US Techiya representative (the US party came to be called Tsomet-Techiya) was Jonathan S. Tobin. During his tenure as head of Tsomet-Techiya, Tobin did sit briefly on AFSI's board but was eventually ousted when he co-founded the Coalition for Israel in 1989. This is not to say that AFSI takes its marching orders from the Israeli right. It does not. Zweibon indignantly rejects political advice from Israeli settlement leaders. Confidential interview, October 15, 1991. See too: Robert I. Friedman, *Zealots for Zion*, (New York: Random House, 1992), p. 76-77

⁶⁹ *Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1986-87 Year Book*, p. 409

impugned U.S. media coverage of the 1982 Lebanon War (among other things). Under Zweibon's leadership, AFSI has steadfastly refused to bill itself as a Jewish group, preferring to project a more broad-based image. Zweibon pledged that AFSI would never apply for Presidents Conference membership. This made it impossible for the Jewish Right to directly ameliorate Presidents Conference policies from within. AFSI has frequently skirmished with the establishment over the vitality of their pro-Israel commitment.

In the role of gadfly, AFSI successfully challenged the legitimacy of peace camp critics of Israeli policies. Zweibon and Isaac led the attack against Breira, the New Jewish Agenda (which Zweibon labels "the old Arab agenda"), the World Jewish Congress as well as elements of the internal opposition.⁷⁰ Its expose` of Breira, in particular, embarrassed the Jewish establishment into breaking ties with the group.

Who Runs the Jewish Establishment?

To place the emergence of the internal opposition as well as outside counter elite, in connection with the US-PLO dialogue issue, into an overall context a succinct sketch of the sociology of Jewish leadership is useful.⁷¹

The mantle of Jewish leadership has its enticements: to be quoted in a newspaper article; participate in a high level delegation being briefed by the Secretary of State; share the same dinner table with the Prime Minister of Israel; and for the select few, receive a White House invitation.

⁷⁰ See Lee O'Brien, *American Jewish Organizations and Israel*, p.253-255op. cit.

⁷¹ The sociology of people who make their living in professional Jewish community work is extensive. For some general background about their beliefs see, Jonathan S. Woocher, "The 'Civil Judaism' of Communal Leaders," *American Jewish Year Book*, 1981

None of this is lost on government policy makers. As Hendrick Smith explained in a less parochial connection, politics is about access:

To politicians, lobbyists, lawyers, journalists, staff aides, and high-level policy makers, access is bread and butter. There is always another circle of power to penetrate; access is the open door, the answered phone call, a couple of minutes with a key player in a corridor or committee room...But access in the power game is not merely physical; it is mental, too. It is not only entry to the inner sanctum; it is being in the power loop--being chosen to receive the most sensitive information, as fresh grist for the policy struggle. Being 'cut out' on information, or being 'blindsided' as the power lingo has it, can be crippling."⁷²

The domestic political context of the US-PLO issue was manipulated by Administration officials. Access was granted or withheld as circumstances warranted. Leadership elements who supported the Administration's approach were brought into the political loop and those opposed often temporarily excluded.

"American Jewry today lacks not only charismatic leadership but even leaders who are well-known to rank-and-file Jews," Will Maslow wrote perceptively some twenty years ago.⁷³ Jewish leaders are an amorphous group. Many are wealthy lay people who are benefactors to their respective organizations. ⁷⁴ Some are "freelancers"-- politicians, academics, intellectuals, entrepreneurs and even entertainment personalities with little in the way of an organizational base. As Wolf Kelman points out: "The last 20 years have seen an astronomical growth in individuals, now numbering thousands, who have direct access to the local and national power establishment and the

⁷² Hendrick Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 71

⁷³ Maslow, *The Structure and Functioning of the American Jewish Community*, *op. cit.* p.37. For an updated confirmation of this fact see "Our Man in the Street: 'Take Me to a Leader'" *Forward*, August 21, 1992. The *Forward* article notes: "Many of the people the press labels 'Jewish leaders' --like Mr. (Malcolm) Hoenlein and Mr. (Abraham) Foxman, national director of ADL-- are professional staffers appointed by the board of their organizations to formulate policy and run day-to-day affairs..."

⁷⁴ Maslow, p. 37

community no longer needs to depend on a handful of *shtadlanim*.⁷⁵ In this world, people of wealth can become people of influence and people of influence can become people of communal prominence.⁷⁶

The second tier of influence is comprised of salaried managers. Because the first tier tends to be made up of very busy professional and business people, the second tier wields significant influence on the political direction of the community. Their futures may well depend on securing a client-patron relationship. Fewer than two dozen establishment professionals actually dominate Jewish policymaking.⁷⁷ In a sense, they maintain a sort of permanent dominion over the Jewish polity. Maslow describes what it means to be part of this class: "In some organizations he shares the spotlight with the elected president. In some respect, the leading American Jewish professionals are like the top permanent civil servants in Great Britain who continue functioning despite changes in administration. But British civil servants are unknown to the general public. American Jewish civil servants make speeches, publish articles, appear on radio and TV and serve (along with their lay leaders) as spokesmen for their agencies."⁷⁸

The inter-locking directorate mentioned earlier is another phenomenon of Jewish organizational life. Lay-leaders seem to move laterally from one group to another.⁷⁹ Wolf Kelman notes: "There is an

⁷⁵ Kelman, *Encyclopaedia Judaica 1986-87 Yearbook*, p 107

⁷⁶ In this sense Jewish leadership is no different from general positions of leadership in the U.S. political system. See for example, Thomas R. Dye, *Who's Running America? Institutional Leadership in the United States*, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J. : Prentice Hall, 1976). A 1990 edition updates the original work.

⁷⁷ I do not want to belabor the elite argument as it relates to any of the Jewish leaders. As C. Wright Mills spelled out: "It is not my thesis that for all epochs of human history and in all nations, a creative minority, a ruling class, an omnipotent elite, shape all historical events. Such statements, upon careful examination, usually turn out to be mere tautologies...no matter how we might define the elite, the extent of its members' power is subject to historical variation...During most of human history, historical change has not been visible to the people who were involved in it, or even to those enacting it." See *The Power Elite*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p20-21.

⁷⁸ Malsow, op.cit. p 38

⁷⁹ Maslow, op. cit. p. 37

interlocking group of professionals and communal leaders, many of whom have developed strong ties of loyalty and mutual support, who often sit on many of the boards of the major national and international organizations. It is not uncommon to see the same faces in leadership roles at the Presidents Conference, the American Section of the World Jewish Congress, HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society), or in the various synagogal groups."⁸⁰ One illustration will suffice. When Morris Abram, former AJCommittee leader, former head of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry and the Chairman of the Presidents Conference during the climax of the US-PLO dialogue issue, "retired" the Bush Administration appointed him U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Human Rights Commission in Geneva. After that job ended in 1993, the World Jewish Congress, a driving force of the outside elite, appointed Abram to serve as chairman of its new "UN Watch" project in Switzerland.⁸¹

In summary, Jewish leadership is very much an elite affair. As political scientists Thomas R. Dye and Harmon Zeigler explain:

Elites, not masses, govern *all* societies. Elites are not a product of capitalism or socialism or industrialization or technological development. All societies-- socialist and capitalist, agricultural and industrial, traditional and advanced-- are governed by elites. All societies require leaders, and leaders acquire a stake in preserving the organization and their position in it. This motive gives leaders a perspective different from that of the organization's members. An elite, then, is inevitable in any social organization. As the French political

⁸⁰ Kelman, op. cit. Two related points may be added. Professional employment opportunities in the Jewish community (even for entry level positions paying low salaries) for positions of a political bent are seldom advertised. While "head hunters" are sometimes used, hiring tends to be done on the basis of networking and nepotism. This makes for a rather homogeneous class of managers. Secondly, the dozen or so managers at the top of the pyramid are extremely well-paid. For instance, Michael Schneider of the "Joint" earns over \$300,000 annually; Thomas Dine of AIPAC, earned about \$200,000, Harry Siegman of the AJCongress, \$176,550, David Harris of the AJCommittee, \$155,487, and Abraham Foxman of ADL, \$200,000. *The Forward*, November 13, 1992

⁸¹ JTA, March 24, 1993. I identify the WJC as "outside elite" for purposes of exposition. It is more a transnational actor headed by billionaire Edgar Bronfman.

scientist Roberto Michaels put it, "He who says organization, says oligarchy."⁸²

What is true for the larger political system is likewise manifest within the Jewish organizational subsystem. The Jewish leadership had a stake in refashioning Israeli conduct and bringing it into harmony with their interests as members of the American elite.

The Jewish oligarchy, like the elite strata in general, is fairly porous. "In fact," as Dye and Zeigler note, "a certain amount of 'circulation of elites' (upward mobility) is essential for the stability of the elite system."⁸³ In the Jewish communal context, the interests of virtually all the key players demanded that they challenge Israeli policies with regard to the retention of Judea, Samaria and Gaza. The question was limited to how this would be done. The Presidents Conference had no way to impose communal discipline but neither did it have an overwhelming desire to do so. Still, there was a tradition and etiquette to follow regarding Jewish elite criticism of Israeli security policies. In this context, the internal opposition buttressed the Administration's policy of disassociation (removing Israel from the West Bank and Gaza). It adhered to the Presidents Conference (and Labor Party) consensus position against a US-PLO dialogue.

Those who no longer felt bound by the constraints of Jewish elite etiquette (for one reason or another) comprised what I have opted to categorize as the outside elite. Together with the peace camp (who were altogether new to Jewish communal affairs and had entirely different motivations), they actively sought to pave the way for a US-PLO dialogue, a main difference being, aside from the absence of previous communal ties, that the peace camp favored an unconditional dialogue while the outside elite sought to facilitate a dialogue by bridging the gap between US prerequisites and Palestinian Arab needs.

⁸² Thomas R. Dye and Harmon Zeigler, *The Irony of Democracy An Uncommon Introduction to American Politics*, 9th Edition, (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1993), p. 2-3

⁸³ Dye and Zeigler, op. cit., p. 3

CHAPTER 5

Redefining Pro-Israelism

Politics Makes Strange Bedfellows

- Charles Dudley Warner

An incongruous amalgamation of Jewish actors, spanning the internal opposition, outside elite and peace camp, worked assiduously to undermine Likud resolve and promote American foreign policy toward the Arab-Israel conflict. These players shared a number of convictions. All believed that the Arab-Israel conflict had shifted to a non-zero-sum contest and that the crux of the struggle was communal (i.e. between Arab Palestinians and Israeli Jews). They were irritated by Israel's recalcitrant stance toward conflict resolution efforts developed by the United States. Moreover, they were genuinely frustrated with Likud's refusal to address Palestinian aspirations for a homeland.

To be sure, there were distinctions among Israel's American Jewish critics.

- The internal opposition, introduced in some detail in the previous chapter, stopped short of promoting a PLO role in the diplomatic process. They adhered to the Presidents Conference (and Labor party) consensus regarding conditions for PLO involvement. The internal opposition carried on the scrimmage within the Jewish organizational framework.
- The outside elite, as earlier noted, sought to assist the PLO in meeting American prerequisites for a dialogue. Outside elite leaders forsook long-standing affiliations and influential positions inside the Jewish establishment in order to confront the Likud-led Israeli government.
- The peace camp essentially favored unconditional PLO participation at the negotiating table. Their primary nexus within the Jewish community was ipso facto their opposition politics.

The purpose of this chapter is to compare and contrast these three groupings which I argue were central to redefining pro-Israelism.¹ This redefinition was a critical stepping stone in facilitating a US-PLO dialogue. And that dialogue decision was significant not for what was discussed or accomplished but for what it symbolized about the nature and evolution of the conflict. It was only after this perceptual shift was enshrined that the Madrid Conference, and indeed, the Rabin-Arafat accord could logically take place.

The Shift

The rupture between what was to become the *outside elite* and the Israeli government can be traced at least as far back as the Prime Ministership of Golda Meir.² Peace with the Arabs, these American Jewish leaders sensed, was already truly possible. But Israeli leaders treated their advice and ideas condescendingly. Meir's approach to them was often insolent, haughty and peremptory.

Nahum Goldmann, president of the World Jewish Congress (WJC), helped lead the vanguard movement of a "new Diaspora" independent of official Israeli influence. Beyond the not insubstantial personal differences he had with Israeli leaders, Goldmann opposed the idea that Diaspora life was

¹ For purposes of exposition, I have lumped transnational actors such as Abba Eban and Edgar Bronfman in the outside elite set. Eban, Bronfman and the Hauser-Sheinbaum group shared a relationship with the International Center for Peace in the Middle East (ICPME). Obviously, these three broad classifications, while having pedagogic value, do not mirror reality with preciseness. Furthermore, any number of individuals may have straddled categories (internal opposition figure Menachem Rosenshaft, for example, joined the outside elite Hauser-Sheinbaum group for its meeting with Arafat).

² "American Jews Head for Rift with Israel," *Jewish Chronicle* (London), February 9, 1973. Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, promoting his latest book on a Jewish cable television program on June 28, 1992, referred to his personal experience before the Yom Kippur War with Golda Meir's imperious attitude towards the Arabs to illustrate the point that Prime Ministers of Israel are not infallible and that American Jews have every right to criticize them. "Smoozing" on Shalom America Television Network, M.P.O. Box 217, Purchase, New York 10477--0217

inferior to Israeli Zionist life. The following passage from his 1969 memoirs offers some insight into outside elite thinking:

Diaspora has played a role in the history of different peoples but never such a central role as it has with the Jews...In our history Diaspora has proved to be a way of life no less enduring and no less legitimate than life in a country of our own...The somewhat naive Zionist idea that a normal life is possible only in a homeland and that Diaspora life is in some way abnormal is understandable in the light of the historical evolution of other peoples, but it does not hold true for us...There is a tendency in Israel to turn to Diaspora Jewry as a natural helper in times of need but to permit it no voice in shaping policies, to treat it as somehow inferior and of unequal status, and to entrust the future development of the country exclusively to its citizens... 3

There had always been an undercurrent of tension between the establishment and Israel. This internal rift was eventually to spawn a contentious politically well-positioned outside elite as well as a comparatively more muted internal opposition. Philip Klutznick, the wealthy former president of B'nai B'rith, had been leading the opposition against Israeli predominance in Diaspora life. To provide an intellectual basis for Diaspora independence Klutznick funded the Institute for Jewish Policy Planning and Research as part of the Synagogue Council of America. Ira Silverman was appointed to head the institute.⁴ Others in the establishment believed that Israel was dictating, and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations uncritically swallowing, an official line American Jews were expected to follow. This criticism was muted between the 1967 Six Day War and the 1969-1970 War of Attrition. But by early 1973 the rumblings had become public.

An American Jewish version of 'No Taxation Without Representation'

³ Nahum Goldmann, *The Autobiography of Nahum Goldmann. Sixty Years of Jewish Life*, 9 (New York: Holt Rinehart Winston, 1969), pp 312-318

⁴ *Jewish Chronicle*, *op. cit.*

underlined much of the criticism leveled by the internal opposition. A top professional at the American Jewish Committee, Bert Gold, complained about Israel's primacy in Jewish life as well as insufficient Diaspora influence over Israeli policy. He faulted Israel for absorbing too many Jewish dollars: "Who is it that decides that poor Jews in Tel Aviv need improved housing and financial aid more urgently than do the poor Jews in Miami?"⁵ Hertzberg, while president of the American Jewish Congress, called for strengthened consultation over priorities between Israel and the American Jewish leadership.

Whatever their differences, a unified establishment (as distinguished from the nascent outside elite) shared Israel's assessment of Arab intentions and opposed U.S. pressure for diplomatic concessions. In 1975, for example, in response to the Ford Administration's hardball tactics, the American Jewish Committee warned that "U.S. pressure to surrender key defense positions without reciprocal Arab political moves from war and toward lasting peace would be dangerous to Israel..."⁶

So, despite tensions in the American Jewish - Israel relationship, the internal opposition adhered to the establishment line and deferred to the Israelis on security issues. The rules of the game changed in May 1977 when Likud captured power in Israel. Labor's loss of power (it had led every government since Israel was established) combined with Anwar Sadat's journey to Jerusalem altered the political landscape. Now, not only did the same old issues separate the establishment from Israel but a new set of acrimonious ingredients was added. Whatever their differences with Golda Meir and other Laborites, these distinctions paled in comparison to the historical antipathy the establishment felt toward the Jabotinsky movement

⁵ *Jewish Chronicle*, *op. cit.*

⁶ American Jewish Committee, Press Release dated May 8, 1975 #75-960-53

embodied by Menechem Begin.⁷

Schindler correctly noted that Labor governments did not welcome Jewish dissent any more than Likud governments. But Schindler suggested that what had changed was the nature of the Arab-Israel struggle. Now, the questions were:

Must we indulge in annexationist fantasies in order to prove that we are passionate Jews? Must I justify every single restrictive measure in Judea and Samaria in order to demonstrate my love for Israel?...So let us once and for all reject the notion that by speaking the truth as we see it, by giving the Israelis our own perception of events, we are somehow treasonous...I believe with every fiber of my body that there should be absolutely no inhibition to any internal discussion. If I speak of valid inhibitions and constraints it is only with respect to public statements; there caution is required...⁸

Begin's election, among other factors, propelled Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg to embrace the views of the outside elite. During the middle to late 1970's, Hertzberg straddled the fissure between the outside elite and the internal opposition. Hertzberg is an academic, a former acting-chairman of the Presidents Conference, ex-head of the American Jewish Congress, vice-president of the World Jewish Congress and a former Conservative pulpit rabbi. He helped lead the charge of protest against Begin's policies. A prolific

⁷ Begin had led the pre-State Irgun underground which waged a guerrilla campaign to oust the British from Palestine. Critics accused the Irgun of engaging in terrorism at Deir Yassin and in an attack on British military headquarters at the King David Hotel (a charge Begin strenuously denied). Well aware of his image problem, Begin dispatched Shmuel Katz to rectify the "terrorist slander" charge, see *New York Times*, May 23, 1977. The Jewish establishment stood squarely against Irgun ideology. Parenthetically, the Labor-affiliated Hagana (which Begin's mentor Jabotinsky had co-founded) maintained an on and off relationship with the Irgun. But in its quest for centralized control of the Zionist movement in Palestine, the Hagana turned in Irgun fighters to the British and, in 1948, even destroyed the Altalena ship which was carrying arms to the "united" forces defending Jerusalem. See *The Revolt*, op. cit., especially chapters 11 and 12.

⁸"Truth-Telling and Leadership Responsibility in American Jewish Life," *Moment*, April 1983. Schindler also acknowledges that Begin's election put Diaspora-Israel relations on a different footing, *Telephone Interview, November 28, 1993*

writer, scholar and intellectual, Hertzberg's frequent essays and Op-Ed pieces were motivated by a world view predicated upon what he saw as the precariousness of Jewish continuity.⁹ In the summer of 1979, Hertzberg made one of the earliest outside elite critiques of Likud policy. In an "open-letter" to Begin, Hertzberg laid out his objections to the establishment of a Jewish settlement, Elon Moreh, in Samaria outside Shekhem (Nablus). He wrote:

The government which you lead has just expropriated privately owned land near Nablus to create a new Jewish settlement...I ...condemn this act...From its beginning in Herzl's day, the Zionist movement has overpaid for land in order to acquire it with the assent of its owners...It is a delusion to imagine that American Jews are united behind your government's policies on the West Bank...There is a liberal America which loves Israel precisely because it represents moral ideals and democratic living..."Tsiyyon be-Mishpat tipadeh" ("Zion shall be redeemed with justice").¹⁰

One can only speculate as to the motivations which impelled some players in the internal opposition to opt for the outside elite. In some cases

⁹ As a visiting professor of Judaic Studies at Brooklyn College in the mid-1970's, specializing in the history of Zionism, Hertzberg often remarked that Jews should never forget that they are a small minority and therefore did not have the luxury of thumbing their noses at world opinion. Jewish survival, for Hertzberg, was dependent on accommodation. It was a delusion to talk about Jewish political power or Israeli military prowess as a solution to threats facing the Jews. Elsewhere, he wrote: "...After the many centuries in which Jews have lived as minorities (they learned that) even an unsatisfactory peace may be better than war, and social peace is worth even major costs. In the past those who promised the Jews a share in the victories won by aggressive strategies have often misled them, from the Zealots, who urged the revolt against Rome in the year 67, to General Sharon, who marched the Israeli Army into Lebanon in 1982." See "Reagan and the Jews," *New York Review of Books*, January 31, 1985. In *Jewish Polemics* published in 1992, Hertzberg maintained a similar line denouncing Jewish "triumphalism," and "chauvinist messianism" and, in support of his accommodationist world view, again warned that Jewish political power had waned. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

¹⁰ "An American Jewish leader's letter to Begin," by Arthur Hertzberg, *Christian Science Monitor*, June 29, 1979. Hertzberg wrote his essay in Hebrew and first published it in the Israeli paper *Haaretz*. Elon Moreh was first established by Gush Emunim at the old railway station of Sebaste in 1975. Local Arabs claiming to own the land appealed to the Supreme Court and won. They were ordered to leave. To avoid confrontation, the Labor government moved the settlers to an IDF military camp at Kaddum near Sebaste in central Samaria in January 1976. Elon Moreh/Kedumim became a "community settlement" at this site in 1977 See *Encyclopaedia Judaica, Decennial Book, 1973-1982* pp. 282,350 and 356.

they were no longer bound by financial or contractual ties to establishment groups. At any rate, it is important to remember that, philosophically, far more united the internal opposition to the outside elite than divided them. The genie of anti-Israel criticism was out of the bottle. And, with Begin's election there was less and less stigma attached to association with the outside elite.

Both camps agreed that Arab intentions had changed. But as these remarks from Ted Mann indicate, unlike the outside elite, the internal opposition had stronger misgivings well into the early 1980s about public criticism of Israel

Those of us who are opposed to annexation are generally not as certain of our truth as those who favor annexation are of theirs. Spinoza once said that it is impossible to have a true idea without knowing in your guts that it is true; the man with a true idea harbors no doubt whatever as to its truth. I hope Spinoza was wrong, but for my part, I must tell you that I have never been able to bring myself to believe any more than this: The annexationists are most probably wrong in terms of what is in the long-term best interest of the Jewish people. I have never been *certain* that they are wrong. And if I make certain plausible assumptions, the question becomes closer still. If, for example, I assume that regardless of Israeli behavior, the Arabs cannot and will not be induced to make a permanent peace, or if I assume that the Islamic revolution is not merely a ten-year spasm or aberration in the region, but is instead a permanent condition, then it becomes a very close question...¹¹

Hauser's Conversion

How does one explain the mystery of Rita Hauser's conversion, by 1988, from AJCommittee figure to the most renowned Jewish advocate for the Arab Palestinian cause in the United States? Actually, Hauser's conversion from establishment opposition to outside elite is a metaphor for others in her class. In hindsight, her pragmatic moderate Republican politics made her as logical a candidate as any to spear-head the outside elite.

¹¹ "Truth-Telling and Leadership Responsibility in American Jewish Life," *Moment*, April 1983

It is worthwhile to briefly survey her ideological odyssey. In 1976, sometime after leaving the post of U.S. Representative on the U.N. Human Rights Commission, Hauser became frustrated with Ford Administration policy toward Israel. She publicly demanded that the U.S. stop “flirting” with the PLO. Her views on the PLO were outlined this way:

America should stop flirting with the idea of a Palestinian state, which the PLO would dominate, for it is now perfectly clear that such a state would preclude stability in the area on which peace between the Arabs and the Israelis can be predicated. Dispersal of the refugees living in the UN camps would wreck the remaining effectiveness of the PLO, and then, surely, Israel and Jordan, and perhaps Syria, can get down to the business of settling their differences, including the fate of the bulk of the Palestinians living in territory occupied by Israel.

Even four years into Begin’s stewardship she took *Time* magazine to task for its essay “What to do About Israel,” writing: “*Time* does grave injury to a strong and solid alliance by its clarion call for such a debate between the United States and Israel.”¹² But at the end of the day, Hauser’s status, upbringing and world view had little in common with Begin’s. So that at a 1983 *Moment* magazine symposium, when the AJCommittee’s Ira Silverman posited the idea that his group had been reluctant to tell “the truth” to American Jews about Israeli policies. Hauser readily agreed:

I have been through endless meetings with Mr. Begin, and my impression is that he doesn’t care very much to hear my views...Israel is today the overwhelming power in its region. It faces no serious threat from the inhabitants of the West Bank, and it no longer faces a serious military threat from the PLO...people are afraid to say anything that might harm Israel. And that’s what bothers me...Since when have Jews avoided looking at questions because they are afraid the answers might not please them...Nothing should be undebatable...¹³

¹² *Time*, September 6, 1981 Letters Section

¹³ *Ibid.*

Hauser, of course, started out detesting Begin and Likud while considering Labor's Peres "a good friend." Moreover, she had always thought of herself as "pro-peace." When a State Department study claimed that PLO terrorism was "down, way down," Hauser discerned a significant message: the PLO was embarked upon a wholly different track.¹⁴

Her embrace of the PLO appears genuinely and openly heartfelt in contrast to her earlier, seemingly staid support for Israel. When she reminisces about the cathartic effect of the Intifada; how Arafat talked about the tire burning and rock throwing: "Those are my leaders," he told her, she does so with warmth and passion. Incongruously, Hauser the affluent Republican moderate exhibits a camaraderie for Arafat and the PLO more typical of the progressives in the peace camp. On the curious role she plays, Hauser says: "Well, it's funny. Now days when we get a call at 2AM and you think, my God, maybe somebody died. It turns out to be Tunis...asking for advice...My family says 'it must be the PLO' when the phone rings late at night."¹⁵

The Hauser-Sheinbaum group played a pivotal sanctifying role during the culminating events of December 1988. Yet it is the uniquely Jewish

¹⁴ *Personal Interview, December 16, 1991.* Later she reiterated that what changed her mind about the nature of the Arab-Israel conflict was a conviction that the PLO had made major changes. When these changes did not bring about a change in US policy she urged the PLO leadership "to do something on your own." In her view, that "something" was the Intifada. *Telephone Interview, April 27, 1994 with Rita Hauser.*

¹⁵ *Personal Interview, December 16, 1991, New York.* See also Rita E. Hauser, *resume*, on file at the Blaustein Library, American Jewish Committee and *Who's Who in the American Jewish Community*. A brief digest of Hauser's personal history and ideological development illustrates the composite type for many in Jewish leadership. Rita Hauser was born in July 1934 to emigrants from Russia. Like many of their generation, her parents prospered in the United States. Hauser graduated Hunter College at age 20, going on to obtain degrees in economics and law from Harvard and the University of Strassbourg, France. Later, she became a partner in the law firm of Stroock & Stroock & Lavan. She sits on various coproprate boards, is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, and has been deeply involved in Republican politics (in 1978 she briefly considered running for New York State Attorney General). Her Jewish communal involvement was expressed mostly through the various posts she held at the American Jewish Committee, including on its Board of Governors and as Chair of the National Executive Committee.

component of her involvement that Hauser downplayed. She argues that American Jews “did not have a hold on” US policy toward the PLO. Asked if the Administration sought out the support of Jewish elements in pursuit of a PLO dialogue, Hauser is vague:

The new {Bush} Administration wanted to make a fresh start. The initiative for our meeting came from Stockholm...I later found out their Ambassador was a regular tennis partner of Bush and Schultz. ..Sten {Foreign Minister Sten Andersson}, a dear friend, *came to me*. He knew I was interested in promoting the peace process.¹⁶

Anderson had, indeed, been “waging a quiet, unheralded campaign to bring the United States and the PLO together.”¹⁷ And all along it was clear to Hauser that the State Department was completely apprised of what the Swedes were doing.¹⁸

Ostensibly, as *The New York Times* subsequently reported, “Rather than discuss its plan with the United States Government, the Swedes decided to deal first with some American Jews.”¹⁹ This may explain why she draws a distinction between herself and Jerome Segal, the peace camp activist, reminding a visitor that she did not “solicit” the Stockholm role.²⁰ When pressed, Hauser adds that “Prominent people in the Jewish community were needed,” because dealing with Arafat could “ruin careers” at the State Department. If influential American Jews determined that Arafat had genuinely met U.S. conditions for a dialogue with the PLO, she implies, the way would be paved for official U.S. acceptance of Arafat’s pronouncement. Asked if she thought the Americans had “put the Swedes up to it all along?”

¹⁶ *Personal Interview with Rita Hauser*, December 16, 1991

¹⁷ “The Secret Effort on Arafat: Go-Betweens Seize Moment,” *New York Times*, December 16, 1988

¹⁸ *Personal Interview with Rita Hauser*, December 16, 1991

¹⁹ *New York Times*, December 16, 1988. Actually, the U.S. was fully involved before Hauser was ever contacted. See chapter 8.

²⁰ In contrast to people like Jerome Segal, she suggests, her mission to Stockholm to meet Arafat was a responsibility she did not seek.

Hauser responds: "That's an interesting question. I hadn't thought of it."²¹

Surprisingly, the Israeli peace movement is more closely aligned with the outside elite than with its American counter-part. The International Center for Peace in the Middle East (ICPME), for instance, served as the vehicle for the Hauser-Sheinbaum group. Though its New York headquarters operates out of a Manhattan Post Office box, the Tel Aviv-based International Center for Peace in the Middle East was a useful mechanism, primarily for the outside elite, but also for the internal opposition. Indeed, many of Israel's most capable critics within the U.S. Jewish community coalesced around ICPME which, in turn, provided them with an ideologically tolerant and convenient organizational structure. Originally founded by the progressive Israeli magazine *New Outlook*, ICPME developed into an informal group that brought together dovish Knesset members, like-minded Israeli and Arab intellectuals, and American Jewish critics. It also undertook activities the Labor party was unable to openly spearhead.

ICPME has long stressed the need for a full solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through mutual recognition, self-determination and co-existence."²² ICPME also sponsors "think tank" research whose findings are made available to left-wing Knesset members. David Hall-Cathala studied the Israeli peace movement and notes that:

As an international centre, the ICPME plays the dual role of giving well-known Diaspora Jews a voice in the debate over the peace process and by providing them (through press briefs and newsletters) with news of Israel not often presented in the international media.²³

As a "think tank," writes Hall-Cathala, ICPME:

²¹ *Personal interview with Rita Hauser, December 16, 1991*

²² David Hall-Cathala, *The Peace Movement in Israel. 1967-1987*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), p 140.

²³ Hall-Cathala, *ibid.* p. 140

Organizes conferences in Israel and abroad, for Israelis, Palestinians and others; works to influence members and other influential Israelis towards recognition of Palestinians political rights. The ICPME project, Jewish-Arab Council for Peace Education, prepares materials on peace and democracy education in Hebrew and Arabic, and also organizes seminars for teachers, principals, and students. Also publishes Israel press Briefs, excerpts from the Hebrew, Arabic, and English Israeli press.²⁴

Prominent Jewish critics who coordinated their efforts through ICPME include: Nobel laureate Kenneth Arrow, Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg (who declined a Hauser invitation to Stockholm) Rabbi Wolf Kelman of the Conservative Rabbinical Assembly of America, Philip Klutznick, honorary president of B'nai B'rith International, Professor Seymour Martin Lipset, Theodore Mann, (after his term as chairman of the Presidents Conference) and Labor Zionist Alliance president Menachem Rosensaft.²⁵ Formally, Abba Eban serves as the International Chair for ICPME while Rita Hauser is the chairperson of its American section. Hauser did not actually join ICPME until 1987. Support for ICPME comes from the Ford Foundation, European sources

²⁴ *Walking the Red Line. Israelis in Search of Justice for Palestine*, edited by Deena Hurwitz, (Philadelphia, PA: , New Society Publishers, published in cooperation with the Resource Center for Nonviolence,1992), p.208

²⁵ "15 U.S. Jews Endorse Arafat's Aide's 'initiative'" *New York Jewish Week*, July 8, 1988

and through fund raising.²⁶

The outside elite came to profit from more than a decade of domestic opposition to Likud policies. By 1988, for instance, Lipset co-founded The Committee of Concerned Jews whose proclaimed aim was to "honor the values of justice and humanity upon which Israel was founded."²⁷ The committee was comprised mostly of outside elite and some well-connected peace camp critics including: David Cohen of Washington, D.C., Alan Baron, Rabbi Balfour Brickner, Jonathan J. Cohen, Professor Ruth Kovnet, Rabbi Robert Marx, Florence Thomasses, Edna Wolf, and Jocelyn Wurzburg.²⁸

American Jewish critics of Israel could count on moral and sometimes financial support from outside the Jewish community. Mel Thrope's Foundation for a Middle East Peace is a case in-point. Thorpe had been critical of Israeli policies and calling for a two-state solution to the Arab-Israel conflict

²⁶ Hauser interview, op. cit. Political support for ICPME's work was wide spread. Hauser says that Tom Dine was privately supportive ("but, he'll deny it, of course"). In all likelihood, ICPME had limited financial requirements and most of the key players are individuals of affluence who could pay their own way. By 1992, Edgar Bronfman (World Jewish Congress) was supporting the work of Drora Kass in Jerusalem (Kass had been participant in the Hauser-Sheinbaum group). But according to Hauser, it was Israel Singer of the WJC who dissuaded Hertzberg from joining her for the Stockholm meeting (though his reasoning is not known).

Drora Kass, an Israeli-born American writer and psychologist, vehemently disagrees that support for ICPME's work was wide spread. There were people in the internal opposition who tried to hamper the work of the outside elite because it went too far. (Kass mentions the AJCongress' Phil Baum as an example). ICPME, says Kass, was active not reactive. Taking a page from Segal (see Chapter 8), she talks about her work in terms of psychological behavioral modification. Perceptions had to change and Arafat had to be un-demonized. She notes that Arafat is psychologically complex and her work involved fostering confidence in Israeli intentions. But far from playing a supportive role, Kass complains that US officials resented private diplomacy. Kass says she simply does not accept the premise that American Jews played a "constructive role. Most didn't." *Personal Interview, October 20, 1992, Jerusalem*. In addition to her close association with Hauser, and later her reliance on Bronfman's support, Kass has also worked academically and politically with Seymour Martin Lipset (See, *New York Times Magazine*, December 7, 1980).

²⁷ Lipset used "a personal appeal" from Abba Eban as part of the packet sent to potential contributors. But Eban was miffed that the letter had been used without first clearing with him. See, "Eban Gets Apology From A U.S. Group," *New York Times*, May 8, 1988

²⁸ Fundraising letter from The Committee of Concerned American Jews, April 1988

starting in 1975. His message dove-tailed with Begin critics and Thorpe began to fund such criticism. At the time of Thorpe's death in 1994, the Foundation had spent tens of thousands of dollars on the purchase of Op-Ed advertising space, mostly in the *Washington Post* but also in the *New York Times*, promoting the "two-state" solution. He also sponsored books and educational projects aimed at promoting the Palestinian-Arab cause.²⁹

US Jewish Peace Camp

The primary mission of the peace camp was to foster resolution of the Arab-Israel conflict along the Israeli-Palestinian divide on terms acceptable to the PLO. Their strategic goal was unconditional PLO participation in the diplomatic process. But an equally important intra-Jewish goal was self-fulfillment for the activists involved; to transform the perceptual framework so that it was no longer an oxymoron to call oneself pro-Israel while holding a torch for the PLO. This was a critical element to the many progressives in the movement who had little or no previous ties to American Jewish life. Using the combined "transformative" lexicon of the progressive-Left, personal development and "recovery movement," the American Jewish peace camp labored in the vanguard of deliberate efforts to redefine pro-Israelism. Bringing a heightened level of moral relativism and ambiguity to the issues, they repeatedly asked what it *meant* to be pro-Israel. They cried

²⁹ Thrope, an Episcopalian, founded the Foundation for Middle East Peace in 1950 with money he made in the copying machine business. His law firm, Hogan and Hartson has been a registered agent for Saudi Arabia. See *Washington Post*, January 13, 1992 and *Outpost*, January 1993. Foundation funds also helped bankroll a variety of projects aimed at undermining Likud policies. For instance, author Robert I. Friedman, a frequent critic of Israeli policies, has received financial support from the Foundation. Friedman is the author of two books: *The False Prophet: Rabbi Meir Kahane-From FBI Informant to Knesset Member*, and *Zealots for Zion, Inside Israel's West Bank Settlement Movement*. Money being fungible, the Tides Foundation has itself benefited from Ford Foundation dollars for projects unrelated to Israel. See *Ford Foundation REPORT* Summer 1992 and Winter 1992. A typical ad, which appeared in the December 12, 1989 *Washington Post*, was headlined: "The Solution to the Middle East Conflict? A Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza at Peace with Israel." Thorpe's obituary appeared in the February 15, 1994 *New York Times*. A small death notice was printed in the February 16, 1994 *Washington Post*.

out for inclusivity and an end to silencing of progressive views by establishment hegemony. They rejected subservience and called for relationships based on mutual affirmation in an alienated world. The peace camp viewed their own efforts as counter-hegemonic. In the words of Marla Brettschneider:

In the empirical way in which real life is dialectical, these groups are struggling in a space "between." They are relatively unalienated islands in a presumed sea of alienation. They are thus fraught with contradiction, and exist in the dynamic space of struggle. They are struggling so that the pursuit of justice and mutual affirmation in relationship become increasingly normative aspirations of the Jewish community. This is not necessarily because they have uncovered some essentially non-dominating core of Judaism. Instead, they seek justice and affirmation of difference because these are what they feel makes being Jewish meaningful.³⁰

The "mainstream" Israeli peace movement had more in common, as noted previously, with the internal opposition and outside elite than with progressives in the American peace camp. The growth of an indigenous mainstream peace movement in the post Sadat-in-Jerusalem era (as opposed to the communist-led fringe which had long a feature of Israeli politics) promoted the legitimacy of anti-Likud criticism within the American Jewish community. In turn, American Jewish protests reinforced the resolve of Begin's domestic opponents. The most politically palatable Israeli peace group, from the viewpoint of the American Jewish establishment, was Peace Now.

³⁰ Marla Brettschneider, *The Liberal Roots of Group Theory: A Case Study in American Jewish Community*, Ph.D Dissertation, Department of Politics, New York University (March 1993 draft), p. 29. (Parenthetically, *Tikkun's* Michael Lerner became a confidant of Hillary Rodham Clinton by preaching the "politics of meaning.") I am indebted to Dr. Brettschneider for graciously allowing me to read her dissertation which offers profound insight into the thinking of progressive Jews on pro-Israelism. It is a sympathetic yet rigorous and comprehensive study of progressive Jewish politics. The idea of associating the recovery movement to progressive Jewish politics came to me as I read Dr. Brettschnider's dissertation. For a critique of the recovery movement, see Wendy Kaminer, *I'm Dysfunctional, You're Dysfunctional: The Recovery Movement and Other Self-help Fashions*, (New York: Vintage, 1993).

In its early stages, Peace Now (*Shalom Achshav*) did not articulate an alternative to Begin's policies. Peace Now's origins can be traced to a letter signed by some 350 IDF reservists which was delivered to the Prime Minister. The letter, written in March 1978, after the historic Sadat visit, called for exchanging "land for peace."

A Government that prefers the existence of the State of Israel within the borders of the Land of Israel over peace and good neighborly relations would cause us difficult reflections. A government that prefers the existence of settlements across the Green Line to the elimination of the historic conflict; and the advent of normal relations in our area would raise questions among us about the justice of our path..."

Begin had been in office for less than a year but, not surprisingly, the reservoir of animosity against all that he stood for was not depleted. During this early period, Peace Now was funded exclusively with small contributions, money raised by independent Kibbutzim and Moshavim (cooperative settlements) as well as support from wealthy Labor oriented industrialists. Peace Now struck a cord with part of the Israeli polity and developed a momentum of its own. The group turned-out thirty-thousand people for an April 1, 1978 rally in Tel Aviv.³¹ The fact that the movement was led by reserve officers underscored the ethical permissibility of criticizing Israeli security policies. The movement promptly captured the attention of the Jewish establishment in the United States. An AJCommittee report on Peace Now prepared in 1978 concluded:

..."Peace Now" is, in a certain way, serving the interests of the Labor Party ...What about the relationship with U.S. Jewry? While the "officers" denounced the demonstrations against Begin in Chicago and Los Angeles by people carrying banners of "Peace Now," since they claim that the struggle should be kept within Israel, they still reject the accusation against them that they are helping to split American Jewry and thus damaging the Israeli position. They claim that the government's positions cannot be explained

³¹ "Peace Now" A Portrait of a Movement, American Jewish Committee Report, prepared by Lea Spector, AJCommittee Israel Office, May 8, 1978.

abroad and do not enable American Jewry to identify with them. They believe that their movement shows that the people in Israel are reasonable and really want peace, and that their positions can be explained in the U.S. and identified with by American Jews...³²

But American Jewish critics could hardly be expected not to capitalize on Peace Now's critique of Begin. A virtual floodgate had been raised. Three weeks later, 37 "prominent Jews" from across the internal opposition - outside elite spectrum, including Nobel Prize winner Saul Bellow, political scientist Seymour Martin Lipset, and American Jewish Committee leader Irving Levine, signed and promoted a letter which read:

We are heartened by your call for greater flexibility in Israel's negotiating position with Egypt. We share your view that a secure peace is more important than a Greater Israel. We applaud your initiative even as we continue to oppose those aspects of American policy which threaten to diminish Israel's security.

The undersigned are lifelong friends of Israel; nothing can destroy that friendship or the efforts on Israel's behalf that follow naturally from it. It is because of our commitment that we are disturbed by the Begin Government's response to President Sadat's peace initiative.

We recognize the skill with which President Sadat has successfully captured the American imagination; we lament the fact that the Israeli Government has contributed to that success; we are distressed by the dangerous Middle East policies of the American Government; we are troubled by the fact that the Israeli Government has made it easier for the Carter Administration to win

³² Ibid.

support for those policies...³³

Jerome Segal emerged onto the scene in the late 1980's as the foremost articulator of the organizationally diffuse peace camp. Segal not only met with Arafat several times prior to Hauser but actually helped draft plans for declaring the State of Palestine.³⁴ His role was by no means a sideshow to Hauser's. It was simply a different approach from a different angle. If Hauser's contribution was to facilitate U.S. acceptance of Arafat's "magic words" in Stockholm by giving them an advance Jewish stamp of approval, Segal's contribution was more ephemeral. His goal was to psychologically bolster Arafat, enabling the PLO to make fundamental political concessions. He says Arafat would never have given Hauser the "magic words" in Stockholm if

³³ "37 Jews in U.S. Applaud Israelis Who Urged Flexibility on Peace," *New York Times*, April 21, 1978. Many of the signers of the letter would continue to be in the vanguard of anti-Israeli government criticism for the next ten years. They are: writer Robert Alter, economist Kenneth Arrow, sociologist Daniel Bell, Rabbi Saul Berman, Rabbi Ben-Zion Bosker, Rabbi Eugene Borowitz, a leader of the New Jewish Agenda, historian Lucy Davidowicz, Brandeis professor Leonard Fein, rabbi Robert Gordish, Rabbi Arthur Green, writer and historian Irving Howe, Rabbi Wolf Kelman, historian Walter Laqueur, American Jewish Committee head Irving Levine, Rabbi Eugene Lipman, Seymour Martrin Lipset (a leading figure and driving force in the movement) Jesse Lurie of Hadassah, Rabbi Israel Moskowitz, Professor Jack Neusner, Michael Pelavin, Yeshiva University professor Alan Pollack, New Republic editor Martin Peretz, former Chairman of the Presidents Conference Rabbi Joachim Prinz, Gary Rubin of Iowa, Rabbi Max Ruttenberg, Benjamin Schwartz, Mayer Shapiro, Arden Shenker, Charles Silberman, Ira Silverman, Marie Syrkin, a major figure in the American branch of Israel's Labor movement, Albert Vorspan a leader in Reform Judaism (and another major player in the movement), Michael Wolzer, Lewis Weinstein and Leon Wiselittier. The story of their letter made the front-page of the *New York Times*.

Rael & Erich Isaac add: "Who were the Jews in the United States who made the first overtures to Peace Now? ...The most prominent, those that gave the letter its cachet in the eyes of The Times, could scarcely be described, as they were in the statement, as 'life-long friends of Israel.' Saul Bellow and Irving Howe came out of the Trotskyite movement (Howe switched to the Shachtmanites); Daniel Bell and Seymour Martin Lipset came from the Young People's Socialist League; Lucy Davidowicz had been a Bundist; Martin Peretz for a time backed the New Left..Peace Now quickly found itself the beneficiary of funds from the Samuel Rubin Foundation, which had been the chief source of funds for Breira and for the Institute for Policy Studies..." *The Americanization of 'Peace Now,'* (booklet) Americans For A Safe Israel, 1980

³⁴ "Jewish Father for Palestinian State?", *New York Times*, August 24, 1988. See also "A Just Declaration-Palestinian Statehood," Op-Ed Page, *New York Times*, August 21, 1988 and Jerome M. Segal, *Creating The Palestinian State. A Strategy for Peace*, (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books,1989).

the PLO had not on November 15, 1988 declared, in Tunis, the State of Palestine.

Only because the State of Palestine had already been declared was Arafat able to drop the term 'self-determination' from the Stockholm" statement. It was psychological. Palestinians had suffered so much at the hands of the Israelis. The victimization comes through when you speak to Arafat. You don't even have to solicit it. That's why declaring a state was a necessary psychological hurdle that enabled them to take the steps necessary for peace.³⁵

Segal laid the groundwork for the success of the outside elite. He paved the way for a declaration of Palestinian statehood through a number of meetings with Arafat and other PLO officials, beginning in the spring of 1987. These efforts received the private support of Abba Eban. Eban lectured Segal on the need to impress upon Arafat that the PLO's renunciation of terror would have to be precise and explicit.³⁶ Ultimately, Segal believes, the work of the Hauser-Sheinbaum group was made infinitely easier because the State of Palestine had already been declared. It negated Arafat's need to explicitly condition recognition of Israel upon Palestinian self-determination (since a Palestinian state already "existed"). Otherwise, a quid pro quo would have faced U.S. rejection.³⁷

His efforts met stiff opposition from the internal opposition, which steadfastly embraced Labor's line on PLO inclusion. Rabbi Marc H. Tennenbaum, director of international relations for the American Jewish Committee complained that "Segal intends his proposals as serious, but it

³⁵ Personal interview , January 8, 1992 (Silver Spring, Maryland)

³⁶ Personal Interview, January 8, 1992 He was born in the Bronx in 1943 to Polish emigrants. Segal's socialist parents briefly sent him to Workman's Circle Sunday School. (The Workman's Circle is a non-Zionist Jewish socialist group). He remarks that he never had "much of a Jewish liturgical education." Segal graduated City College and obtained a doctorate from the University of Michigan. He worked for Representative Donald M. Fraser (D-Minnesota) and later did part-time teaching at the University of Maryland.

³⁷ Segal is convinced that declaring the State of Palestine was an absolute prerequisite to subsequent events in Stockholm. Personal Interview, January 8, 1992

emerges as a political fantasy because it creates an illusion that the Palestinians are engaged in a peace offensive, and that illusion has little basis in reality.³⁸

In contrast to the players associated with the outside elite, Segal had no previous involvement in Jewish affairs before taking on a leadership role in the peace camp. Now, Segal devotes himself full-time to managing the Jewish Peace Lobby which seeks to condition U.S. support for Israel upon Israeli concessions in the diplomatic process.³⁹ Segal's employment at the State Department which facilitated access to Richard Murphy and other foreign policy officials will be discussed in Chapter 8.⁴⁰

Antecedents

Long before it was "safe" inside the Jewish community to champion Palestinian Arab statehood and criticize Israeli security policies, a small number of individuals and groups did precisely that. The emergence and success of outside elite and peace camp actors (starting in the late 1970's and into the late 1980's) benefited enormously from the years of groundwork undertaken by Breira and its successor organization New Jewish Agenda.⁴¹

The first nationally significant peace camp group was Breira (Hebrew for alternative). Breira was founded in 1973 by Alan Mintz and others to support unconditional inclusion of the PLO in the diplomatic process. Unlike Noam Chomsky, and others on the hard-Left, who supported a "democratic

³⁸ *New York Times*, August 24, 1988, op. cit.

³⁹ "U.S. Jews Organize to Urge Israel-PLO Talks," *New York Times*, July 23, 1989

⁴⁰ Personal Interview, January 8, 1992

⁴¹ To be sure there were ideological precursors to Breira including the Radical Zionist Alliance, a progressive college group founded in 1969, and Hashomer-Hatzair, an affiliate of Israel's hard-left Mapam party. Mapam, after various schisms between its Stalinist faction and more mainstream elements, joined the Labor party in 1969. It later broke away to form Meretz. Meretz now shares power in the Rabin Government.

secular state" in place of Israel, Breira members wanted a vehicle through which they could express their Jewishness (one hundred Reform and Conservative rabbis signed on to Breira's 1974 Advisory Council).⁴² To participate in Jewish communal affairs on their own terms, Breira would have to redefine what it meant to be pro-Israel. Parenthetically, there was talk that Nahum Goldmann, the outside elite figure par excellence, had helped finance Breira.⁴³

Breira's influence far exceeded its actual numbers (which never went much beyond 1000-1500 members). In addition to unconditional PLO involvement in the diplomatic process, Breira advocated the establishment of a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza. Domestically, Breira called for open discussion and debate on Israeli policies.

Breira's one and only national conference took place in February 1977. By then the group had attracted enough attention to make it unwelcome in Jewish communal life. The establishment reacted most negatively to Breira's desire to speak as a Zionist group. B'nai B'rith's Hillel organization cautioned its employee-rabbis not to affiliate with Breira;⁴⁴ *Hadassah's Newsletter* termed Breira "cheerleaders for defeatism;" the *West Coast Jewish Weekly* said Breira was the "creation of...a coterie of left-wing revolutionaries."⁴⁵ Indeed, perhaps more than its message, the close ties between Breira's core leadership group and well known personalities of the hard-Left delegitimized the organization.⁴⁶ Among those who criticized Breira were Albert Vorspan,

⁴² Brettschneider, op. cit., p.127

⁴³ *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Decennial Book, 1973-82, p. 606. Rael Jean Isaac, in *The New Jewish Agenda*, identifies Mintz as a Breira founder.

⁴⁴ *Encyclopaedia Judaica* Decennial Yearbook, 1973-1982, op. cit.

⁴⁵ Howard M. Sachar, op. cit p889

⁴⁶ Whatever its origins, Breira was quickly infiltrated by people with few previous ties to Jewish life. Rael Jean Isaac could therefore reasonably suggest that Breira was a "front" for people who favored supplanting Israel with a PLO state. Breira Executive Director Robert Loeb, Isaac pointed out, had close ties to the hard-Left of Noam Chomsky, Arthur Waskow, and William Kunstler among others.

Leonard Fein and Arthur Hertzberg. Brettschneider argues the real issue was precisely Breira's message: "Key centers of hegemonic pro-Israel power responded to the challenge presented by Breira's 'alternative' with a smear campaign designed to delegitimize the organization. This politics of silencing was disguised as a plea for 'unity.' Even though in this case those silenced were not always members of non-dominant subsections of the communal polity, the content of their opinion was decidedly non-dominant."⁴⁷

Breira's legacy, given its brief existence, was extraordinary. The barrier against public criticism of Israeli policies had been broken (even though Breira was never formally part of Jewish communal structure); the "talking" to the PLO taboo had been publicly challenged by Jews; the Arab-Israel conflict had been portrayed as a non-zero-sum *Israeli-Palestinian* struggle; and, the 'land for peace' movement had been infused with scores of experienced anti-Vietnam war activists who knew something about mobilizing a community for peace.

Breira's successor organization turned out to be the New Jewish Agenda (NJA). Founded in 1980 by Breira-affiliated rabbis Gerald Serotta and Albert Axelrod, NJA attracted many of the same people who had coalesced

⁴⁷ Brettschneider, p. 134. My own view is that the Jewish establishment was indeed uncomfortable with Breira's overlapping ties with the hard-Left. Moreover, Breira was criticizing Labor governments--which was truly novel and disconcerting. This is not to discount that, as Bretschneider argues, the establishment was also uneasy about Breira's message as well as its audacity.

around Breira.⁴⁸ But the Agenda's future was brighter than Breira's. ⁴⁹ In part this was because NJA operated in the Begin era at a time when outside elite criticism of Israeli policies had become an accepted feature of Jewish communal life.

The 1982 Lebanon War further bolstered NJA's ranks. Unlike Breira, which never took to the streets, NJA activities included vigils outside the Israeli Consulate in New York to protest "beatings" of Palestinians by Israeli troops;⁵⁰ joining the 'land for peace' struggle with other progressive causes;⁵¹ and sponsoring visits by Arabs and Israelis favoring "an end to occupation."⁵² NJA was able to form alliances with various Arab groups and communist front organizations while still developing a level of legitimacy as a Jewish organization that had eluded Breira. ⁵³

⁴⁸ Rael Jean Isaac, *The New Jewish Agenda*, p.1. Isaac's expose of Breira received widespread, of tacit, support from centrist groups like ADL. According to Isaac: "By the times New Jewish Agenda came along, which was more blatantly anti-Israel (without that large panoply of rabbis), the situation had markedly changed. We (AFSI) sent the Agenda pamphlet to ADL where (National Director Abe) Foxman's reply was that they already published something dealing with NJA and so didn't need anything else. Herb (Zweibon, Chairman of AFSI) asked him to send us what ADL had done and he sent us an ADL publication that never even mentioned NJA. ADL would not even distribute the pamphlet to its staff." *Personal Correspondence from Professor Isaac, March 29, 1994.*

⁴⁹ A brief definition of the term "Left" can be found in *A Dictionary of Politics*, edited by Walter Laqueur, Free Press, New York: 1971.

⁵⁰ "Jewish Protests Grow Over Beatings of Palestinians," *New York City Tribune*, January 26, 1988

⁵¹ "Controversial Protest in Washington," *New York Jewish Week*, August 29, 1983. The AJCongress and several other Jewish organizations eventually joined the march

⁵² "Middle East Forum Speakers Call for End to Occupation," *People's Daily World*, September 24, 1982.

⁵³ NJA's willingness to form united fronts is readily apparent in its willingness to cosponsor activities with Marxist groups. As a consequence, NJA received positive coverage from the *People's Daily World* (organ of the U.S. Communist Party). See for example: "Middle East Forum Speakers Call for End to Occupation," PDW September 24, 1988. In fact, NJA attracted so many progressives that it was forced to purge members of Fred Newman's and Lenora Fulani's New Alliance cult who had also infiltrated NJA. See PDW May 5, 1989. Now, NJA is listed in the American Jewish Year Book, an AJCommittee reference work, describing itself as "a progressive voice in the Jewish community and a Jewish voice among progressives." AJYB, 1990, p. 538.

Plainly, the perceptual environment between 1973 and 1980 had changed dramatically. This allowed NJA to portray itself as basically mainstream and paint the establishment as retrograde. Gerald Sorotta explains that: "The Agenda was set up in 1980 as a response to the perception that Jewish community organizations had become more parochial and conservative and that American Jews needed to rebroaden their outlook to what it had been." A revised Passover *Hagadda* (an ancient liturgical book used to conduct the Passover *Seder* ceremony) published by NJA calls for the liberation of both Jews and Palestinians and includes passages from the Koran.⁵⁴ The Agenda's relative success (it has yet to apply for Presidents Conference membership) reflects the extent to which pro-Israelism has been redefined and the perceptual framework of the Arab-Israel conflict transformed.

Conclusion

Outside elite and peace camp critics of Israeli policy embraced an approach predicated upon three principles: (1) the Arab-Israel struggle had evolved to a non-zero-sum conflict; (2) the Palestinian problem had become the crux of the conflict; and (3) the PLO, which dominated the Palestinian-Arab polity, needed to be constructively engaged.

Critics needed organizational vehicles and it was clear the Presidents Conference could not serve that purpose. The towering importance of pro-Israelism to the rank-and-file constrained the leadership from pursuing a line at odds with Israel's stated position. So, establishment leaders who came to share the ideas of a Klutznick or Goldmann had to forsake the Presidents Conference entirely. Contrary to Goldmann's original hopes, the Presidents Conference, in coming into its own, had become tethered politically and emotionally to Israeli policies and approaches.

⁵⁴ "Setting a New Agenda for Jewry," *Insight*, October 5, 1987

Neither the peace camp nor the outside elite are monoliths. Still, certain patterns are evident. The peace camp sought to reshape the fabric of Jewish communal life in its own “progressive” image. Outside elite criticism was focused far more narrowly on policy differences (and motivated, perhaps, in many instances by personal pique). The internal opposition came along considerably later and agreed in broad outline with many of the complaints raised by the outside elite and peace camp, though not necessarily with the solutions they offered.

The pages that follow spotlight the crisscrossing activities of all three elements in making the case that each was influenced by, and contributed to, changing perceptions of the conflict. The perceptual transformation, in turn, paved the way for PLO inclusion in the process.

CHAPTER SIX
Perceptual Metamorphosis
1967 to 1976

"Victories won on the battlefield shall not be lost at the tables of diplomacy."
-Theme of Presidents Conference Rally, June 9, 1967

This chapter traces how the perceptions of the Jewish leadership about the zero sum nature of the Arab-Israel conflict altered between 1967 and 1976. Secondly, key events of the period are analyzed from the vantage point of political suasion, as conducted by the Administrations and, for the first time, elements in the Jewish leadership. This era traverses the solidly state-centered perception of the conflict, to a point where key Jewish leaders endorsed the Administration's emphasis on the centrality of the Palestinian-Arab conundrum. This period began with the quintessential life-or-death war that had long marked the struggle in zero sum terms and ended (perceptually) as a conflict open to resolution.

The self-image Jews held of themselves and their image of the Arabs shifted in the years between 1967 and 1976. Within the Jewish community, Joachim Prinz, a former Presidents Conference chairman, illuminated this permutation when he argued that American Jews needed "a Jewish Declaration of Independence" from Israel. Herschel Schacter unhappily conceded that Israel was no longer the "David" of the Arab-Israel conflict. The community crossed over from relative apathy to zealous pro-Israelism to equivocal support, all in the space of less than a decade.

Despite the "easy" victory in the 1967 Six Day War, Terrorism threatened the personal security of Israelis and Jews, and colored the image of the Arab. The very real peril posed by the Arab countries, as demonstrated by the casualties of the Six Day War, the War of Attrition and the Yom Kippur War, remained vivid in the Jewish consciousness. Equally striking was the August 1967 message from Khartoum, where Arab leaders declared a policy of: "no peace with Israel, no negotiations with Israel, no recognition of Israel

and maintenance of the rights of Palestinian people in their nation.”¹ Nevertheless, modest signs suggested a turnabout in Arab intentions and this contributed to a significant change in American Jewish attitudes. In 1974, the Palestinian-Arabs themselves hinted that they would, on an interim basis, be willing to settle for control of Judea and Samaria and Gaza. This message signaled by the Palestine National Council demanded “Palestinian ‘national authority’ in any piece of liberated Palestine.” That same year, the diplomatic emergence of the PLO on the international political scene became a *fait accompli*, when the Arab powers recognized the PLO as the “sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.” Other ambivalent signals followed. The Saudis hinted that they could tolerate the idea of a Jewish State in the Arab Middle East. Another tangible, if indirect, signal was the temporary non-belligerency pact Egypt signed with Israel in 1975.

Israeli security was the singular sphere of cognitive consistency of the American Jewish leadership. They principally adhered to the stance that Israelis alone should decide issues of security. Consequently, any criticism of Israeli policy had to be made in private. On a psychological level, cognitive dissonance presumably plaguing the liberal sensibilities of the Jewish leadership in connection with the “occupation” was offset by the bellicose rhetoric of the PLO leadership.

The Jewish leadership adhered, throughout this era, to several consistent goals grounded in their perceptual framework. To preserve Israel’s survival, they lobbied for American military, diplomatic and economic support for Israel. They uniformly supported Israel’s demand for direct talks with its Arab neighbors. Ever vigilant against an “imposed solution,” they sought to prevent battlefield victories from being transformed into defeats at the bargaining table. Toward this end, in the absence of peace, they were against withdrawal from the lands captured in 1967 and against the Rogers

¹ cited in Alan M. Tigay, editor, *Myths and Facts, 1980, A Concise Record of the Arab-Israel Conflict*, (Washington, D.C., Near East Report, 1980).

Plan. They opposed a role for the PLO in the U.S. led peace process as well as U.S. talks with the PLO. Indeed, they opposed an overriding emphasis on the Palestinian-Arab aspect of the conflict.

Environmental factors in the international political system framed American Jewish attitudes. For instance, world focus on US-USSR tensions, the Vietnam war, relatively warm US-Israel relations during the Johnson Administration (1963-1969), various Arab-Israel wars, terrorist atrocities, and the plight of Soviet Jews, tended to foster admiration and unequivocal support for Israel among American Jews.

Conversely, a long list of environmental factors subsequently undermined Jewish American-Israeli solidarity. These included aversion to the occupation of a resentful population; discomfiture over the loss of explicit liberal support for Israeli policies;² coupled with events that contributed to Jewish insecurity in the United States, such as heightened Black-Jewish tensions. PLO terrorism aimed at Diaspora targets called unwanted attention to Jewish vulnerability; the Arab oil embargo contributed to a resurgence of anti-Jewish sentiment in the U.S.; the confrontational policies of the Ford Administration forced the Jewish leadership into the unwanted role of publicly opposing U.S. policy. Other related environmental ingredients which debilitated American Jewish-Israeli solidarity revolved around the need of the U.S. Jewish leadership to be in a constant state of opposition: opposing the UN General Assembly 'Zionism is racism' resolution of 1975; having to contest repeated "accidental" US-PLO contacts; having to oppose the opening of PLO offices in the U.S.; having to do political battle with influential elected officials who had come to champion the Palestinian-Arab cause (including Senators McGovern and Mathias).

² In line with Soviet policy, the "progressive" hard-Left fully supported the Arab cause. But only after the U.S. defeat in Viet-Nam did Jewish progressives take an active role in trying to influence U.S. policy toward Israel and the PLO.

It is important to recall that the Jewish leadership was simultaneously waging a formidable political campaign on behalf of Soviet Jews wishing to emigrate to Israel and the West. Their strategy was to use the leverage offered by detente to pry open the exits for Soviet Jews .

On the Arab-Israel front, however, Jewish politics was seldom "pro-active." The U.S. Jewish leadership was entangled in an incessant chain of events calling for a "Jewish reaction." The PLO's emergence as an actor on the international political stage and the propensity of Administrations to engage the Jewish community in bitter political battle over the sale of advanced weaponry to Israel's enemies, in the post Yom Kippur War period, called for reaction. There were still other quandaries necessitating reaction: the establishment of "settlements" -- Jewish towns and villages in Judea, Samaria, Gaza and the Goian --began to present itself as a prospective issue on the American Jewish leadership's agenda. Added to this environment were the mixed signals being sent by respected Israeli figures. For instance Ariel Sharon and Moshe Dayan, independently, suggested that Israel should not make a fetish about not talking to the PLO.

No discussion of Jewish perceptions toward the Arab-Israel conflict would be complete without at least cursory allusion to the issue of approval seeking. The psychological underpinnings of perceptual analysis require an acknowledgement that decision makers seek the approval of others in their political milieu. This approval seeking colors their actions. The political milieu of Jewish politics is liberalism. The affinity between the Jewish leadership and liberal causes is well established. As Ruth Wisse argues: "Jews are associated with liberalism the way the French are with wine: it is considered native to their region..."³ Not only did the Jewish leadership find themselves in the uncomfortable position of having to do political battle with

³ Ruth R. Wisse, *If I Am Not For Myself...The Liberal Betrayal of the Jews*, (New York: Free Press, 1992), page 21.

the conservative Nixon and Ford Administrations on sundry occasions, they also gradually forfeited the support of the liberal media and elected officials because of their defense of Israeli actions.

Approval seeking also takes place on the personal level between Jewish leader and government decision maker. Maintaining the friendship of key U.S. policy makers became an end in itself for some players. Other Jewish leaders prided themselves on their friendship with Henry Kissinger and did not want to take any action which might place so valued a connection at risk. Rabbi Israel Miller, Chairman of the Presidents Conference during the Kissinger years, spoke warmly of his personal friendship with both Kissinger and George Shultz, whom he called a "friend of the Jews."⁴ Kissinger played upon these feelings by occasionally cautioning Jewish leaders that he would not always be on the scene to nurture warm U.S.-Israel ties.

A theoretical analysis based on perceptual factors naturally places a heavy emphasis on the role of individuals. It is beyond the realm of this study to pose explanations justifying the perceptions held by the various individual players over time (although exploring "self-justification" can be an ingredient in perceptual analysis). Nor can gradations of perceptual change be quantified in order to make the case that a change in perception occurred at a certain point.

The belief system of individuals involved--to the extent that they shared a single set of beliefs--is part of the perceptual equation. The roles played by Joachim Prinz, Herschel Schacter, Jacob Stein, Yehuda Hellman, Israel Miller, Alexander Schindler, Nahum Goldmann and Rita Hauser (and others) were immensely important. It is through their publicly recorded activities that we can chart perceptual shifts.

⁴ Personal Interview, April 23, 1991, Yeshiva University, New York.

The June 1967 Six Day War resulted in permutations in American, Arab and U.S. Jewish policies and perceptions. As a direct outcome of the war's aftermath, United States foreign policy decision makers became persistently involved in efforts to bring about a regional peace between Arabs and Israelis. Partly because of the larger geostrategic rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States, the war yielded an American diplomatic compulsion to vigorously address the Arab-Israel conflict.

As a result of the War, the dynamics of US-USSR competition in the region shifted from a focus on the inter-Arab arena to the more explosive Arab-Israel problem.⁵ Since the United States had interests in both Israel and the Arab world, it was uniquely positioned to commence what is now almost euphemistically known as, the "peace process."

New Facts-On-The-Ground: The Paestinians

Israel's capture of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Golan Heights during the 1967 War created diplomatic possibilities which did not exist previously. Political Scientist Nadav Safran argues that the war "marked the beginnings of a new configuration...Essentially, the war gave rise to a 'bargaining situation' between Israel and its Arab neighbors, previously conspicuous by its absence, and thus made a settlement of the conflict possible *in principle* for the first time since 1949."⁶ On the very day Israel claimed victory-- June 7th-- President Johnson recalled McGeorge Bundy from his new post at the Ford Foundation to explore ways to translate the new facts-on-the-ground into a durable peace.⁷

Israel's capture of Judea, Samaria and Gaza during the Six Day War

⁵ Safran, *op. cit.*, page 383

⁶ Safran, *op. cit.*, page 414

⁷ "U.S. Vows To Seek A Durable Peace," *The New York Times*, June 8, 1967. Bundy did not produce any tangible results and headed a long line of Presidential envoys to struggle with the Arab-Israel conundrum.

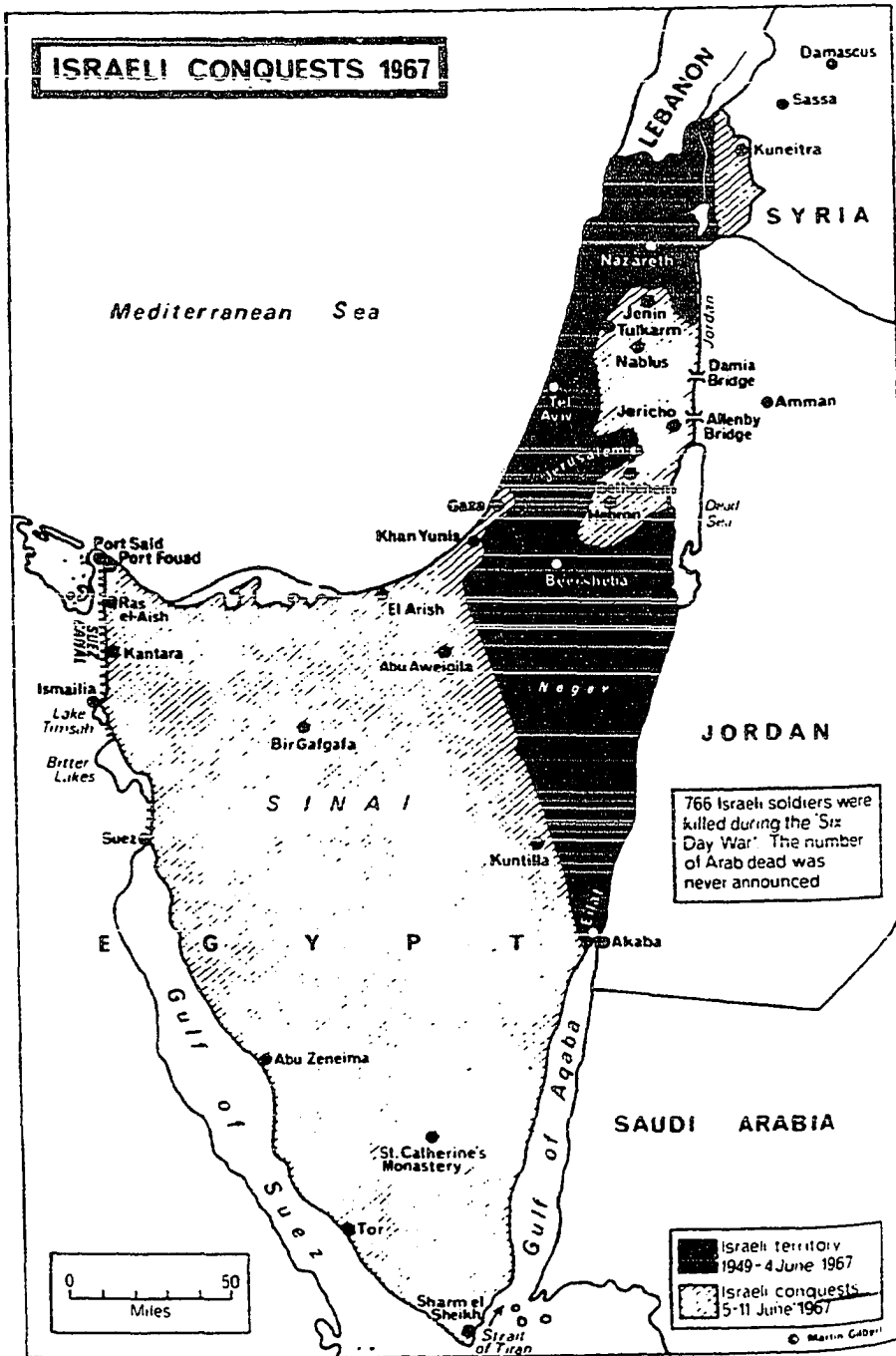


FIGURE #3

together with its 1.5 million Arab inhabitants, "reawakened a question that had been all but dormant since 1948: the political definition of the Palestinian Arabs. As a result of Israel's conquest, which united the Arabs of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and pre-'67 Israel under one government, it was possible, for the first time since 1948, to relate to the Palestinians as a single political body."⁸ Fatah efforts to conduct a "popular liberation war" in the Administered Territories failed. But Fatah continued to attack Israeli targets from Jordan or Lebanon.

Karamah

On March 8, 1968 a bus carrying Israeli children hit a Fatah-planted mine causing serious casualties. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) retaliated against a Fatah staging base at Karamah on the East Bank of the Jordan. Initially, the operation went smoothly with hundreds of Fatah fighters killed or wounded. As they sought to withdraw, the IDF force was surprised to find itself facing a superior Jordanian tank force. In the ensuing battle, the invading Israeli forces suffered heavy casualties.

The guerrillas described the incident as a "joint" battle in which they fought side by side with the Jordanian troops and prevented Israeli tanks from entering Amman...Yasir Arafat was elevated to the status of hero despite the fact he had fled the besieged town and left his lower-ranking fedayeen comrades to their fate. Foreign correspondents were told by publicity-hungry Fatah functionaries that Karamah was the "Alamo" of the Palestinian Arabs and was the event that put an end to the legend of an invincible Israeli army. The propaganda worked and Fatah rose even further in the esteem of Arabs throughout the Middle East...⁹

Now, from a position of strength, El Fatah joined the PLO as its dominant power at the May 1968 Palestine National Conference. The

⁸ *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol.9 p. 468

⁹ Schiff and Rothstein, op. cit. p 85.

Palestine National Covenant was re-written at this PNC session. In February 1969 Arafat finally wrested control of the PLO from Yahya Hammuda who had replaced Shukeiry in the wake of the Six Day War.¹⁰ Thereafter, the PLO under Arafat pursued a campaign of terror against Israeli and Jewish targets.¹¹ Eventually, as we shall note later, this activity paid off at the 1974 Rabat Arab Summit which declared the PLO to be the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians.

Propaganda of the Deed

From September until December 1967, the Fatah terror campaign resulted in 61 attacks against mostly civilian targets.¹² A survey by the Anti-Defamation League shows that between 1967 and 1977, the PLO killed 1,131 Israelis and Jews across six continents and wounded 2,471. In addition, 2,755 hostages were taken. About seven terrorist incidents occurred per month for the ten year period including 19 airliner hijackings and six attempted hijackings.¹³

Fatah terror (military attacks against civilian targets) has had a variety of politico-military objectives. For the purposes of this case study it is enough to emphasize the value of these attacks in promoting the centrality of the Palestinian cause as the crux of the Arab-Israel conflict. The unprecedented nature of the attacks propelled the Palestinian-Arab cause onto the world

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 469

¹¹ On May 30, 1972 the PLO-PFLP murdered 27 civilians at Lod airport; later in the year the PLO-Black September unit killed 11 Israeli Olympic athletes in Munich. Letter bombs were sent to President Nixon and former Secretary of State William Rogers; On March 1, 1973 the PLO assassinated U.S. Ambassador Cleo Noel and his deputy George Moore; in May 1974 the PLO-DFLP murdered 27 Israeli school children at Maalot.

¹² Bard & Himmelfarb, op. cit., p. 70

¹³ *New York Jewish Week*, February 9, 1979. A comprehensive catalog of terrorist incidents is available in Edward F. Mickolus, *Transnational Terrorism: A Chronology of Events, 1968-1979*, (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1980) and in the two volume follow-up work, *International Terrorism in the 1980s: A Chronology of Events*, which covers 1980 through 1987.

stage. For instance, the PLO conducted the first airplane hijacking in July 1968; the first destruction of a plane in mid-air in February 1970; and the first gun-and-grenade attack on airline passengers in December 1968. Beginning in 1972, the PLO also targeted non-Israeli and non-Jewish prey including a Lufthansa plane on a flight in the Far East and a JAL flight between Paris and Tokyo.¹⁴

Throughout its history, the mission of the PLO--replacement of Israel with a Palestinian state--defined the group's strategy. Thus the strategy called for elevating the Palestinian cause and the role of the PLO itself as champion of that cause. Tactically, the PLO used diplomacy as well as "armed struggle." Between 1974 and 1988, for reasons we shall wrestle with later, many observers, including some in the American Jewish community, came to believe that in the process of pursuing its strategy, the PLO's mission was transformed.

Joachim Prinz

Though his tenure as head of the Presidents Conference ended in December 1967, even a succinct sketch of Joachim Prinz's life and ideas encapsulates a world view that long dominated organized Jewish life, disappeared briefly between 1967 and 1977, and was then resurrected with vitality.

Joachim Prinz was Chairman of the Presidents Conference from 1965 until shortly after the June 1967 War. Prinz was born in Burchartsdorf, Germany in 1902. He became a strong supporter of Zionism early in his career. Imprisoned several times by the Gestapo, he was eventually expelled from Germany in 1937. Prinz made his way to the United States where he took a

¹⁴ Untitled fact-sheet dated January 1989 provided by *Information Department, Consulate General of Israel in New York.*

Conservative pulpit in Newark, New Jersey. He became active in Essex County Jewish affairs, the World Jewish Congress, and the Conference of Jewish Material Claims Against Germany. Prinz assumed the position of Chairman of the Presidents Conference in his capacity as president of the American Jewish Congress.¹⁵ He was a staunch civil rights advocate as well as a resolute civil libertarian.¹⁶

After 1948 Prinz quit the Zionist movement, "contending that the establishment of Israel made it obsolete."¹⁷ In 1962 he wrote: "To be a Jew in the United States under the specific freedom which is spelled out in the American idea, and lived in accordance with the mores of the country is radically different from anything which the Jews ever experienced."¹⁸ The Jews were not a nation, nor a race nor a faith. Rather, Prinz argued, they are a people. Israel's place, in the Prinz world view, is captured in the following passage:

It is probably one of our unavoidable dilemmas that the symbol of our relationship with Israel is the check which represents our annual contribution. Israel accepts it because she could not exist without it. We give it because it seems to be an expression of our participation. Whether we wish so or not, it creates a relationship of benefactor and beneficiary, not the happiest of human relations. And not one to win friends. But we are not here concerned with a popularity contest. What is lacking on the part of leaders of Israel is the simple comprehension of the facts of Jewish life in America, of the very special nature and structure of American Jewry...We need, indeed, a

¹⁵ Biographical details come from Joachim Prinz, *The Dilemma of the Modern Jew*, (Boston: Little Brown & Company, 1962) and *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 13, p. 1116. An interesting side note is that Adolf Eichmann personally spied on Prinz's last meeting with his Congregation in which he discussed plans to emigrate.

¹⁶ Prinz's concern with civil rights is particularly noteworthy given the tensions between Blacks and Jews in Newark during the mid to late 1960's. With these tensions rising in the inner city, Dr. Jonathan Prinz, Joachim's son, called upon Jews not to exaggerate Black anti-Semitism. Ironically, black militants in Newark targeted Prinz's synagogue for anti-Semitic assaults including firebombing. In May of 1969, a plot by the Black Panthers to kidnap Rabbi Prinz was uncovered and thwarted by Newark, New Jersey police. See *JTA*, May 15, 1969.

¹⁷ *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 13 p 1116

¹⁸ Prinz, *The Dilemma of the Modern Jew*, p. 192

Jewish Declaration of Political Independence ...This does not mean that American Jews should not take an active interest in the affairs of Israel, political and otherwise. But they can do this effectively only if they themselves have no political ties with any country other than their own...¹⁹

Joachim Prinz's tenure as head of the Jewish community ended just as pro-Israelism came to prevail as a driving force in Jewish affairs. It was just as well. For Prinz, Israel's purpose to American Jews was in the spiritual realm. Pro-Israelism smacked of nationalism and Jewish nationalism in the American context made no sense to Prinz. For the next ten years or so, subsequent incumbents in the Presidents Conference leadership defined their roles in ways Prinz would never have found comfortable. With some adaptation, the pendulum began to swing back in Prinz's direction by 1977. Meanwhile, Prinz became an outspoken advocate of a US-PLO dialogue and of Israeli withdrawal from the territories captured in the 1967 War.

Early Perceptual Milieu

The Six Day War unleashed a sense of identification and a feeling of unity among U.S. Jews with Israel that was remarkable in its scope, intensity of spirit and commitment. American television coverage of the war served as a catalyst to mobilize the Jewish community behind *pro-Israelism*.

Mindful of President Eisenhower's pressure on Israel to withdraw from lands captured in the 1956 Sinai Campaign, the President's Conference organized a pro-Israel rally in Lafayette Park opposite the White House on June 9, 1967. The theme of the demonstration was "victories won on the battlefield shall not be lost at the tables of diplomacy." Fifty thousand Jews from across the nation participated.²⁰

¹⁹ Prinz, op. cit. p. 210

²⁰ JTA, June 9, 1967

Some days later Abba Eban, the Israeli Foreign Minister, explicitly reiterated Israel's primary demand: face-to-face negotiations with its Arab neighbors. Eban made the call at the United Nations on June 19, 1967: "History summons us forward to permanent peace and the peace that we envisage can only be elaborated in frank and lucid dialogue between Israel and each of the states which have participated in the attempt to overthrow her sovereignty and undermine her existence...In free negotiations with each of our neighbors we shall offer durable and just solutions to our mutual advantage and honour."²¹ This was a stance the organized U.S. Jewish leadership could confidently promulgate in the American political system. The task was made easier by Arab reaction to the war.

Arab leaders made clear they they were not prepared to enter into a direct dialogue with Israel. Instead, they called for a complete and unconditional Israeli withdrawal to the 1949 boundaries. President Nasser of Egypt asserted: "Israel wants direct negotiations and wants a peace treaty signed. We reject this. Israel thus won a military victory but has so far been unable to achieve the political objective—signing a peace treaty with any of the Arab States surrounding it."²²

Johnson Administration policy reassured the pro-Israel community that the Eisenhower approach would not be repeated. In an address before the Department of State's Foreign Policy Conference for Educators in Washington on June 19, 1967, the President said: "There are some who have urged, as a single, simple solution, an immediate return to the situation as it

²¹ Speech reprinted in Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin, editors *The Israel Arab Reader A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*, (New York: A Pelican Original, 4th edition, 1984)

²² "We Shall Triumph," Speech by President Nassar, National Congress of thge Arab Socialist Union at Cairo University, Cairo, July 23, 1968, reprinted in *The Arab-Israel Reader*, op. cit.

was on June 4...this is not a prescription for peace, but for renewed hostilities."²³ Five months after the war, the U.S. policy of "land for peace" became embodied in UN Security Council Resolution 242, which was adopted November 22, 1967. Among other things the Resolution called for:

- Withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict;
- Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force.
- Achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem."²⁴

A golden era in Israel - American Jewish relations prevailed. American and Israeli policies were largely in sync. This harmony combined with Arab bellicosity contributed to the Jewish perception of the conflict as state centered and zero-sum. Nasser not only refused to provide Israel with a diplomatic triumph to match its military one, but the warlike situation continued to simmer and Israel's security troubles continued unabated. Terrorist attacks against civilian targets from the Egyptian and Jordanian borders commenced soon after the war ended.

Within months, Egypt initiated a prohibitively expensive War of Attrition on Israel's southern front. President Nasser's warlike rhetoric was

²³ Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1967, Part I (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969) pp. 632-634.

²⁴ UN document S/RES/242.

given added resonance by the number of Israeli dead and wounded.²⁵ From the end of the Six Day War until the end of the War of Attrition, 738 Israelis were killed, and 2,700 wounded.²⁶ In this context, American Jews had little reason to abandon their perception that the nature of the conflict was anything but zero-sum.

First Jewish Settlements

Weeks after the conclusion of the Six Day War, the IDF's *Nachal* branch established the first Jewish settlement (*Yishuv*) in the captured areas. A settlement was established on the strategic Golan Heights near Banyas.²⁷ Three months later, another *Yishuv* was erected at the militarily essential Etzion Bloc (or Gush Etzion). The Gush Etzion villages, located east of the north-south Jerusalem-Hebron road near the Armistice lines, had been lost to the Arabs in the 1948 War. Subsequently, other settlements were also erected on the Sinai coast and in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem.²⁸

Nascent disharmony over the settlement issue began to emerge, within the U.S. Jewish community, as early as October 1967. The dissension engaged groups at opposite ends of the pro-Israel periphery while the establishment center stood aloof. On one end of the Jewish political spectrum, a new group, Americans For Permanent Peace sought to mobilize public opinion behind LBJ's pro-Israel's policies. They complained that "Arabists" at the State Department were not adequately supporting the President's own position.

²⁵ At a May 28, 1967 Press Conference, Nassar said: "We will not accept any possibility of co-existence with Israel." The next day he said: "If we have succeeded to restore the situation to what it was before 1956, there is no doubt that God will help us and will inspire us to restore the situation to what it was prior to 1948." Quoted in Eban's speech to the UN on June 19, 1967, op. cit.

²⁶ JTA, October 6, 1970

²⁷ In Zionist parlance, a settlement is a "Yishuv." The entire Jewish presence in Palestine prior to the establishment of the state was considered "the Yishuv." By returning the Jewish people to their ancient homeland, settlement was considered the highest form of Zionism.

²⁸ JTA, July 25, 1967 and JTA, September 26, 1967

This group was spearheaded by Meshulam Riklis, an expatriate Israeli millionaire. Among other things, Riklis sponsored two advertisements in *The New York Times* articulating what can be termed a “peace for peace” approach.²⁹ This element of Jewish thinking, which perceived the Arab-Israel conflict as an unremitting zero-sum struggle, continued to grow at a modest pace. In making the case for Jewish settlement in the areas captured during the war, proponents were divided over whether to emphasize strategy, religion, culture, history, international law or a combination of these. Thus fragmented, their movement would fail to develop as a major broad-based force within the U.S. Jewish community and virtually none of the ideological organizations supporting settlement and peace-for-peace would ever take a leading role in the Presidents Conference. At the other end of the Jewish political spectrum were elements associated with the Israeli Left who wanted to use the period immediately after the war to pursue concessions supporting the concept of “land-for-peace.” Americans for a Progressive Israel called on the Jewish State to relinquish parts of the lands captured from the Arabs in exchange for free navigation through the Suez Canal.³⁰ In hindsight, it is apparent that the sentiments they espoused were close to what would later become the American Jewish political center. Others in the Jewish community, still further to the left, wanted to use the new facts-on-the-ground to address the Palestinian-Arab problem. I.F. Stone, for example, called for the creation of “an Arab state on the West Bank” linked “with Israel, perhaps also Jordan.”³¹ However, to a pro-Israel community concerned about direct negotiations and continued violence, settlements and Palestinian aspirations remained marginal issues.

²⁹ JTA, October 23, 1967.

³⁰ JTA, December 11, 1967

³¹ I.F. Stone, “Holy War,” *New York Review of Books*, August 3, 1967. Reprinted in Laquer and Rubin, op. cit.

Political Suasion: U.S.

Soon after the Six Day War, American policy makers demonstrated a sense of strategic mindedness regarding a possible solution of the Arab-Israel conflict. This strategy was embodied by UN S/C Resolution 242 of November 1967. Shortly thereafter, the U.S. made clear its interest in parlaying changes on the ground into a bargaining situation which would have Israel trade (most) of the captured lands for peace with the Arab states. By making strategic choices, such as publicly criticizing Israeli actions in the captured territories, the U.S. was forcing other players in the arena to make their own choices. It had already set the all important agenda for the peace process by identifying "land for peace" as the only avenue of conflict resolution. It was in this context that the State Department issued its first condemnation of Jewish settlement activity in January 1968. It criticized the building of housing units in the Mt. Scopus and Sheikh Jarrah areas of Jerusalem.³² Then, in July 1969, the U.S. joined in a UN Security Council vote on the status of Jerusalem making it clear that America did not recognize Jewish claims to Jerusalem.³³

Herschel Schacter's Pro-Israelism

Rabbi Herschel Schacter succeeded Joachim Prinz as chairman of the Presidents Conference at the end of 1967.³⁴ Unlike his predecessor, Schacter was comfortable with the new orientation of pro-Israelism sweeping the community. Schacter's tenure as Chairman of the Presidents Conference

³² JTA, January 4, 1968

³³ *Department of State Bulletin*, July 28, 1969, pp. 76-77.

³⁴ Schacter was born in 1917 in Brooklyn, New York. He began his career in the Orthodox rabbinate with a Connecticut congregation. During the Second World War Schacter served as a U.S. army chaplain and ministered to the survivors of the Buchenwald concentration camp. In 1946 he renewed his livelihood as the Rabbi of the Mosholu Jewish Center in the Bronx, New York, an association which he maintains. Rabbi Schacter is also a highly respected Talmudic scholar and professor of Talmud at Yeshiva University. He became Chairman of the Presidents Conference in his capacity as President of the Religious Zionists of America (*Mizrachi*). See *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 14, p. 936.

came at a pivotal point in American Jewish relations with Israel. Arab terrorism-- including airliner hijackings--was helping to spotlight the Palestinian cause. As the first Presidents Conference chairman to assume office after the 1967 War, Schacter helped set an energetic tone for handling disputes with the White House and State Department. He believed that the Arab-Israel struggle remained zero-sum in nature. Yet he recognized that Israel's capture of Judea, Samaria, Gaza and the Golan changed the perception that the Jewish State was the aggrieved party to the dispute. Under Schacter's leadership, the Presidents Conference took a strong stance against an imposed solution to the conflict as well as efforts to circumvent Israel's insistence on direct talks with the Arab states. Among Schacter's first public actions was to critique the State Department for its Mount Scopus condemnation. He warned that America's pro-Israel line was in danger of eroding if the mutuality of American and Israeli interests was not publicly articulated.³⁵

The job of chairman is essentially the same regardless of the incumbent. Schacter, like other Chairmen, expended much time seeking to build an internal strategic and tactical consensus. The Chairman is largely dependent on a small professional staff and in particular on the Executive Director (during Schacter's tenure, Executive Vice Chairman Yehuda Hellman). The Executive Director wields formidable day-to-day power over the activities of the organization. Schacter attributes this simply to the fact that many of the Presidents Conference members are busy running their respective organizations or otherwise professionally engaged. With regard to external politics, he expresses awareness of subtle White House efforts to circumvent the Presidents Conference when it disapproves of the group's policy direction.³⁶

With increasing regularity, Schacter found it necessary to lobby the

³⁵ JTA, January 22, 1968

³⁶ *Personal Interview, April 23, 1991*

Administration in support of Israeli positions: supporting Israel's continued insistence on direct talks with its Arab neighbors; defending Israel's policy of retaliatory strikes following terrorist attacks; and calling on the U.S. to sell Israel advanced American military aircraft. He called on President Johnson to "make good America's commitment to Israel by providing it with the necessary arms that would serve as a deterrent to war."³⁷ Eventually, the U.S. did agree to such a sale.

Perceptually, ten months after the War, Israel presented, and the Jewish leadership accepted, a zero-sum assessment of the struggle. Israel's UN Ambassador Yosef Tekoah told the the Presidents Conference that Arab hostility toward Israel remained unchanged.³⁸

Politically, pro-Israel activity solidified the Presidents Conference in its role as the central address of American Jewry. While it took no position in the Presidential race between Hubert Humphrey and Richard Nixon, both candidates presented their positions on the Middle East conflict before the organization.

In the wake of negative U.S. reaction to Israel's retaliatory attack against Beirut Airport, a President's Conference delegation met with outgoing Secretary of State Dean Rusk in early January 1969. From the viewpoint of political suasion, the U.S. stance can be understood as an instance of situational advantage seeking. IDF retaliation in response to terror attacks delayed an Israel political response, thus postponing addressing the fundamental problem. In a refrain that would be heard time and again, the American Secretary of State told the delegation of Jewish leaders that "basic" U.S. policy on Israel was unchanged.³⁹ Insinuating change while denying it

³⁷ JTA, September 12, 1968

³⁸ JTA, April 17, 1968

³⁹ JTA, January 3, 1969

was taking place can be interpreted as a further manifestation of political manipulation. These assurances did not, at any rate, assuage the Jewish leadership. The Jewish leadership launched an educational and public relations campaign aimed against an imposed solution. In March 1969, the Presidents Conference brought a large contingent of Jewish groups to Washington for a forum on US-Israel relations.⁴⁰

The following month, Schacter met with Secretary of State William Rogers. Again the topic was a perceived drift in U.S. policy away from Israel, and again the Jewish leader received fresh assurances that there was no change in policy. Nevertheless, the Jewish leaders were aware of important trends within the American political system: A pro-Arab group now lobbied for the creation of a Palestinian state on the West Bank,⁴¹ while an American Jewish Committee report divulged that anti-Israel propaganda in the U.S. had become a significant factor in public opinion.⁴²

In this context, with Israel fast becoming ever more dependent on U.S. economic and military aid,⁴³ with the tide of public sentiment slowly shifting, tensions in the US-Israel relationship would have grievous consequences for Israel's ability to insist on direct negotiations to solve the conflict. Such direct talks would represent tacit Arab acknowledgement of Israel's legitimacy. Schacter, keenly aware of the gravity of perceptual factors, returned to the theme of Israel's image in a speech delivered at an international parley of Jewish leaders held in Geneva. The Presidents Conference, he declared, would conduct public relations activities on behalf of Israel in the United

⁴⁰ JTA, January 26, 1969

⁴¹ JTA, May 6, 1969

⁴² JTA, July 11, 1969

⁴³ JTA, October 1, 1969. Western Europe imposed a de facto military boycott on Israel. Meanwhile, the Soviet bloc continued to supply the Arab countries. Consequently, Israel's financial and military dependency on the U.S. was solidified.

States.⁴⁴ There is no evidence of any follow up to this pledge or that the Presidents Conference ever did more, in connection with public relations, than issue sporadic statements and press releases.

Back from Switzerland, Schacter and Hellman made plans to welcome Prime Minister Golda Meir to the United States. She visited Washington, New York and Los Angeles. Meir was immensely popular in the United States, especially among American Jews. Nevertheless, arrangements had to be made so that she was greeted everywhere by adoring (often large) crowds. It is worth recalling her view of the Palestinian-Arab issue which was largely shared by the U.S. Jewish leadership. Meeting with President Nixon, she addressed the Palestinian problem this way: "Between the Mediterranean and the borders of Iraq, in what was once Palestine, there are now two countries, one Jewish and one Arab, and there is no room for a third. The Palestinians must find the solution to their problem together with that Arab country, Jordan, because a 'Palestinian state' between us and Jordan can only become a base from which it will be even more convenient to attack and destroy Israel."⁴⁵ The Jewish leadership also largely embraced Israel's overall negotiating strategy regarding the Administered Territories as outlined to the Knesset by Foreign Minister Abba Eban: "Three demands which Israel will not waive are a permanent presence at Sharm el-Sheikh (southeastern coast of Sinai), a unified Jerusalem despite concessions to Jordan over the Holy Places, and a Golan Heights for ever out of Syrian hands."⁴⁶

In the late 1960s cleavages within the Presidents Conference did not involve U.S.- Israel relations. There was a conflict of visions over politics and religion. In December 1969, Rabbi Wolf Kelman threatened to pull the

⁴⁴ JTA, July 23, 1969

⁴⁵ Golda Meir, *My Life*, (New York:, G.P. Putnam, 1975), p. 390.

⁴⁶ Statement to the Knesset, 13 May, 1969, cited in Yehuda Lukacs , editor, *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: A Documentary Record 1967-1990*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press and ICPME, 1992), p. 181.

(Conservative) Rabbinical Assembly out of the Presidents Conference because the chairman was not from the Conservative or Reform branches.⁴⁷

The Roger's Plan

In a further instance of political suasion, where U.S. policy was intended to force Israel and the American Jewish community into making an accommodating response, the United States unveiled the "Roger's Plan." On December 9, 1969, Secretary of State William Rogers, speaking in Washington, unveiled a forceful statement of U.S. policy embracing "land-for-peace" and a number of Palestinian-Arab demands: "We believe that while recognized political boundaries must be established and agreed upon by the parties, any changes in the preexisting lines should not reflect the weight of conquest and should be confined to insubstantial alterations required for mutual security. We do not support expansionism."

On the Palestinian issue, Rogers said: "There can be no lasting peace without a just settlement of the problem of those Palestinians whom the wars of 1948 and 1967 have made homeless...the problem posed by the refugees will become increasingly serious if their future is not resolved. There is a new consciousness among the young Palestinians who have grown up since 1948 which needs to be channeled away from bitterness and frustration toward hope and justice."⁴⁸

U.S. plans to offer a binding solution to the Arab-Israel conflict were based on talks the U.S. had held with its European allies and with the Soviet Union. Nadav Safran explains:

⁴⁷ JTA, December 22, 1969. Kelman later become associated with the International Center for Peace in the Middle East (ICPME).

⁴⁸ *Department of State Bulletin*, January 5, 1970, pp.7-11

During the month of October 1969 the American and Soviet negotiators hammered steadily at the outlines of an Egyptian-Israeli settlement. On October 28, 1969, the agreed results were summarized by the American side in a brief, which the United States government, for some unknown reason, submitted under its *sole* sponsorship to the governments of the Soviet Union, Britain, and France as well as Israel, Egypt and Jordan. The brief envisaged essentially a binding peace agreement and an Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 boundaries, except for the Gaza Strip, which was to be subject to discussion between Israel, Egypt and Jordan. The Palestinian refugees were to have the right to either repatriation on the basis of an agreed annual quota, or resettlement outside Israel with compensation..."⁴⁹

Given their perception of the Arab-Israel conflict the Jewish leadership's reaction was predictable: The struggle still seemed moored in a zero sum categorization; The image of the Palestinian-Arabs remained highly negative and associated with terror; The Roger's Plan materialized as precisely the imposed solution the American Jewish leadership had sworn to oppose. Consequently, the leadership viewed vehement opposition to the Roger's Plan as its only course of action. Within two weeks of Roger's address, Schacter arranged for a meeting between a Presidents Conference delegation and the Secretary. Afterwards, Schacter let it be known publicly that there had indeed been a "serious erosion" in State Department Mideast policy.⁵⁰ In an "emergency" follow-up session held in late January 1970, the leadership again voiced concern over the prospect of an "imposed solution" which would force Israel out of the lands it had captured during the war without any direct contact between the principles. The Jewish leaders implored the Department of State not to make specific proposals and to

⁴⁹ Safran, p. 434

⁵⁰ JTA, December 23, 1969

rescind those already enunciated.⁵¹

First Clandestine US-PLO Contacts

Imperfect information is a property of manipulation. While American Jewish perceptions about Palestinian-Arab intentions remained fixed, United States officials determined early on that they could do business with the PLO. Shortly after Henry Kissinger became the Director of the National Security Council (NSC), and unbeknownst to the Jewish leadership, he initiated a secret dialogue covering security issues with the PLO. Robert C. Ames was ostensibly a junior diplomat assigned to the U.S. Embassy in Beirut. In fact, he was a key CIA operative whose task was to serve as Kissinger's conduit to Ali Hassan Salameh, the PLO security chief. Befittingly, Ames was personally sympathetic to the Palestinian cause. He began what turned out to be years of contact with the PLO. Kissinger and Nixon were mostly interested in working out security arrangements with the PLO in order to protect American diplomats from attacks by "radicals." Later, the CIA would learn that Salameh was actually head of Arafat's Black September unit responsible for airliner hijacking. According to Arafat biographers Janet and John Wallach:

Ames embodied American policy towards the PLO. He became the CIA's national intelligence officer, its chief Middle East analyst and top undercover operator. He became George Shultz's resident Palestinian expert and a close personal friend. Ames' relationship with Khaled al-Hassan and with Hassan

⁵¹ JTA, January 27, 1970. Nevertheless, US Assistant Secretary of State Joseph J. Sisco said privately that the Palestinian-Arab component to peace making was critical; that "an honourable and durable peace is not possible unless it meets the legitimate concerns of the many people whose lives are touched daily by the so-called Palestinian question." See, John K. Cooley, *Green March Black September, The Story of the Palestinian Arabs*, (London: Cass, 1973), p. 191.

Salameh reaped dividends for the United States.⁵²

"Salami tactics"

Typically, political suasion takes place in an environment in which a frontal political assault is unavailing. In such an ambiance decision makers can achieve their goals by taking gradual and incremental measures. The Rogers Plan directly threatened Israel's American Jewish supporters with the prospect of an imposed solution. Their sense of gloom was only exacerbated by the continued casualties in the War of Attrition. Nixon decided to re-define the Roger's Plan. In late January, he sent Meir a message re-stating the U.S. commitment to the Jewish State. It was a partial tactical success hailed in Israel as halting the "erosion" in relations but leaving U.S. Jewish leaders restive.⁵³ On July 24, 1970, Nixon sent another note to Meir providing important mitigating assurances on the Roger's Plan.⁵⁴ According to Safran:

These included; (1) American recognition of the need to preserve the Jewishness of Israel--to allay Israeli fears about the refugee provisions in the Rogers Plan and recent statements on the subject by Nasser; (2) American acknowledgement that Israel's borders would not be the same as those of June 4, 1967--a more favorable rephrasing of Rogers' "insubstantial modification" clause; (3) an assurance that the United States would not be a party to an imposed solution--allaying a long-standing Israeli fear and unequivocally rejecting a long-standing Egyptian demand; (4) support for a peace settlement based upon secure and recognized boundaries as the outcome of negotiations between the parties to the conflict; (5) agreement that Israeli troops would remain on the cease-fire lines until a contractual peace agreement was signed; (6) a pledge to maintain the military balance in the Middle East core and to continue the supply of arms to Israel; and (7) a promise of continuing large-

⁵² Wallach & Wallach, p. 413. In his memoirs, Kissinger insinuates that the first contacts were the result of PLO overtures to the U.S. in mid-1973 and that he "took care" to inform the Israelis. In November 1973, Kissinger writes, he dispatched General Walters to Morocco for, he implies, the first (albeit procedural) meeting between the PLO and the United States. Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, (Boston: Little Brown, 1982), pp. 626-627

⁵³ JTA, January 27, 1970

⁵⁴ Safran, op. cit., page 446

scale American economic aid.⁵⁵

Even a modified Roger's Plan implied Israel's evacuation from the areas captured in the Six Day War; Menachem Begin's Gachal faction [*Herut* dominated], which had been serving in the Cabinet since before the war, left the Meir Government.⁵⁶ Begin accepted the cease fire component of the plan but opposed a peace process predicated on an exchange of land for peace.

Acceptance of the Roger's Plan contributed, haltingly, to an end to the War of Attrition. Beginning in the fall of 1969, the Meir Government "was receiving conflicting signals" about the War of Attrition "from Richard Nixon's Byzantine Administration...Rogers was pressing for a cease-fire...Kissinger...(for) escalation."⁵⁷ Following a spate of military and diplomatic brinkmanship involving the U.S., USSR, Egypt and Israel, the United States helped broker a cease fire standstill agreement ending the War of Attrition on August 6, 1970. This was accomplished without direct talks between the parties. Nevertheless, Israel and her supporters in the U.S. were relieved the fighting had ended because from the Six Day War until the fall of 1970, 738 IDF soldiers had been killed, most on the Egyptian front.⁵⁸

Perceptual Shift

Nasser's acceptance of the Roger's Plan (and Jordanian assent) made untenable the claim that the Arab states sought only Israel's destruction. It also became ever more difficult to play down the Palestinian-Arab

⁵⁵ Safran, *op. cit.*, page 446

⁵⁶ The political party of the Jabotinsky movement, *Herut*, joined forces with smaller center-right parties to form Gahal in 1965. Years later Gahal became Likud. See, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 4, p. 392.

⁵⁷ Conor Cruise O'Brien, *op. cit.*, p. 494. O'Brien cites Yitzhak Rabin's memoirs (p.105 and 118-119) for this supposition.

⁵⁸ JTA, October 6, 1970. Israel accused Egypt of violating the agreement almost immediately by moving missile sites in the standstill area forward. Israel, therefore, decided to suspend participation in the Jarring talks in September 1970.

component of the conflict. Palestinian terrorist attacks against civilian targets served to radiate media awareness to the Palestinian issue. People were asking who the Palestinians were and what they wanted. This negative attention to the PLO-cause was an improvement, from its point of view, over no attention at all. The events of Black September are a case in point. The Hashemite regime found its sovereignty threatened by the PLO which had created a "state-within-a state" inside Jordan. The PLO's ability to capture international attention reached a turning point with a spate of airliner hijackings to Jordan. On September 15, 1970, with behind-the-scenes support from Israel and the United States (to obstruct a Syrian advance into Jordan), King Hussein preserved Hashemite sovereignty by eliminating the PLO as a military presence in Jordan. Far from resulting in political oblivion, the PLO's military defeat further heightened interest in the Palestinian cause.⁵⁹

Further undermining the zero-sum perceptual impression was the call made by Anwar Sadat, Nasser's successor, in February 1971. Sadat declared that: "If Israel withdrew her forces in Sinai to the Passes, I would be willing to reopen the Suez Canal; to have my forces cross to the East Bank...to make a solemn official declaration of a cease-fire; to restore diplomatic relations with the United States; and to sign a peace agreement with Israel through the efforts of Dr. Jarring, the representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations."⁶⁰ Whether one ascribes Israel's lack of positive response to internal Israeli politics or to doubts about Sadat's veracity, the offer was an added manifestation of a changing political environment.

In this new perceptual milieu -- four years after the Six Day War-- the outline of American policy had begun to define itself: The U.S. would be

⁵⁹ Despite or indeed because of the bloodshed, the Palestinian cause received worldwide attention. Meanwhile, The *Christian Science Monitor*, which at the time had a small but influential readership began to champion the Palestinian cause, thus becoming the first of the prestige press to do so. Its chief Middle East correspondent at the time was John K. Cooley, who appeared to favor the dismantlement of Israel. See John K. Cooley, *op.cit.*

⁶⁰ cited in O'Brien, *op. cit.*, p. 504-505.

supportive of Israel's overall security concerns but not its diplomatic strategy for direct talks with the Arab states. Concurrently, the U.S. would not countenance the Jewish State's permanent control over the territories captured as a result of the 1967 War. Sporadic violence in Judea and Samaria, as well as terrorist attacks abroad, reinforced the perception that the Palestinian component of the conflict had become a compelling factor. Now, resolving the Palestinian issue, while perhaps not the linch-pin of the peace process, had emerged as a collateral goal.

Buying Time

The U. S. Jewish leadership was, understandably, in no position to develop its own agenda for an Arab-Israel peace. Scanning the political landscape, they found an Israeli government which did not claim the captured territories (other than Jerusalem); and appeared willing to exchange some land for peace in return for direct talks with would connote Arab recognition of Israel.⁶¹ Domestically, the U.S. Jewish leadership was taxed politically by its Israel related responsibilities and the emerging issue of Soviet Jewry. Specialized agencies and a division of labor did not absolve the Presidents Conference from addressing the full gamut of communal concerns.

During the first term of the Nixon Administration, Jewish leaders would routinely meet with various U.S. officials. These discussions invariably covered old ground, with American policy makers arguing that geography should not be the determining factor in a possible settlement and Jewish leaders countering that an imposed solution would backfire and make the area even more violent.⁶² The consistent goal of the Jewish leadership

⁶¹ Meeting with the Presidents Conference in March, Israel's Ambassador to the US, Yitchak Rabin said that Israel would never agree to a total withdrawal from the West Bank and asked the Presidents Conference to mobilize public opinion to explain its policy. See JTA, March 9, 1971

⁶² JTA, March 17, 1971

was to forestall Nixon Administration pressure on Israel to make concessions in the absence of direct talks; to counter U.S. criticism of Israeli policies in the Administered Territories; and simultaneously, to lobby for the sale of U.S. military hardware to Israel. In some ways, American Jewish and Israeli roles had become reversed. By the end of 1971, when Meir again visited with Nixon, the Israeli leader found it necessary to reassure the Presidents Conference that, despite differences, Nixon and Rogers had received her with warmth and that the U.S. was not pressuring Israel diplomatically, economically or politically.⁶³

Jewish support for Israeli policies was not based on an ideological conviction regarding the West Bank (or Sinai for that matter--Sadat's offer was still being debated internally by the Israeli leadership), nor upon the expectation of a more propitious diplomatic opportunity over the horizon. Indeed, the American Jewish response to Sadat's expulsion of Soviet advisors in July 1972 took its cue from the Israelis who were highly dubious about Egyptian intentions. Thus, in the absence of a proactive Israeli diplomatic strategy, the actions of the U.S. Jewish leaders were premised on little more than the need to buy time. Such efforts met with mixed results.

Meanwhile, the State Department advanced the position that any measures taken by the Jewish State to buttress a continued presence in the Territories, including Jerusalem, were inappropriate. William Wexler, who had taken over from Schacter as Chairman of the Presidents Conference in December 1969, urged the State Department not to oppose Israeli stewardship of Jerusalem and to halt its critical rhetoric.⁶⁴ Wexler's term was relatively

⁶³ JTA, December 8, 1971. Tone aside, the substance of Nixon's position was, as he told Congress in February 1971 that: "No lasting settlement can be achieved in the Middle East without addressing the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people." In 1972 he said: "The Arabs saw the new State of Israel as an unwanted intruder in the Arab world and the plight of the Palestinian refugees as an historic injustice..." Cited in Cooley, op. cit., p. 191

⁶⁴ JTA, September 17 & 27, 1971

uneventful insofar as the US-PLO issue. Apprehensive about the military balance of power in view of Soviet support to the Arab states, the Presidents Conference forcefully urged the White House to permit the sale of Phantom jet aircraft to the Israel Air Force.⁶⁵ When U.S. aid was promised or forthcoming, the leadership complained that it was being made contingent on Israeli concessions.⁶⁶

In February 1972, Jacob Stein of Long Island, N.Y., replaced Wexler as Chairman of the Presidents Conference. Stein maintained close ties with the Republican party and would later serve as White House liaison to the Jewish community in 1981. Initially, at least, Stein's primary focus was not Israel. He met a number of times with Rogers on the plight of the Jews of the Soviet Union.⁶⁷ He also warned about the dangers of the oil lobby to pro-Israel interests and sought to draw attention to the plight of Iraq's persecuted Jewish community.⁶⁸ In March 1973, Stein hosted a visit to the Presidents Conference by Meir, who discussed the status of U.S. aid, terrorism, Soviet Jewry and other issues. In April, he brought a delegation of Jewish leaders to the White House for a meeting with President Nixon on Soviet Jewry.⁶⁹

Whispers of Discontent

Until after the 1973 Yom Kippur War voices within the Jewish community critical of Israeli policies were scarcely granted a communally sanctioned platform. "Respectable" criticism was muted and private. That it

⁶⁵ JTA, October 28, 1971

⁶⁶ Wexler made this criticism at a B'nai B'rith dinner. See JTA, November 1, 1971. Wexler, an optometrist by training, was born in 1913 in Ohio. Later, he became active politically and in the Jewish community in Savannah, Georgia. He became a leader of B'nai B'rith and chaired the Presidents Conference between 1968 and 1972. Subsequently, he took over the presidency of the World Conference of Jewish Organizations from Nahum Goldmann. See, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 16, p. 479

⁶⁷ JTA, October 3, 1972

⁶⁸ JTA, November 16, 1972 and February 2, 1973

⁶⁹ JTA, April 20, 1973

existed at all can be inferred from speculative remarks about critiquing Israeli policy. For example, Jewish Agency Chairman Louis Pincus told a meeting of the Presidents Conference held in Jerusalem that mutual criticism between Israel and the Diaspora should be encouraged, it being understood that final decisions should be left with Israel's decision makers.⁷⁰ In any event, Israel's new Ambassador to the United States, Simcha Dinnetz, said in March of 1973 that he would keep lines of communication with American Jewry open through its "authoritative roof organization," the Presidents Conference.⁷¹

Meanwhile, U.S.-PLO contacts between Robert Ames and Ali Hasan Salameh resumed during the summer of 1973. Only months earlier Black September had murdered Cleo Noel, the U.S. Ambassador to Sudan, and his deputy George Curtis. Ames was led to believe that Black September was not controlled by the PLO. "Salameh...told Ames that Arafat opposed Black September's tactics and was willing to undertake a commitment in the future to protect the lives of American diplomats."⁷²

New Opportunities for Political Suasion

On October 6, 1973, Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack on Israel in what came to be known as the Yom Kippur War. The outbreak of war presented U.S. policy makers with opportunities to promote an exchange of land for peace. Nixon and Kissinger could not have agreed more with Karl Von Clausewitz who wrote: "War is not merely a political act but a real political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, a carrying out of the same by other means."⁷³ The Administration now intended to capitalize on the war as a political instrument in order to accomplish goals stymied by

⁷⁰ JTA, November 22, 1972

⁷¹ JTA, March 28, 1973

⁷² Wallach & Wallach, op. cit. page 409

⁷³ Karl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, Trans. O.J. Matthijis Jolles, book 1, chapter 1, section 24, p. 16 (1943 edition).

its absence.

Conor Cruise O'Brien suggests the Administration did more than take advantage of the opportunities war presented. He poses the provocative query: "Did Henry Kissinger, during 1973, encourage Anwar Sadat to launch an attack on Israel?" Apparently, according to evidence collated by O'Brien, "Kissinger did just that."⁷⁴

If Kissinger did indeed suggest--indirectly and/or implicitly-- to Sadat the need for a military initiative ("heating up"), this was sound advice in terms of realpolitik, from a statesman in Kissinger's position, to one in Sadat's position...Kissinger had strongly urged the Israelis--through Ambassador Rabin-- to respond favorably to Sadat's initiative of February 1971. Israel's response had been negative from the beginning and became--by 1973--triumphalist and defiant. Nor was the Nixon Administration, at any time from 1971 to 1973, in a position to shift Israel's position by the usual kinds of pressure...⁷⁵

Even if O'Brien's analysis is correct, there was, of course, no way for American Jews to know it at the time. When the war broke out the President's Conference held an emergency meeting attended by 300 Jewish leaders on October 8th, mostly to help the United Jewish Appeal gear up for a massive crisis fund raising drive. Privately, several of the leaders may have known from Ambassador Dinnitz that the emergency airlift of military supplies to Israel was being delayed by Kissinger or Defense Secretary Schlesinger or both. Within the week, the group reconvened in Washington to demonstrate solidarity with Israel and to urge the Nixon Administration to deliver "military, political, and moral support" to the Jewish State.⁷⁶ Meanwhile, in the midst of the Yom Kippur war, the PLO leadership

⁷⁴ O'Brien, op. cit., p. 512.

⁷⁵ O'Brien, op. cit., pp. 512-518. These suppositions are based on Mohamed Heikal's *Autumn of Fury, The Assassination of Sadat*, pps. 49-50 and 64

⁷⁶ JTA, October 11, 1973. See too, *Richard Nixon, RN The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1978), p. 924. Nixon was enmeshed in Watergate leaving Kissinger in de facto control of US foreign policy.

contacted the U.S. and offered to join the peace process if the Administration would stop supplying weapons to Israel.⁷⁷

Militarily, Israel had “won” the war and captured additional territory from the attacking states. But in actuality, Israel had been trounced. Beyond the ghastly loss of life, the war paved the way for a diplomatic and public relations debacle. The repercussions of the Arab oil embargo set shock waves of insecurity through the American Jewish polity. In the war’s aftermath, the tradition of American Jewish support for Israeli policies became slowly unraveled. Simultaneously and not coincidentally, the Administration went to great lengths to placate the Jewish leadership about its goals and intentions. One repercussion of the war was intense U.S. pressure, orchestrated by Kissinger, on Israel to make territorial concessions. Immediately after the war, Meir traveled to Washington in an effort to prevail upon Nixon to attenuate U.S. demands. She then traveled to New York for meetings with Jewish leaders at the Conference of Presidents. Afterwards, they launched a major political effort to get the Administration to appropriate \$2.2 billion in emergency aid to Israel, block Soviet pressure on the Jewish State and assist in bringing about the release of Israeli POW’s.⁷⁸ At the same time, they grappled with how to address the negative effect the Arab oil embargo was having on Israel’s standing in public opinion.⁷⁹

According to Safran, the war dramatically changed the American perspective on the Arab-Israel conflict: “The United States sought to trade off the Israeli assets for the establishment and reinforcement of American influence in Egypt in order to advance peace, avert war, and remove the Arab

⁷⁷ Wallach & Wallach, *op. cit.* Kissinger writes: “We returned no reply while the war was going on. But its tense aftermath caused us to take another look at Palestinian feelers.” Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 627.

⁷⁸ JTA, November 5, 1973

⁷⁹ JTA, November 7, 1973

oil embargo."⁸⁰ On November 11, 1973, forceful US diplomatic pressure on Israel led to its acceptance of an initial Six Point Agreement with Egypt signed at Kilometer 101.

Toward the end of November, Stein, accompanied by Yehuda Hellman, led a President's Conference delegation to Tel Aviv. They told Israeli leaders of new assurances they had received from the Nixon Administration that the United States would not pressure Israel.⁸¹ Nixon's promise is understandable given his attitude about Jews and his Watergate travails. The President, according to Kissinger, believed that "Jews formed a powerful cohesive group in American society...that they put the interests of Israel above everything else....that their control of the media made them dangerous adversaries."⁸² Matters were further complicated because of Kissinger's own Jewish heritage. He believed his ethnic background to be a handicap. "I was born Jewish, but the truth is that has no significance for me."⁸³ However, this attitude did not stop Kissinger from exploiting his Jewishness when it suited him.

International Conference & PLO Participation

Kissinger made plans to convene an international peace conference in Geneva. According to Safran:

One remaining obstacle in the way to the conference was the problem of Palestinian participation. Kissinger had tentatively worked out with Sadat a proposal wherein the invitation to the conference would say that the question of Palestinian participation will be taken up at the first stage of the conference. The Israeli government strongly opposed any specific reference to the Palestinians and wanted it stated that invitations to any other countries or groups could be sent only with the agreement of all the primary participants--in other words, it wanted a veto-power over any invitation to the Palestine

⁸⁰ Safran, op. cit. page 508.

⁸¹ JTA, November 27, 1973

⁸² Cited by Walter Isaacson *Kissinger*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), p. 560

⁸³ Isaacson, op. cit., p. 561.

Liberation Organization. Kissinger realized that the issue was fundamental to Israel and therefore made a special effort to accommodate it....The United States gave Israel a written private assurance that it would oppose, to the point of veto, any invitation to the PLO without Israel's consent.⁸⁴

An international Conference was convened, briefly, in December 1973 attended by Israel, Egypt, Jordan, the United States and the Soviet Union. Syria had refused to participate. Nevertheless, further momentum was achieved on both the Egyptian and Syrian fronts as a consequence of Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy. On January 18, 1974, at Kilometer 101, Israel and Egypt signed the first disengagement agreement. An Israeli-Syrian agreement regarding the Golan was signed on May 31, 1974. Jewish leaders who had been meeting with Kissinger periodically hailed these latest achievements.⁸⁵

Walters Meets Salameh in Rabat

Kissinger was also operating on a second track. On November 3, 1973, General Vernon Walters, the deputy director of the CIA, had been dispatched by Kissinger to meet secretly with Ali Hassan Salameh. According to Kissinger, the meeting assured "PLO quiescence" while the Secretary was trying to bring about the Arab-Israel disengagement agreements.⁸⁶ In his book, *Silent Missions*, Walters says that as a result of this meeting: "Attacks on Americans, at least by Arafat's faction of the PLO, ceased...I saw them alone and unarmed in a part of the world sympathetic to their cause. My position made me a major target. I had studied their past, their hopes, their dreams, even their poetry. I was able to convey to them the message that I had been ordered to deliver. We were able to communicate and there were no further

⁸⁴ Safran, op. cit., page 517. Parenthetically, it should be noted that Israel's long-standing demand for direct bilateral talks was circumvented by the international conference modality.

⁸⁵ Kissinger met with the Jewish leadership in March and again at the end of April 1974, see JTA, March 13, April 29, & May 31, 1974.

⁸⁶ Kissinger, memoirs, vol. 2, p. 628-29

acts of blood between us."⁸⁷

Walters also met with Khaled al-Hassan, a leading PLO ideologist, on March 7, 1974 in Rabat. This meeting went beyond strictly security issues. According to Janet and John Wallach, al-Hassan had "resigned from the PLO Executive Committee and was publicly supporting a two-state solution and coexistence with Israel."⁸⁸ The purpose of this meeting was to discover PLO intentions on a variety of issues. The PLO's political offensive was closely tied to Arafat's perception of what the Americans wanted with regard to moderation. "We thought we heard an instruction from the United States in 1973," Hassan told the Wallachs. "We followed through at Rabat on what the United States said it wanted and we didn't get anything for it."⁸⁹

Miller, Presidents Conference Chair

In February 1974, Baltimore born Rabbi Israel Miller, head of the New York based Orthodox Rabbinical Council of America, was elected Chairman of the Presidents Conference, replacing Stein. Miller's extensive resume of communal credentials included the presidency of the American Zionist Foundation and a prestigious administrative position at Yeshiva University. He was nominated to the post by Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg.⁹⁰

Situational Advantage Seeking

The American reaction to Arab terrorist attacks against Israel can be

⁸⁷ cited in Wallach & Wallach, p. 409-410

⁸⁸ Wallach & Wallach, p.411

⁸⁹ Wallach & Wallach, p. 412

⁹⁰ While Miller's background suggested staunch pro-Israelism his chairmanship was similar to that of his predecessors, involving consensus building. In August 1975 he remarked: " We will support that which the Government of Israel will accept...There is no monolith called the American Jewish community: there are some who support a proposed Israeli-Egyptian agreement and some are against it in some elements..." *Encyclopaedia Judaica Decennial Book*, 1973-82, p. 606.

viewed from the vantage point of political suasion analysis. On April 11, 1974, a George Habash-led Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine squad attacked an apartment house in the northern Israeli settlement of Kiryat Shemona. The resulting bloodbath left eighteen persons including eight children dead. Afterwards, the United States supported a UN resolution condemning Israel for launching a retaliatory mission against PLO targets in Lebanon. In fact, the American reaction was characteristic of a strategically minded actor. The U.S. routinely took advantage of the aftermath of an Arab terror attack (and an Israeli retaliation) to point out that the fundamental problem of the Palestinians could not be dealt with militarily. In this particular case, Kissinger explains the American UN vote as both regrettable and expedient:

The built-in hesitations and complexes of the parties were sufficient problems in themselves. But circumstances continually threatened the fragile imagery of progress. . . I was about to launch the Syrian shuttle. . . The right course here was to condemn either both sides or neither. . . Eager to accumulate capital in the Arab world for the imminent shuttle, we voted for this resolution...⁹¹

Miller expressed "shock" that the U.S. favored a resolution which criticized Israel but made no mention of the original terror attack. The Jewish leaders took advantage of their previously scheduled meeting with Kissinger to convey their chagrin at the UN vote.⁹² Privately, Kissinger had no patience with their protestations. "Israel was outraged with good reason. Yet its votaries overdid their protests. They had witnessed an unwise tactical move, not, as they clamored, a shift in our policy-- but a move that heightened the sense of beleaguerment and insecurity in Israel."⁹³ Kissinger forcefully argues that the repercussions were inadvertent. Still, political suasion thrives in a crisis atmosphere.

⁹¹ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 1048-1049

⁹² JTA, April 29, 1974

⁹³ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 1048-1049

One month later, in the midst of U.S. efforts to achieve a Syrian-Israeli disengagement deal on the Golan Heights, a second terror attack took place against another northern Israeli town, Ma'alot. This raid, against a school, was conducted by another PLO faction, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine led by Nayef Hawatmeh. Sixteen children were killed and 68 wounded when the IDF stormed the building at the precise time the terrorists had set as a deadline. For the Israelis, these and other PLO actions reinforced the idea that the Palestinian-Arab problem was fundamentally a security not a diplomatic issue. Strangely, in March 1974, Hawatmeh told an American reporter that he wanted to establish a dialogue with Israel.⁹⁴ Kissinger sensed that the Israeli polity was gripped by an aura emphasizing the zero-sum nature of the conflict. Consequently, he temporarily abated U.S. pressure for further concessions: "Israel's premonition of living in a hostile and friendless world determined on the nation's destruction was fulfilling itself."⁹⁵

In response to Ma'alot, Miller called for concerted international action against terrorism. He also held meetings with various officials including UN Ambassador John Scali.⁹⁶ But attention quickly shifted back to the Syrian-Israel front. The Presidents Conference, mirroring Israeli apprehensions about Syrian military intentions on the Golan, sought to play an ancillary role by expressing their misgivings both publicly and privately.⁹⁷ The importance of maintaining the support of the U.S. Jewish leadership made it expedient for Kissinger to again meet with Miller before leaving for an extended diplomatic mission in the Middle East.⁹⁸

Beginning April 28, 1974, Kissinger spent 34 days traveling in the

⁹⁴ *Time*, May 27, 1974, p. 27

⁹⁵ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 1076

⁹⁶ JTA, May 16 & 17, 1974

⁹⁷ JTA, April 5, 1974

⁹⁸ JTA, April 29, 1974

Mideast in an effort to bring about a Syria-Israeli deal. On May 31, 1974, Kissinger was able to announce an agreement which required Israel to cede parts of the Golan it had only recently captured during the Yom Kippur war. The painful dilemma of Israeli POW's held by Syria was also solved by the deal.

American Jewish leaders acclaimed the accord. On June 5, Miller led a delegation to the White House so that the Jewish leaders could personally thank President Nixon for the country's efforts. Nixon had gone out of his way to invite contacts between the Presidents Conference and the White House. The President personally met with Miller in 1973 and 1974. Miller's access to Kissinger had been virtually open-ended. Perhaps as result of these contacts, Miller became a champion, within the Jewish community, of Kissinger's work and would later describe the Secretary of State as "one of the greatest intellects I've ever had the pleasure to know."⁹⁹ Kissinger deftly played on his Jewishness telling Miller that getting the list of Israeli POW's in Syrian hands was "one of the most moving events in my life."¹⁰⁰ For many in the top echelon of Jewish communal life, the opportunity to develop personal relationships with high level U.S. officials is part of the "power game." Years later, Secretary of State George Shultz would follow the Kissinger model by maintaining an open door policy toward the Jewish leadership. Miller gave equally high marks to Shultz, terming him a "righteous Gentile" forced by circumstances to open the U.S. - PLO dialogue.¹⁰¹

During the Nixon presidency, a pattern of political suasion, which would take on a concerted quality in the Carter years, began to take shape. The Nixon-Kissinger targets of suasion included the U.S. Jewish leadership, American Jewish public opinion and Israeli decision makers who were in

⁹⁹ *Jerusalem Post*, June 6, 1974,

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Personal Interview conducted at Yeshiva University on April 23, 1991

close contact with the U.S. Jewish leadership. A sense of American strategic mindedness had emerged (i.e. manipulator has strategy): The United States sought to parlay changes on the ground into a bargaining situation in which Israel would trade (most) of the conquered lands for peace (the nature of which would be defined at a later date). In this context, the Administration followed a pattern commonly identified with political suasion: situational advantage seeking; manipulating dimensions (expanding the political loop, for instance, using the Presidents Conference to reinforce messages meant for Israeli leaders); agenda setting; exploiting imperfect information (secret talks with PLO); using insinuation (gradually shift U.S. policy toward a Palestinian focus); utilizing time constraints (the crisis atmosphere associated with shuttle diplomacy) and engaging in "salami tactics" especially with regard to the Roger's Plan. The Ford Administration, in which Kissinger continued to play the central Arab-Israel conflict foreign policy role, pursued much the same course.¹⁰²

The Kissinger arranged Syria-Israel Disengagement deal forever changed the Arab-Israel conflict perceptually. The idea that the conflict was permanently locked into a zero sum mode was now crippled. Israel could no

¹⁰² Discussion of Kissinger's use of manipulation on the micro level, such as in bargaining leading up to the disengagement deal, is well beyond the scope of this work. Still, one humorous matchmaking anecdote circulating in Israel during those years captures the Kissinger bargaining style. "Kissinger decides to play matchmaker and informs a poor peasant that he has found the perfect wife for his son.

'But I never meddle in my son's affairs,' says the peasant.

'Ah, but the girl is the daughter of Lord Rothschild,' says Kissinger.

'Well in that case...'

Then Kissinger goes to Lord Rothschild. 'I have the perfect husband for your daughter,' he says.

'But she's too young,' Lord Rothschild protests.

'Ah, but the boy is a vice president of the World Bank.'

'Well, in that case...'

Then Kissinger goes to the president of the World Bank, saying, 'Have I got a vice president for you.'

'But we don't need another one.'

'Ah,' says Kissinger, 'but he in the son-in-law of Lord Rothschild.'

See Isaacson, op. cit., p. 554-555.

longer claim U.S. Jewish acquiescence to its policies on grounds that the Jewish State was in a life or death struggle. One highly consequential aspect of the accord was, for instance, Assad's vow that PLO terrorism from the Syrian border would be "policed."¹⁰³ Kissinger was hardly oblivious to the perceptual factor even though he downplayed the "psychological" aspects: "The significance of the Golan disengagement was not all or even primarily psychological. On the political plane, it marked a major breakthrough. If radical Syria could sign an agreement with Israel, there were no ideological obstacles to peace talks with any other Arab state."¹⁰⁴

PNC Moderation

Angered that the Rabin Government was not prepared to relinquish the West Bank to Jordan, Kissinger instructed Joseph Sisco to hint that Arafat had abandoned terrorism and might want to attend a Geneva peace conference. "What Jerusalem was upset about," writes Matti Golan, "was that a high US official had contemplated the possibility of negotiations between Israel and the PLO. Kissinger was in effect signaling Rabin that the Palestinian option existed for the United States if the prime minister continued to be stubborn about Jordan."¹⁰⁵

The fruits of moderation, which had paid off for both Syria and Egypt, now began to entice moderates in the PLO leadership. In July 1974, the Palestine National Council (PNC) met in Cairo to signal a measured permutation of policy. According to Safran, the PLO "decided, among other things, to establish Palestinian 'national authority' in any piece of 'liberated' territory, thus enabling the organization to play a role in a possible

¹⁰³ *Time*, June 10, 1974

¹⁰⁴ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 1109

¹⁰⁵ Matti Golan, *The Secret Conversations of Henry Kissinger, Step-by-Step Diplomacy in the Middle East*, (New York: Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Co., 1976), p.219

disengagement in the West Bank.”¹⁰⁶ The PNC would now accept “the establishment of the people’s national independent and fighting authority on any part of Palestinian land to be liberated.”¹⁰⁷ As we shall see, this set the stage for the Arab states to designate the PLO as the official representative of the Palestinian-Arabs. Conor Cruise O’Brien raises two fundamental questions that, henceforth, were to consume policy makers. The first issue involves the fundamental nature of the conflict: “Would the Palestinian State be based on compromise with Israel, or would it be a springboard for the overthrow of Israel?” The second query is of special interest to this study: “Is the cession of territory to the PLO for a Palestinian State something which Israel is expected to accept voluntarily; or will it have to be imposed on Israel; and if so, how?”¹⁰⁸ I argue that political suasion made the choice less stark by allowing decision makers the possibility of “imposing” a solution in an amiable manner.

‘Gloves Off’ Ford Years

The Presidency of Gerald Ford represents a turning point in American-Israel relations. Excluding Dwight Eisenhower, the American Jewish leadership had not encountered a president so unsympathetic to Israel. Since 1967 the United States adhered to a consistent policy for addressing the Arab-Israel conflict. Ford dispensed the policy with a blunt tool and relations between the two countries became decidedly strained. He startled Israel and the U.S. Jewish leadership by raising the issue of a “disengagement” scheme for Judea and Samaria at a White House session with Jordan’s King Hussein. None of the requisite political ground had not been laid and the Presidents Conference negative reaction came as little surprise.

¹⁰⁶Safran, op. cit., page 532

¹⁰⁷Cited in O’Brien, op. cit., p. 547

¹⁰⁸O’Brien, op. cit., p. 548

The Administration did not discount the need for domestic Jewish support for its policies or as leverage with the Israelis. It merely sought to obtain that support by circumventing the President's Conference. Ford reached out to long-time supporter and Republican campaign contributor Max Fisher. They met shortly before Fisher was due to travel to Israel on Jewish Agency business.¹⁰⁹ In Jerusalem, "Fisher trumpeted the backing of the Administration, telling reporters that Israel had 'no reason to fear a cooling of President Ford's longtime support.'"¹¹⁰

Press leaks, however, now insinuated that secret U.S. - PLO talks were already underway. The State Department used innuendo in responding to the report, saying it would not "rule out" or "rule in" future possible U.S.- PLO talks.¹¹¹ While the agenda of the President's Conference continued to be strongly dominated by the Soviet Jewry issue, U.S. policy toward the PLO was raised at an October meeting between the group and Kissinger.¹¹²

Rabat - Political Turning Point for PLO

The formal emergence of the PLO onto the international political stage can plausibly be traced to October 1974 when an Arab summit meeting in Rabat, Morocco affirmed "the right of the Palestinian people to set up an independent national authority under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, in its capacity as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, on any liberated Palestinian land."¹¹³ The PLO thus had an internationally stipulated role on the West Bank. According to Safran: "The summit decided unanimously to divest Hussein of any role and to invest it all in the PLO, which was recognized as the sole legitimate

¹⁰⁹ JTA, April 7, 1975

¹¹⁰ Peter Golden, *Quiet Diplomat: Max M. Fisher*, (New York: Herzl Press, 1992), p. 308.

¹¹¹ JTA, September 4, 1974

¹¹² JTA, October 8, 1974

¹¹³ Rabat Conference Resolution, October 29, 1974 in Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin, *The Israel Arab Reader A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*, *op. cit.*, (1984 edition).

representative of the Palestinian people. This decision paved the way for the recognition of the PLO by the United Nations and the formal appearance of its leader before the General Assembly not long after, and killed any Jordanian option for any foreseeable time.”¹¹⁴

In mid-October of 1974, the United Nations General Assembly voted 105-4 to invite the group to participate in its debate on the Arab-Israel conflict. The immediate reverberation among the Jewish leadership was “shock and anger.”¹¹⁵ The Presidents Conference made plans to greet the UN debate on the “Palestine question” with a mass demonstration outside the world body.¹¹⁶ In view of American Jewish perceptions of PLO intentions, the community reacted to Arafat’s ascendance on the ladder of international political legitimacy with “uniform gloom.”¹¹⁷ To no avail, the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith obtained a show cause court order aimed at blocking the PLO leader from entering the country to address the UN.¹¹⁸ As scheduled, to protest Yasir Arafat’s forthcoming entry into the United States 200,000 people demonstrated at Dag Hammarskjöld plaza near the U.N on November 5, 1974. All segments of the affiliated Jewish community, including Agudath Israel (strictly orthodox non-Zionist movement), took part.¹¹⁹ Never had the Jewish polity been so united, and isolated, in their perceptions.

American Jewish efforts notwithstanding, Arafat was warmly welcomed to the UN on November 13, 1974. His speech summarized the Arab-Israel conflict as a struggle between the Palestinian people and European Zionists. Arafat implicitly suggested, as a solution to the conflict, the

¹¹⁴ Safran, op. cit., page 539

¹¹⁵ JTA, October 16, 1974

¹¹⁶ *Jerusalem Post*, October 21, 1974

¹¹⁷ JTA Daily, October 30, 1974.

¹¹⁸ JTA, November 1, 1974

¹¹⁹ JTA, November 5, 1974

dismantling of the Jewish State: "I proclaim before you that when we speak of our common hopes for the Palestine of tomorrow we include in our perspective all Jews now living in Palestine who choose to live with us there in peace and without discrimination...We offer them the most generous solution, that we might live together in a framework of just peace in our democratic Palestine."¹²⁰

Ostensibly the U.S. stance toward the PLO and the PLO-cause remained constant.¹²¹ But harbingers of change could be gleaned from the U.S. decision to grant twenty PLO representatives entry visas and from UN Ambassador John Scali's decision to meet with Dr. M.T. Mehdi, who was a naturalized American Arab activist sympathetic to the PLO.¹²² Then, in December 1974, Vice President-designate Nelson Rockefeller expressed affinity for the PLO position, observing that Israel "took the land" of the Palestinian-Arabs.¹²³ Earlier, speaking before the House Judiciary Committee, Rockefeller indicated that he did not know whether he would recognize the PLO in the event he assumed the Presidency.¹²⁴ Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, president of the American Jewish Congress, took Rockefeller to task:

Your failure to condemn the terrorist Palestine Liberation Organization for the murder of innocent civilians and for its avowed goal of annihilating the State of Israel represent an astonishing omission which is irreconcilable with your long and distinguished participation in international concerns... 70 per cent of the territory that became the State of Israel in 1948 was state land belonging to the (British) mandatory government and, previously, to Turkey--land that passed to Israel from Britain, just as Britain inherited it from Turkey...Of the remainder, 8.6 per cent was owned by Jews, 3.3 per cent by Israeli Arabs and 16.9 per cent by Arabs who quit the new state and abandoned their property...More than half the Jewish land purchases over the years

¹²⁰ Yasir Arafat, *Address to the UN General Assembly, November 13, 1974* in Laqueur & Rubin, *op. cit.*

¹²¹ JTA, Nov. 11, 1974

¹²² JTA, Nov. 11 & 12, 1974

¹²³ JTA, Dec. 2, 1974

¹²⁴ *Jerusalem Post*, December 1, 1974

involved large tracts belonging to absentee landlords...¹²⁵

Rockefeller soon tempered his public stance in response to Jewish criticism. Moreover, in a scene that would be repeated at regular intervals, Israeli and American Jewish leaders reassured each others that all was well. Foreign Minister Yigal Allon, briefing the President's Conference at the conclusion of his mid-December talks with U.S. officials, said relations with Washington were "satisfactory."

Since his return from Israel, Fisher had been striving to set up a meeting between Ford and the Jewish leadership. The first White House meeting between the Jewish leadership and Ford was finally held on December 20th. "The Israelis can count on our economic and military aid. Israel is vitally important to overall American policy in the Middle East," Ford reassured. He said the U.S. opposed a Geneva peace conference because the PLO would have to attend. "The crux of Ford's program was precisely what American Jewish leadership wanted to hear: the President would be a champion of Israel."¹²⁶

Next came the turn of the U.S. Jewish leadership to reassure the Israelis. At the end of the month, Miller took a Presidents Conference delegation to Jerusalem for meetings with Prime Minister Yitchak Rabin. He offered assurances that America would honor its commitments to Israel.¹²⁷ Miller pointed to continued American aid to Israel in rejecting the notion that U.S. support had eroded. But the leadership was not oblivious to the writing on the wall. They were dubious about step-by-step diplomacy which they saw as "salami tactics."¹²⁸ Several weeks later, Miller openly admitted the

¹²⁵ *Jerusalem Post*, December 12, 1974. Some years later, ironically, Hertzberg became a key proponent of a US-PLO dialogue.

¹²⁶ Golden, op. cit., p. 310

¹²⁷ JTA, December 31, 1974

¹²⁸ JTA, January 3, 1975

Jewish community was indeed “uneasy” about Ford Administration plans to sell F5E’s military aircraft to Saudi Arabia.¹²⁹ He continued to painstakingly calibrate Jewish criticism of the Ford Administration, noting that “certainly there is a pressure there but there is a pressure on the Arabs too.”¹³⁰

By the start of 1975, the idea that Israel was engaged in a life or death struggle was not credible outside the Jewish community. The PLO had enhanced its image and political position worldwide. The new Administration willfully balanced support for Israel with criticism and arms sales to pro-U.S. Arab states. Arab inroads in U.S. public opinion drew the attention of the Jewish leadership. The issue of Israel’s image in U.S. public opinion became a staple for speeches given by Jewish and Israeli officials.¹³¹ Self-critical Jewish media reports observed that Zionist propaganda was inadequately responding to Arab propaganda.¹³² The American Jewish Committee and Anti-Defamation League announced that they would join forces in combating “growing Arab propaganda.” Forgetting Lincoln’s credo: “We must not promise what we ought not, lest we be called on to perform what we cannot,” the President’s Conference announced that it would “coordinate” efforts to counter Arab propaganda, especially the work of the PLO’s New York office.¹³³

The Jewish leaders did not deliver a public relations offensive. It is by no means certain that such a campaign would have had its intended effect. Indeed, it is not clear what goal the leaders had in raising the specter of a public relations onslaught. Arguably, however, a concerted effort aimed at American Jews would have bolstered support inside a community which had

¹²⁹ JTA, Jan 13, 1975

¹³⁰ JTA, January 15, 1975

¹³¹ JTA, January 21, 1975

¹³² JTA, February 5, 1975

¹³³ JTA, February 18 & 20, 1975. Lincoln quote from *Respectfully Quoted*, (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1989), item 1544.

been buffeted by negative media messages. But what would such a campaign advocate? There was no ideological unanimity about Jewish rights, only about Arab wrongs. That the Jewish leaders so much as raised the specter of public relations conveys their disquietude. But by the mid-1970's, the political and media environment had recognized the Palestinian cause as the crux of the conflict and Arab intentions toward Israel as non-malevolent.¹³⁴ It was only a matter of time before the Jewish leadership embraced these very ideas. At the time, the Jewish leaders were united in their antipathy toward the PLO. In an effort to limit the PLO's role at the UN, the President's Conference sought the intercession of UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim. Miller said he wanted to "narrow interpretation of what 'observer' means."¹³⁵

The extent to which the image of the PLO image had gone through a metamorphoses can be gauged by the number of distinguished mainstream politicians willing to embrace its cause. Former 1972 Democratic Presidential candidate George McGovern, for example, became the first major American political personality to publicly endorse the PLO. McGovern met with Arafat in Beirut and called for the establishment of a Palestinian homeland.¹³⁶ Later, McGovern protested that his views had been incorrectly portrayed and that he favored a Palestinian homeland alongside a Jewish state.¹³⁷

Ford's "Reassessment"

When Kissinger's step-by-step efforts to broker an Egyptian-Israeli deal faltered in March 1975, the Administration blamed Israel for the failure. Egypt had rejected an Israeli stipulation that in exchange for the Abu Rodeis oil fields and the Milta and Gidi passes, Sadat explicitly pledge non-

¹³⁴ JTA, March 26, 1975.

¹³⁵ JTA, March 20, 1975

¹³⁶ JTA, March 31, April 3 and April 4, 1975

¹³⁷ JTA, April 3 & 4, 1975

belligerency. As a result, personal relations between Kissinger and Rabin corroded. The Jewish leadership took Ford's private threat to "reassess" U.S.-Israel relations seriously. A shaken Ambassador Dinitz met with the President's Conference almost immediately upon his return from Israel where he had participated in the Kissinger negotiations.¹³⁸ Ford publicly declared a "total reassessment" of United States policy in the Middle East at the beginning of April 1975. American ambassadors from Israel, Egypt, Syria and Jordan were all summoned for talks at the State Department. Kissinger also convened "the foreign policy establishment's wise men--including John McCloy, Averell Harriman, George Ball, Dean Rusk, McGeorge Bundy, and David Rockefeller--(who) not unexpectedly" favored a revived Geneva Conference and Israeli withdrawal to the 1948 borders.¹³⁹ Ostensibly, however, reassessment was not aimed exclusively against Israel. In point of fact, Israel bore the brunt of the policy's negative publicity. The President's Conference expressed solidarity with Israel's position and sought to mobilize support on Israel's behalf, arguing that it was Egypt which was responsible for the breakdown.¹⁴⁰ Prior to the breakdown of the Kissinger mission, public support had been with Israel by a margin of 52 percent to 7 percent.¹⁴¹ Meanwhile, Ford, Kissinger and Undersecretary of State Joseph Sisco met with Max Fisher at the White House on March 27, 1975. Ford said: "Max, it is the most distressing thing that has happened to me since I became president. Rabin and Allon misled us into thinking they would make a deal. I never would've sent [Kissinger] if I didn't think we had an agreement. The Israelis took advantage of us."¹⁴² Ford wanted "Max to get us the background

¹³⁸ "US Sources expect more pressure on Jerusalem," *Jerusalem Post*, March 24, 1975. In a letter leaked to the press Ford warned the Israeli Cabinet: "I am disappointed to learn that Israel has not moved as far as it might..." Though he implied otherwise, Kissinger had been responsible for the reassessment threat. Kissinger removed the special telephone line the Israeli Ambassador used to contact him. See, Isaacson, op. cit., p.632

¹³⁹ Isaacson, op. cit., p. 634

¹⁴⁰ JTA, April 1, 1975

¹⁴¹ Golden, op. cit., p. 316

¹⁴² Golden, op. cit., p.318

information on what the unofficial thinking of the Israeli government was."¹⁴³

Ford began speaking publicly about the need for "even-handedness" in U.S. Middle East policy. He could not meet with Rabin unless he also met with Arab leaders, Ford explained. The Presidents Conference interpreted the presumed "evenhandedness" as an invitation to the Arabs to harden their position.¹⁴⁴ In any event, Ford again warmly received King Hussein at the White House in April.¹⁴⁵

The reassessment was now drawing to a close. Relations with Kissinger being at a low point, a large delegation from the President's Conference held an informal and reportedly friendly meeting at the State Department with Joseph Sisco and Alfred Atherton. The Jewish leaders requested the session to express concern over the public and private pressure to which Jerusalem was being subjected.¹⁴⁶ Meanwhile, seventy-six U.S. senators had signed a letter critical of Ford's reassessment, with behind-the-scenes encouragement from AIPAC.¹⁴⁷ Another factor was an April 9th meeting between Fisher and the President in which the Jewish leader reported on his talks with Israeli officials. Fisher assured Ford that Rabin had not meant to mislead Kissinger. Fisher also delivered the message that Rabin could not negotiate while the "reassessment" was underway. By mid-May the reassessment policy had come to a close.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ Golden, op. cit., p 320

¹⁴⁴ JTA, April 23, 1975

¹⁴⁵ JTA, April 30, 1975

¹⁴⁶ JTA, April 30, 1975

¹⁴⁷ In response an enraged Kissinger berated Dinitz: "You'll pay for this! What do you think? That this is going to help you? You are crazy. This letter will kill you. It will increase anti-Semitism. It will cause people to charge that Jews control Congress." Isaacson, op. cit., p. 634.

¹⁴⁸ JTA, May 15, 1975. An economic agreement was signed between Israel and the U.S. Also, the President did not refer to the reassessment policy in a speech, on April 10th. which covered Middle East issues. See too, Golden, op. cit. p. 339

Image Problem

Some Jewish leaders believed that their fundamental political problem was not substantive but perceptual. To that end, they monitored Arab propaganda in the United States and found that the other side had made few inroads on campus. But Aharon Yariv, the Israeli Minister for Information (a portfolio seldom maintained), was less sanguine. He asserted that Israel was losing the public opinion battle in the United States.¹⁴⁹ In May, the President's Conference held a leadership meeting in New York at the Delmonico Hotel to mobilize further support for Israel.¹⁵⁰ The gravity with which the Presidents Conference viewed the image issue was heightened by news that Gulf Oil corporation had been funding a pro-Arab public information campaign in the United States.¹⁵¹

It was in this political environment that Saudi Arabia launched a peace offensive in the American media. In an interview with the *Washington Post*, Saudi King Faud conceded that Israel had a right to exist within its pre-1967 borders in return for the establishment of a PLO-led state. The Israelis dismissed the interview, which they pointed out was not publicized within Saudi Arabia, as a tactic to gain Israeli withdrawal from the Territories.¹⁵² Clearly, however, this was another nail in the coffin of the zero-sum idea.

In addition to vague manifestations of conciliation from Saudi Arabia, the Jewish leadership was challenged by a political and perceptual climate which did not augur well for Israel's image. The ever increasing pressure

¹⁴⁹ JTA, April 23, & 25, 1975

¹⁵⁰ JTA, May 20, 1975

¹⁵¹ JTA, May 29, 1975. Gulf Chairman Bob Dorsey later said that the report of a \$50,000 contribution by the Securities and Exchange Commission was based "upon incomplete information." See, too JTA, June 2, 1975. Later in the year, the ADL released a report revealing that \$45 million in Arab oil money had been funneled to interest groups in the U.S. for anti-Israel propaganda efforts. (JTA, November 7, 1975)

¹⁵² JTA, May 30, 1975

from the Administration on Israel to accept American terms for the next phase of Egyptian-Israel disengagement was having negative consequences on how the public perceived the Jewish State. The PLO cause was, meantime, making public relations strides in the international arena (at the International Year of the Women conference in Mexico). A proposed \$350 million arms sale to Jordan created further tensions in the US-Israel relationship. The interminable Soviet Jewry quandary coupled with lesser issues seemed to forever cast the Jewish community in an unfavorable, adversarial, and ungracious light. In this setting, President Ford's cordial greeting to a PLO official at a diplomatic reception in Bucharest (which all sides sought to downplay) left Jewish leaders uneasy.¹⁵³

The Jewish community seemed hunkered-down. Some blamed all the troubles on Kissinger.¹⁵⁴ In this environment, Rabbi Alexander Schindler urged American Jews not to "scapegoat" Ford or Kissinger for the difficulties in U.S.-Israel relations.¹⁵⁵ Albert Chernin, of NJCRAC, also cautioned Jews not to be overwhelmed with worry over the state of U.S.-Israel relations.¹⁵⁶ But the Administration did not make it easy to follow such advice. It told Israel to accept the second interim disengagement plan or else the U.S. would propose its own plan at Geneva. In retort, the Presidents Conference lambasted "a tendency in some circles to accept Arab statements of peaceful intent toward Israel at face value without requiring tangible demonstrations of peaceful co-existence. While Israel is being asked to take chances for peace by giving up strategic territories, the Arab states' major contribution is a willingness to accept the return of territories."¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ JTA, August 7, 1975. Had Ford's overall approach been less blunt, one could make a case that such a chance meeting was not accidental.

¹⁵⁴ In Israel he was met, during August, by protesters calling him a traitor to the Jewish people and chanting "Jew boy go home!" Nixon had used the phrase on one of the conversations recorded in his office during the Watergate crisis. See, Isaacsson, p635.

¹⁵⁵ JTA, June 2, 1975

¹⁵⁶ JTA, June 9, 1975

¹⁵⁷ JTA, July 3, 1975

Milestone Event: Second Israeli-Egyptian Sinai Agreement &
Memorandum of Agreement on US-PLO dialogue

On September 4, 1975 the Second Israeli-Egyptian Sinai Agreement was signed. The deal called for a further Israeli pullback in the Sinai, a 3-year nonbelligerency pledge and the presence of U.S. technicians in a buffer zone. The accord gave additional credence to the perception that the nature of the struggle was shifting to an entirely new plane. In fact, no direct talks between Israel and an Arab state had taken place. Moreover, the Egyptians refused to sign the agreement in the presence of the Israeli delegation.

In the face of misgivings within the Jewish community and among the Israeli opposition, the White House sought and received American Jewish support for the accord. Fisher and American Jewish Committee President Elmer Winter ushered a delegation of Jewish leaders to the White House to hear the President suggest that they lobby the Congress in support of Sinai II (which required the stationing of several hundred American observers).¹⁵⁸

It was clear from the outset that Sinai II was less than the non-belligerency agreement Israel wanted. But it included important provisions about the PLO. Safran points out: "The most important American contribution, however, took the form of a whole array of assurances, undertakings, and commitments given to Israel to induce it to make the concessions that made the agreement possible." One memorandum "specifically committed the United States to continue to adhere to a policy of not recognizing or negotiating with the PLO so long as that organization did not recognize Israel's right to exist and did not accept Security Council Resolution 242 and 338..."¹⁵⁹ The annexes were leaked to the *New York Times* in mid-September. The Second Clause says:

¹⁵⁸ Golden, *op. cit.*, p. 353-354. Congress approved funding for the accord shortly thereafter.

¹⁵⁹ Safran, *op. cit.*, pages 557 and 559

The United States will continue to adhere to its present policy with respect to the Palestine Liberation Organization, whereby it will not recognize or negotiate with the P.L.O. so long as the P.L.O. does not recognize Israel's right to exist and does not accept Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. The United States Government will consult fully and seek to concert its position and strategy at the Geneva Peace Conference on this issue with the Government of Israel...It is understood that the participation at a subsequent phase of the Conference of any additional state, group or organization will not require the agreement of all the initial participants.¹⁶⁰

Years later, Kissinger would deny that this agreement was intended to be binding on subsequent presidents. "I'm tired of having my position misrepresented. I never gave the Israelis veto power over our dialogue with the PLO. All I said was that we wouldn't officially recognize them nor negotiate with them. I didn't say we couldn't have any contact with them."¹⁶¹

Divisions Surface Among Leadership

Following on the heels of Ford's reassessment policy, the Sinai II accords contributed to bitterness among some in the communal leadership. Much like the proverbial old couple fighting over who would take the garbage out when what was really bothering them was much more fundamental, some in the leadership now questioned whether the Presidents Conference had been sufficiently vigorous in its representations to the Ford Administration. Joseph P. Sternstein, head of the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), charged that the Conference of Presidents was no longer effectively representing the interests of American Jewry. He complained that the President's Conference (of which ZOA is a member) had failed to rally American Jewry against the "one sided and discriminatory" Sinai II agreement with Egypt.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ quoted in Helena Cobban, *The Palestine Liberation Organization, People, Power and Politics*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 67.

¹⁶¹ quoted in Wallach and Wallach, op. cit. p.402-403

¹⁶² JTA, October 7, 1975

Parenthetically, a ZOA press release implied that Sternstein's criticism of the Presidents Conference had the support of Philip Klutznik. The statement quoted Klutznik, one of the first Chairmen of the Presidents Conference Klutznik, as calling for, "an independent American Jewish voice not constrained by the Israeli government." Later, ZOA issued a correction saying that Klutznik had been misquoted.¹⁶³ Rejecting Sternstein's charges, Miller countered: "I believe that responsibility for the crucial decisions on territories, borders, and relations with surrounding Arab states rightfully belongs to the democratically elected representatives of the citizens of Israel."¹⁶⁴

Meanwhile, Rabbi Meir Kahane, of the Jewish Defense League, launched *Democracy in Jewish Life*, a crusade against the organized leadership with a public relations offensive intended to debilitate the Presidents Conference.¹⁶⁵ More than anything else, Kahane despised the Jewish establishment for its liberal credo. He instructed his young disciples: "The holocaust was the unbelievably horrifying climax to century after century of persecution...If in the twentieth century a nation of culture and science could do this - there was no more hope for the Jew in relying upon liberalism..."¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ JTA, November 19, 1975. More likely, his remarks were taken out of context. He would have been likely to criticize the Presidents Conference for adhering too closely to Israel's line rather than for not vigorously fighting the Ford Administration's policies. ZOA had implied that Klutznik would join Sternstein at the group's 78th Annual Convention in Chicago.

¹⁶⁴ JTA, October 7, 1975

¹⁶⁵ JTA, October 16, 1975 Kahane's appeal had always been rooted in a populist critique of the Jewish establishment. He began his career, in 1969, by arguing that the liberal establishment was oblivious to Black anti-Semitic street violence. Later, he expanded his message and talked about the failure of the WWII Jewish establishment to press the Allies to directly address the destruction of European Jewry. As the message evolved, Kahane warned that the same thinking was behind their "silence" on the Soviet Jewry issue. Now, American Jewish leaders who had failed to save Europe's Jews from the Holocaust, who had, for fifty years, been silent to the plight of Soviet Jews, and who were out of touch with the concerns of inner city Jews had acquiesced to a concession which was jeopardizing Israel.

¹⁶⁶ *Jewish Defense League Youth Movement Handbook*, (pamphlet, no date), p. 4

The PLO achieved another enormous diplomatic triumph which greatly enhanced the legitimacy of its cause, as a result of the UN's Third Committee vote to equate "Zionism with racism." Once more, the Jewish community came under criticism. Israeli Ambassador to the UN Chaim Herzog reproached American Jewish leaders -- though he singled out Miller as an exception -- for not exerting sufficient influence against the resolution. Miller noted, however, that "the Conference of Presidents and its constituents were actively engaged--and remain so-- in public statements and private representations giving voice to the Jewish community's indignation at the immoral assault on Zionism and to our recognition of the dangers it poses..."¹⁶⁷ Indeed, the President's Conference organized a "Kristallnacht" mass rally 100,000 strong, to protest the UN action¹⁶⁸ Though the US staunchly opposed the "Zionism is racism" resolution, the leadership was undoubtedly frustrated by its inability to substantively influence the larger picture. In December, when the U.S. opted not to block PLO participation at a U.N. Security Council, the Presidents Conference conceded its inability to change Administration policy.¹⁶⁹

Schindler Takes Over President's Conference

In January 1976, Rabbi Alexander Schindler, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, succeeded Miller as the Chairman of the President's Conference. He was the first leader of the Reform branch to hold this position.¹⁷⁰ Born in Munich in 1925, Schindler emigrated to the United States and enrolled in City College. During World War II he was awarded the Bronze Star and Purple Heart. He was ordained, after the war, and quickly

¹⁶⁷ JTA, October 28, 1975

¹⁶⁸ JTA, November 12, 1975

¹⁶⁹ JTA, December 3, 1975

¹⁷⁰ JTA, January 16, 1976

rose through the leadership ranks of the reform movement.¹⁷¹ At the outset, Schindler made plain that he would take a maverick stance and not necessarily tell Israel what “it wants to hear.” He warned that “the Israeli viewpoint did not necessarily oblige American Jews to ignore other considerations.”¹⁷² Nevertheless, Schindler adhered to the dominant belief system of the Jewish leadership and did not condone public criticism of Israel.

Perceptual Factors

Various environmental ingredients contributed to a continuing shift in the categorization of the conflict. But any turnabout seemed to extend to the PLO only haltingly. While the PLO was now prepared to accept the West Bank as an interim measure, Farouk Kaddoumi, the group’s foreign minister, said that “the final settlement as far as we are concerned is a secular, democratic state of Palestine.” He reiterated that Israel had no right to exist, saying that “the Zionist ghetto of Israel must be destroyed.”¹⁷³

Outside the American Jewish leadership, at least one international Jewish figure would not take the PLO’s “no” for an answer, believing that the Palestinian-Arab problem was at the root of the conflict. Nahum Goldman, the iconoclastic head of the World Jewish Congress, based in Switzerland, published an essay in the Op-Ed pages of *The Washington Post* asserting that: “Once the PLO is ready to recognize Israel, Israel will have to recognize the

¹⁷¹ *Encyclopaedia Judaica, Decennial Book, 1973-1982* p. 545. As noted earlier, Reform Judaism initially opposed Zionism and gradually shifted its stance after the destruction of European Jewry. Reform Judaism views Jewish law as nonbinding and thoroughly adaptable to contemporary social and political conditions. About 40% of American Jews are affiliated with Reform Judaism. In 1993, Schindler told a convention of Reform leaders that Jews should not be “plugged into Israel as if it were a dialysis machine that keeps them Jewishly alive.” *New York Times*, October, 24, 1993.

¹⁷² *Jewish Telegraphic Agency Daily News Bulletin*, Daily Jan.19, 1976

¹⁷³ “As the PLO Sees It, *Newsweek*, January 5, 1976. Kaddoumi went on to say that “we will unite the whole region in one state, not just Palestine. I bet you.”

existence of the Palestinian problem.”¹⁷⁴

The Administration’s enduring need to foster support and assuage skepticism is exemplified by Assistant Secretary of State Joseph Sisco’s remarks at a luncheon honoring Miller, the outgoing Chairman of the Presidents Conference. Sisco maintained that he had never detected substantive long-range policy differences between the Jewish leadership and the Ford Administration.¹⁷⁵ Whether many Jewish leaders were comforted by this patently false assertion is unknown. However, further cause for disquiet resulted from a *Foreign Policy* magazine article by Edward R.F. Sheehan which asserted that Presidents Nixon and Ford had both assured Arab leaders that the United States favored a total Israeli withdrawal to the 1948 armistice lines.¹⁷⁶ Of still more immediate concern to the Presidents Conference were Ford Administration plans to sell military aircraft to Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Speaking to a “mixed” delegation of Jewish leaders, including Schindler, Max Fisher, Yehuda Hellman, Arthur Hertzberg, Elmer Winter of the AJCommittee and Miller, the President and NSC Advisor Brent Scowcroft spent 85 minutes undertaking to justify the premise behind the sale of weaponry to pro-American Arab regimes.¹⁷⁷ He also denied the veracity of Sheehan’s *Foreign Policy* article by contending that he merely favored UN Resolutions 242 and 338.¹⁷⁸

Assurances aside, the Administration made strategic choices intended to elicit a response from Israel and its American Jewish supporters. For instance, Governor William Scranton, the Administration’s special Middle East envoy, pointedly declared that Jewish settlements in the Administered

¹⁷⁴ Jewish Telegraphic Agency Daily News Bulletin, Daily Jan. 27, 1976. As noted earlier, Goldman seemed to savor the role of independent maverick.

¹⁷⁵ JTA Daily News Bulletin News Bulletin, February 12, 1976

¹⁷⁶ Edward R.F Sheehan, “How Nixon Did It Step by Step by Step in the Middle East,” *Foreign Policy*, (Spring 1976).

¹⁷⁷ JTA Daily News Bulletin News Bulletin March 19, 1976.

¹⁷⁸ JTA Daily News Bulletin News March 19, 1976

Territories were “obstacles to peace.” On the surface, this position did not reflect a change in policy. Indeed, the United States had often protested the establishment of Jewish communities in the Territories. Still, to many in the Jewish leadership, the tone of criticism seemed unduly one-sided, centering exclusively on concessions Israel was expected to make in fulfillment of UN S/C Res. 242 and 338. Having consulted in Jerusalem with Rabin, Schindler and Hellman made plans to meet with Scranton.¹⁷⁹

Parenthetically, it is worthwhile recalling the context of these events within the American political system. Presidential candidate Jimmy Carter, seeking victory in the upcoming New York State Democratic Primary, declared his support of Jewish settlement in the Administered areas. Carter also said that he would never want Israel to relinquish the Golan or East Jerusalem.¹⁸⁰

Both U.S. and American Jewish leaders engaged in agenda-setting activities. In the wake of Scranton’s comments and an upsurge in violence in the Territories, Schindler made good on his pledge to tell the Israelis what was on his mind. Speaking in Jerusalem, he said that Israel was projecting an image of a nation without strong leadership. He urged the Jewish state to resolutely address the Palestinian problem.¹⁸¹ In Israel, Fisher said: “I see the Palestinian problem as the gut issue of the conflict.” He also noticed “a definite shift in the attitude of Israeli intellectuals towards the Palestinian problem,” not “reflected in government circles.”¹⁸² United States Ambassador Malcolm Toon warned that an anti-Israel backlash was possible unless Israel demonstrated greater flexibility regarding its security needs.¹⁸³ The chorus of

¹⁷⁹ JTA, March 25 and 26, 1976

¹⁸⁰ JTA, April 2, 1976. At around the time Carter made these comments, violent Arab riots were taking place in the Territories.

¹⁸¹ JTA April 2, 1976.

¹⁸² Golden, op. cit., p. 362

¹⁸³ JTA, April, 6, 1976

criticism, and attendant U.S.-Israel tensions, continued unabated. Promised financial aid was withheld, while State Department official Harold Saunders reiterated that the Palestinian problem was at the heart of the Arab-Israel conflict. Meanwhile, a Haifa academic conference revealed that the United States was embarked upon an effort to bring about PLO participation in the the peace process.¹⁸⁴ To lend further credence to the idea of ongoing US-PLO contacts, and to the notion that the group had emerged as a full fledged diplomatic player, United States Senator Charles Mathias met with PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat in Lebanon late in April.¹⁸⁵

Concerted Jewish Criticism

Evidence now began to accumulate that outside elite Jewish political suasion was becoming increasingly purposeful. World Jewish Congress head Nahum Goldman, speaking in Israel, implied that the Jewish State should return to its pre-1967 borders. Regardless of who was elected president of the United States, Goldman predicted, American pressure on Israel would continue.¹⁸⁶ Also around this time, active U.S. Jewish opposition to settlement activity in the Territories began to crystallize. Rabbi Joachim Prinz, a former Chairman of the President's Conference, joined with I.F. Stone, the left-wing intellectual, in supporting demonstrations by Israelis opposed to a new Jewish settlement at Kaddum.¹⁸⁷

This frenzy of criticism was too much for former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir. Speaking at the Presidents Conference in New York early in June 1976, she reproached American Jews who doubted Israeli policies in the Territories.¹⁸⁸ Perhaps taking cognizance of Meir's admonition, Schindler said

¹⁸⁴ JTA, April 7, 1976

¹⁸⁵ JTA April 23, 1976

¹⁸⁶ JTA ,May 4, 1976

¹⁸⁷ JTA , May 10, 1976

¹⁸⁸ JTA, June 2, 1976

that American Jewish support for Israel was undiminished despite criticism of some of its policies: "The debate of late has focused on those territories that Israel should or should not surrender. But the essential questions are: what kind of peace will result from Israel's concessions?"¹⁸⁹

While arguing that criticism of specific Israeli policies was best handled in private, Schindler offered the first ever Presidents Conference platform to Eugene Borowitz of Breira. Borowitz defended Breira's policies and its public criticism of Israel. Breira's program was vigorously opposed by Rabbi Fabian Schonfeld, of the orthodox Zionist Poali Agudat Israel movement. Somewhat incongruously, Schindler himself joined in to decry "public dissent [that] gives aid and comfort to the enemy."¹⁹⁰ Plainly, Schindler was endeavoring to set parameters for American Jewish criticism of Israel.

In the meantime, Kissinger seemed to be probing just how far open contacts with the PLO could be taken. He sent Farouk Kaddoumi a message expressing U.S. gratitude in connection with the evacuation of Americans from Beirut. Though delivered through "third parties," it was the first publicly acknowledged contact between the United States and the PLO.¹⁹¹ Incrementally, with little fanfare, and largely as a result of ostensibly random events, the PLO's stature blossomed as a legitimate actor in the American as well as in the international political arena. For instance, technically, PLO officials affiliated with its UN Observer office were restricted to remaining within a 25 mile radius of Manhattan's Columbus Circle. But publicized exceptions were now made. In June 1976, Shawfiq Al-Hut was invited to a Capitol Hill luncheon tendered by Senator James Abourezk. About a dozen senators participated, among them: Abraham Ribicoff, Charles Mathias, Gaylord Nelson, George McGovern, and Thomas Eagleton. The State

¹⁸⁹ JTA , June 8, 1991

¹⁹⁰ JTA , June 18, 1976

¹⁹¹ JTA , June 23, 1976

Department acknowledged that it gave Al-Hut permission to travel to Washington but claimed that it “in no way reflects a change in U.S. government policy toward the PLO.” The State Department also confirmed that, in November of 1975, Abdul Salleh, another PLO official connected with the UN Observer office, visited Chicago and Washington D.C. in violation of federal regulations.¹⁹² The United States continued to maintain direct contact with the PLO on the procedural aspects of evacuating Americans from Lebanon.¹⁹³ The Department of State explained that it was in contact with “all parties” to facilitate the evacuation.¹⁹⁴

So as not to endow the nascent US-PLO relationship with added legitimacy, the Israeli Embassy in Washington opted to voice its unhappiness with the contacts in a low-key complaint to the State Department.¹⁹⁵ The State Department insisted that the contacts with the PLO, which it said had been taking place since June, were limited to security matters involving the evacuation of US civilians from Beirut.¹⁹⁶ The PLO had begun providing protection to U.S. personnel stationed in Beirut after the June 15, 1976, murders of US Ambassador to Lebanon, Francis Malloy, an embassy official, Robert Waring, and their Lebanese driver. While taking their cue from the Israelis, the organized Jewish community was equally apprehensive about the direction the US-PLO relationship was taking.¹⁹⁷ The last thing they wanted was a U.S.-PLO dialogue which circumvented the 1975 memorandum of understanding.

¹⁹² JTA, June 23, 1976

¹⁹³ JTA, July 26, 1976

¹⁹⁴ JTA, July 28, 1976

¹⁹⁵ JTA, July 29, 1976

¹⁹⁶ JTA, July 30, 1976

¹⁹⁷ JTA, August 4, 1976

Domestic Parameters: 1976 Campaign

With the GOP Convention approaching, Ronald Reagan said he favored a Republican Party platform which supported compromise in settling the Arab-Israel conflict. Such a compromise needed to take into account the "legitimate needs" of the Palestinians.¹⁹⁸ Rita Hauser, destined to play a pivotal role in fostering a U.S.-PLO dialogue years later, urged the US to stop flirting with the PLO and the idea of a Palestinian state. A former State Department political appointee (she had been a United States Representative to the UN Human Rights Commission during the Nixon administration), Hauser had close ties to the Jewish community as well as with the Republican party. In a speech prepared and distributed, but not delivered, at a B'nai B'rith International meeting, Hauser called upon the State Department to stop "creeping toward tacit recognition" of the PLO; urged a halt to American support of Arab refugee camps; and demanded "hard nosed insistence" that the Arab world absorb the refugees.¹⁹⁹ An essay published several days later in the *Jerusalem Post* further elucidated her thinking:

The events in Lebanon support fully Israel's refusal to accept a Palestinian state on the West Bank dominated by the PLO, as it would be the staging ground for a relentless irredentist attack on the Jewish nation...Having created the Palestinian "people" by their refusal to integrate several thousand refugees and their descendants, the Arab states now find they cannot contain fully or, even in war, destroy totally these very people...American policy, which has been creeping toward tacit recognition of the PLO and support for an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank...is both unrealistic and, in many respects, uncondusive to peace in the area...America should stop flirting with the idea of a Palestinian state...²⁰⁰

Democratic presidential candidate Jimmy Carter made several forays into the Jewish community offering his position on the Arab-Israel conflict.

¹⁹⁸ JTA August 12, 1976

¹⁹⁹ JTA Daily News Bulletin News Bulletin August 24, 1976

²⁰⁰ *Jerusalem Post*, August 12, 1976

He told Jewish leaders in New York that Israel did not cause the Palestinian problem.²⁰¹ Some days later, at a Presidents Conference appearance, he charged the Ford Administration with caving-in to Arab blackmail in its arms sale policies and failing to support legislation opposed to the Arab economic boycott of Israel.²⁰² Then, in an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Carter was asked to assess the nature of the PLO:

“...The PLO is not the group to deal with in solving the Palestinian problem. The PLO is an alliance of guerrilla organizations, not a government in exile, The PLO is unrepresentative of the Palestinians and un-elected. The PLO should not participate as an equal partner in any resumed Geneva peace Conference because the PLO’s stated aims are diametrically opposed to any peace which envisions the continued existence of Israel.”²⁰³

Later, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter’s chief foreign policy advisor, held a 90 minute meeting with the Presidents Conference to discuss the campaign’s position on the Middle East.²⁰⁴ Not surprisingly, leaders of Arab-American groups, meanwhile, announced they were supporting President Ford’s re-election campaign.²⁰⁵

Multitude of Mixed Messages

Since 1967, the Israeli polity had been unable to decide between autonomy or annexation for the Administered Territories. Unilateral withdrawal in the absence of peace was never considered. This ambivalent

²⁰¹ JTA September 1, 1976. Though Jews tended to vote in overwhelming numbers for the Democratic candidate, Carter, who was not well known to the Jewish leadership, was taking no chances.

²⁰² JTA, October 1, 1976

²⁰³ JTA Daily News Bulletin News Bulletin, October 18, 1976

²⁰⁴ JTA, October 27, 1976

²⁰⁵ JTA, October 29, 1976

message was formalized by the publication, in *Foreign Affairs*, of an essay by Foreign Minister Yigal Allon. Allon offered to "demilitarize" Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District, while asserting that Israel would not return to the 1948 borders.²⁰⁶ Allon promoted, on security grounds, large scale Jewish settlement in those areas of Judea and Samaria away from Arab population centers. The Allon approach was, de facto, the Israeli plan-on-the ground between 1967 and 1977. By 1977, there were 32 settlements regarded as defensive in character populated by Labor oriented *kibbutz* and *moshav* movements.²⁰⁷ Whatever the strategic merits of the plan, it failed to give the U.S. Jewish leadership a clear-cut political solution they could back. It implied that Arab intentions were mellowing but only erratically. It did not make a spirited case for Jewish rights to the land.

The PLO came under heightened U.S. public scrutiny. The PLO information office had originally been established in New York in 1965 and been registered with the Justice Department. A PLO Observer Office was subsequently authorized by the United Nations. Columnist Jack Anderson reported that Zaidi Terzi netted \$4,984 worth of contributions at a Virginia fund raising appearance. The amount itself was a pittance but what signal was the U.S. sending by allowing Terzi to travel freely, lecture and fund raise? In response to the disclosure, the US Mission to the UN advised Terzi that PLO fund raising activities were inappropriate. Meanwhile, the State Department insisted that the U.S.-PLO contacts in Beirut did not constitute de facto or de jure recognition of the PLO.²⁰⁸

To further befog matters, Moshe Dayan, a former Defense Minister in the Meir Government, suggested that Israel should now consider talking with

²⁰⁶ "Israel: The Case For Defensible Borders," *Foreign Affairs*, (October 1976)

²⁰⁷ These figures are cited in O'Brien, op. cit., p. 463

²⁰⁸ JTA, November 3, 1976

the PLO about setting up a Palestinian homeland in Jordan.²⁰⁹ Dayan was not alone in proposing this line. General Ariel Sharon (ret.) also advocated an Israel-PLO dialogue. Sharon favored "Speaking with all Arabs...We need to talk to Arabs including the PLO. We shall have no other way...We talked with the Germans after they exterminated six million of our brethren, we talked with Syria after they tortured our prisoners. Why shouldn't we talk with Palestinians? We don't have to exclude anyone."²¹⁰

The American vote, at the UN in mid November, to criticize Israel for establishing *Yishuvim* (settlements) in the Administered Territories, hammered home the enormous political cost of maintaining control over the disputed lands.²¹¹ The meeting between three U.S. Senators --John Glenn, Robert Griffin, and Paul Laxalt-- and PLO representatives based in Cairo, demonstrated how far perceptions of PLO intentions had evolved.²¹² Such meetings had become cavalier and unremarkable. In late November, the PLO opened an information office in Washington D.C. and formerly registered with the Justice Department. A high ranking PLO member was granted a US visa for the occasion.²¹³ PLO entree into the corridors of U.S. power was not without obstacles. The United States ordered the Washington PLO post closed just days after it opened. A U.S. spokesman explained that it was "not a propitious time" for the group to open an office. Two PLO diplomats, Sibri Jiryis and Isam Sartawi, were constrained to leave the country. But if there was a message in all this it is hard to discern. The PLO's New York information office, meantime, continued to operate.²¹⁴

²⁰⁹ JTA November 8, 1976. My speculation is that this may have been intended as a message to King Hussein that Israeli options were open.

²¹⁰ JTA , November 18, 1976. Even in the Israeli context, Sharon is an opportunistic politician and I can only speculate that this statement was in line with his Jordan is Palestine approach.

²¹¹ JTA, November 15, 1976

²¹² JTA , November 17, 1976

²¹³ JTA, Nov 22, 1976

²¹⁴ JTA, November 29, 1976

Carter Victory

Jimmy Carter's November 1976 election victory led to an almost audible sigh of relief from the pro-Israel community. The Jewish leadership felt that Carter's victory over President Ford "augurs well" for strong U.S - Israel ties. The President-Elect was known to oppose the PLO and was believed to favor a liberal domestic agenda.²¹⁵ Upon closer examination, the election results revealed some fairly startling data. About %33 of the Jewish vote went to Ford (Fisher says the figure is probably %40) despite the commonly held perception that his policies were unfriendly to Israel.²¹⁶ The fact remains that, for a variety of reasons, Carter captured the Jewish vote.

Nine years after the Six Day War, as the Nixon-Ford years drew to a close, both Arabs and Israelis came to the realization that the United States had become the main non-military arena of their struggle. The two sides knew how utterly dependent Israel had become, diplomatically, politically, and economically, on the United States. On this battleground the goal was to capture, or hold, public opinion support. To accomplish this goal the parties engaged in the use of propaganda.²¹⁷ This effort was not centrally controlled, systematic or coherent. That was beyond the capabilities of either side despite

²¹⁵ JTA, November 4, 1976

²¹⁶ Golden, op. cit., p. 370

²¹⁷ There is no single accepted definition for "propaganda" of utility in political analysis. For my purposes, propaganda is "The more or less systematic effort to manipulate other people's beliefs, attitudes, or actions by means of symbols (words, gestures, banners, monuments...and so forth). A relatively heavy emphasis on deliberateness and manipulateness distinguishes propaganda from casual conversation or the free and easy exchange of ideas." Propaganda need not be false. However, the true intent of effective propaganda is often hidden from its target. See, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, "Propaganda," (15th Edition).

their best efforts.²¹⁸

Propaganda is the ultimate manipulative communication. Practitioners aim, not so much to change people's minds, as to condition particular responses over time. Propaganda is "based on slow, constant impregnation."²¹⁹ The Arabs came to the struggle for public opinion at a decided disadvantage. Americans tended to place blame on the Arab camp for its bellicosity after each military conflict with Israel.²²⁰ Indeed, while Israel would now and then garner the wrath of public opinion, dissatisfaction with the Jewish State seldom translated itself into public opinion gains for the Arab cause.²²¹

In the communications age, popular opinion matters to a greater extent than ever before in history. Still, it is not the only factor in the formulation of foreign policy. Therefore, the foci of efforts to change perceptions about the conflict were directed at mobilizing and decision making elements, including those in the U.S. Jewish community.

The American Jewish community was a cardinal target of Arab and pro-Arab efforts to redefine the nature of the struggle. This campaign was grounded on the humanization of the Palestinian cause. The most significant goal was the reconfiguration of the struggle from Arab-Israeli to Palestinian-Israeli. By 1976 fulminations about "driving the Jews into the sea" had been supplanted with messages arguing that the Jews posed a

²¹⁸ In a story headlined: "The Arabs Pursue U.S. Public Opinion," the January 6, 1975 *Jerusalem Post* reported: "The Arab states have initiated a sophisticated, well-financed, and systematic campaign to capture American public opinion...According to a confidential report received in Jerusalem, the Arab campaign is directed by American public relations experts...it is funded by an annual budget of close to \$20 million."

²¹⁹ Jacques, Ellul, *Propaganda*, (New York: Vintage, 1973), p. 4.

²²⁰ See poll data in Michael W. Suleiman, *The Arabs in the Mind of America*, (Brattleboro, Vermont: Amana Books, 1988), p. 77.

²²¹ This is true for virtually the entire period covered by this study. See, Suleiman, op. cit., p. 120

genocidal threat to the Palestinians. Zionist symbols had been coopted by the Arab side. While it was premature to present the PLO with a friendly face, its armed struggle was referred to as the Palestinian Resistance and the Palestinian Arabs who lived outside of Israel were referred to as the Palestinian Diaspora. A concerted effort to change symbolic places with Israel had been successfully accomplished.²²² While such messages were not well received by the pro-Israel community at-large, there was a certain reservoir of receptivity among Jewish elites. A segment of the liberal-left coalition against the Vietnam War had mobilized its resources on behalf of the Arab cause. Their strident, often vitriolic, messages were rejected by the Jewish mainstream.²²³ However, the moderate wing of the anti-War movement did enjoy easy access to the Jewish establishment.

In December 1976, the PLO launched a peace offensive reaching out to Israeli doves and elements of the organized U.S. Jewish community. The essential message of this venture was that the nature of the conflict had been transformed and that a non zero sum condition now prevailed.

As Cooley notes, "The possibility of active co-operation between the radical Israeli Left, and Palestinian individuals or organizations, guerrilla or otherwise, has always been a spectre hunting the Israeli security establishment."²²⁴ By 1976 Israeli-PLO contacts had become a fact. For instance, retired general Matityahu Peled and three other Israel doves met with PLO members in Paris. Peled reported "very little argument" in rejecting Arab claims to parts of Israel within its 1948 borders. He favored the establishment of a PLO Government-In-Exile on the theory that it would

²²² Fredelle Z. Spiegel, "The Emperor's New Clothes: The New Look in Arab Public Relations," *Middle East Review*, Spring-Summer 1983.

²²³ Parenthetically, it is worth recalling that Black separatists, who were themselves redefining the direction of the American civil rights movement, had already joined the pro-Arab cause. Black Panther leader Eldridge Cleaver aligned his movement with Yasir Arafat at a public rally in Algiers in 1969. See Cooley, *op. cit.*, p. 185

²²⁴ Cooley, *op. cit.*, p. 208

make the organization more responsible. Ultimately, Peled said, he wanted to see a demilitarized PLO entity on the West Bank but insisted that Israel maintain a security border at the Jordan River. Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria were an “ill-advised adventure and a sheer waste,” and should be dismantled.²²⁵ As early as 1968, ninety-eight intellectuals had signed a denunciation of Israeli activities in the occupied territories.²²⁶ But, in the prevalent view on the Israeli Left summed up by one academic: “The only way to change Israeli opinion is through the Diaspora. It’s useless for a non-Jew to waste his breath criticizing Israel. A ‘goy’ doesn’t count here. But if American Jews were to criticize our attitude towards the Arabs we would take notice because we need their money!”²²⁷ But to be successful, such criticism would have to come from a new direction. Left-wing intellectuals such as I.F. Stone and Noam Chomsky had paved the way.²²⁸ But only mainstream and identifiably Jewish individuals and organization could deliver on American Jewish public opinion.

Concurrent with efforts to reach out to Israeli doves, the PLO also began contacts with elements of the American Jewish leadership. Under the

²²⁵ *Newsweek*, “Talking to the PLO,” December 6, 1976

²²⁶ Cooley, op. cit., p. 216

²²⁷ Dr. Israel Shahak, quoted in John K. Cooley, *Green March Black September: The Story of the Palestinian Arabs*, Cass publishing, London, 1973, p. 218

²²⁸ This is not to equate the two. Chomsky, who specializes in ultra-Left conspiracy fantasies, was born Avram Noam Chomsky in Philadelphia in 1928. A passionate critic of Israel, Chomsky published *The Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel and the Palestinians* in 1983. He is also a strong “free speech” defender of holocaust deniers. See Werner Cohn, *The Hidden Alliances of Noam Chomsky*, (pamphlet) published by Americans For A Safe Israel, 1988. Unlike I.F. Stone, Chomsky has never had any ties to the Jewish community. The late Isidore Feinstein Stone started out being pro-Israel, writing *Underground to Palestine* in 1946, but became anti-Israel after the Six Day War. Charges that Stone received payments from the KGB have circulated in recent years. There was, to the best of my knowledge, no organizational unity among Jewish ultra-Leftists because they were splintered along ideological lines. For information on the anti-Israel activities of the Old Left (i.e. Communist Party USA and its various front groups) as well as the Trotskyist left see Arnold Forster and Benjamin R. Epstein, *The New Anti-Semitism*, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1974), especially chapter 8.

auspices of Tarrt Bell, Director of the American Friends Service Committee, meetings were arranged in Washington and in New York between PLO diplomats and mid-level Jewish leaders. In Washington, Jiryas and Sartawi met with Herman Edelsberg of B'nai B'rith International, David Gorin of the American Jewish Congress, Olya Margolin of the National Council of Jewish Women, Max Ticktin of Breira and Arthur Waskow of the left-oriented Institute for Policy Studies. Waskow had also been a key figure in Breira and would reappear in the New Jewish Agenda. In New York the two PLO representatives met with Dr. George Gruen of the American Jewish Committee.²²⁹

When the press picked up the story (likely because it was leaked), mainstream Jewish organizations scrambled to distance themselves. B'nai B'rith denied it played a role in the meeting; Richard Cohen, associate executive director of the American Jewish Congress, deplored the meeting and revealed that AJCongress president, Arthur Hertzberg, had rejected an invitation to attend; The AJCongress staffer who did attend the meeting, David Gorin, was described as being new to the organization and unaware that the PLO representatives would be present at the meeting.²³⁰ Marjorie Merlin Cohen, director of the National Council of Jewish Women, said that the organization wanted to "disassociate ourselves completely from" the actions of Olga Margolin in meeting with the PLO representatives.²³¹

Edelsberg, of B'nai B'rith, in an effort to set the record straight, provided the following details of the meeting:

The PLO, (Sartawi) said, accepts the principle of a Jewish State in Palestine, alongside a Palestinian state composed of the West Bank, Gaza and some

²²⁹ JTA, November 29, 1976. IPS served to bridge the old (i.e. identifiably communist) and new left. See for example, S.Steven Powell, *Covert Cadre: Inside the Institute for Policy Studies*, (Ottawa, Illinois: Green Hill, 1987).

²³⁰ JTA, December.1, 1976

²³¹ JTA, December 3, 1976

small pieces of land now held by Syria and Egypt." But, the Jews were told that this could not be made public because the PLO considered this position to be its "trump card." I said recognition of Israel was not a trump card; it did not even warrant any Israeli concessions...The real trump card would be the conduct of a future Palestinian entity--would it live in peace or become a revanchist force. ²³²

Significantly, Sartawi told Edelsberg that the PLO held out little hope Israeli doves could influence their government. Instead, the PLO hoped that the American Jewish community would sway Israeli policies.²³³

The State Department now shifted policy again, letting it be known that while it still felt the time not "propitious" for the PLO to open an office in Washington, the U.S. had no legal means to stop them. In light of the earlier expulsion of Sabri Jiryas and Isam Sartawi, the State Department said it did not know who would be running the PLO's Washington office. But it said that as far as the U.S. was concerned, "the PLO office in Washington was already open."²³⁴

The Presidents Conference reacted by sending Ford a telegram appealing to him to prohibit the PLO from maintaining the Capital office. Schindler and Hellman urged Ford to find a "law or principle of law that can be invoked that can protect the American people from the criminal conspiracy that constitutes the PLO. In the interests of public safety, in the cause of peace in the Middle East, our country must not permit the killers of Jewish children and the assassins of American diplomats to open an office in Washington D.C."²³⁵ Arguing the PLO's New York operation which had been open since 1965 did little damage to Jewish interests, some American Jewish organizations believed that a public battle to force the closing of the

²³² JTA December 1, 1976

²³³ JTA, December 1, 1976

²³⁴ *Jerusalem Post*, December 3, 1976.

²³⁵ *Jerusalem Post*, December 3, 1976 & JTA December 2, 1976

Washington office would provide the PLO with valuable free publicity.²³⁶

Incoming members of Congress and the new Administration were petitioned by the American Friends Service Committee to include the PLO in future Middle East peace efforts.²³⁷ The Presidents Conference rejoinder was to reiterate its opposition to PLO participation in efforts to resolve the Arab-Israel conflict. A Presidents Conference statement drafted by David Blumberg of B'nai B'rith, said: "the only purpose and possible result of such meetings is PLO propaganda aimed at providing this terrorist federation with an image of moderation and conciliation."²³⁸

Conclusion

Oscar Wilde wrote: "There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about."²³⁹ The PLO's chief perceptual and political achievement was that it was everywhere talked about. This public relations triumph in the United States was matched abroad with the opening of PLO offices in many of the world's capitals. Support for a Palestinian homeland also came from America's Western European allies. At the threshold of the Carter Administration, the Palestinian cause permeated the American political environment. Aided by persistent, albeit episodic, violent disorders in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, public attention almost never waned.

The nature of Arab intentions was no longer clear-cut, and it was certainly less ghoulish. As early as 1970 even the zero-sum goal had taken on a friendly face:

²³⁶ *Jerusalem Post*, December 3, 1976

²³⁷ JTA December 23, 1976

²³⁸ JTA, December 23, 1976

²³⁹ *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, cited in *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, 14th Edition

The creation of a democratic non-sectarian state where Christians, Jews and Moslems can live, work and worship without discrimination...

A revolutionary change of attitude on the part of the Palestinians may be observed in the fact that these do not see the Jews as monsters, superman, or eternal enemies. They clearly identify their enemy as the racist-settler State of Israel and its Western allies. Reading Jewish literature, joining hands with progressive Jews around the world, and acquiring self-confidence—all have helped the Palestinians change their attitudes. Racist-chauvinistic solutions epitomized by the 'throwing-the-Jews-into-the-sea' slogan have been categorically rejected, to be replaced by the goal of creating the new democratic Palestine.²⁴⁰

Now, official PLO policy went further to emphasize the desire to establish Arab control over any part of Palestine which came under its authority. This pragmatic approach did not negate the PLO Covenant. But it did allow "progressive" Jews to find cause for hope in the ambivalence of Palestinian pronouncements.

In 1969, Golda Meir went largely unchallenged, within the American Jewish community, when she reminded a reporter:

There was no such thing as Palestinians. When was there an independent Palestinian people with a Palestinian state? It was either southern Syria before the first world war, and then it was a Palestine including Jordan. It was not as though there was a Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them. They did not exist.²⁴¹

By the end of 1976, the Palestinian Arabs commanded a presence on the political scene that could not be impugned. Arabists in the State Department

²⁴⁰ *Toward a Democratic Palestine*, (Beirut: Fateh, 1970), p. 1, cited in *A Study in Persuasion: The Arab and Israeli Propaganda Campaigns in America*, by Michael Alan Siegel and Jerry Charles Gephart, unpublished dual Ph.D dissertation, University of Utah, 1972.

²⁴¹ Frank Giles, "Golda Meir Speaks Her Mind," *The Middle East Newsletter*, September 1969, cited in Siegel and Gephart, *op. cit.*, p. 156

and Administration decision makers had earlier discovered the Palestinians. Later, "progressive" Jews and elements of the Jewish leadership elite took greater cognizance of the Palestinian cause. These changes took place in period of less than ten years, even allowing for a certain amount of hyperbole in Meir's comments. Plainly, Israel's control over the Palestinian Arab population of Gaza, Judea and Samaria and the prominence gained for the Palestinian Arab cause by PLO terror and diplomacy unalterably transformed the political environment.

It is important to recall that the sympathy of the American people remained with the Israelis.²⁴² In their 1972 evaluation of why this was so, Siegel and Gephart offered the following explanation:

The causes of Arab failures to achieve a measurable degree of success in their persuasive efforts in America go beyond the rhetorical strategies employed by pro-Arab forces. Perhaps the underlying and consistent support for Israel in America is a cultural phenomenon in which religion and history have created a bond that seems impenetrable by rhetoric.²⁴³

In the decade or less recounted in this chapter, the American Jewish community had come full circle. The trend of assimilation had been slowed by Jewish identification with pro-Israelism. A 1972 *Time* magazine cover story noted the symbiotic relationship: "Jewish developments in the Diaspora influence the homeland, and the homeland in turn shapes the Diaspora."²⁴⁴ By the end of the Nixon-Ford years the American Jewish community began its first hesitant steps at redefining the nature of pro-Israelism. In the process, ironically, they gave sanction to future Administration and Arab efforts to change perceptions about the nature of the conflict.

²⁴² Siegel and Gephart, op. cit., p. 343

²⁴³ Siegal and Gephart, op. cit., p. 396

²⁴⁴ *Time*, April 10, 1972

CHAPTER 7
PERCEPTION DISASSOCIATION & MANIPULATION:
The Emerging Centrality of the Palestinian
Issue in the Carter Administration
1977-1980

A dramatic shift in tone but not in substance occurred under Jimmy Carter. Ford and Carter shared an almost identical strategic outlook on what U.S. policy toward the Palestinian-Arabs and the PLO should be. But it was Carter who fostered the already developing wedge between the American Jewish community and the Israeli Government over the West Bank through a policy of "disassociation." The new President made it clear, from the beginning of his Administration, that the Palestinian issue was at the root of the Arab-Israel conundrum. During his single term, American sensitivity toward the Palestinian cause manifested itself as never before.

I

Political Suasion by U.S.

Substantively, Carter continued the course established by Ford of trying to coax the PLO into making diplomatic and semantic concessions so that it could be ushered into the peace process. Simply stated, the mission of U.S. policy was to promote an Arab-Israel accord and thereby buttress the overall American geo-strategic position in the region. The United States' strategy was to facilitate the entry and participation of the Palestinian-Arabs (perhaps the PLO under the right set of circumstances) into the peace process. U.S. Jewish leaders in particular, and American Jewish public opinion in general, were the targets of this strategy (though they were by no means the *only* targets), whose success depended on political suasion. U.S. strategy also included making clear its opposition to a continued Israeli presence in the Administered Territories. These strategic choices forced the American Jewish community to make its own set of selections.

Situational advantage seeking is a characteristic of political suasion. In this case, the Administration used the Camp David negotiations to reprise the Palestinian-Arab facet of the Arab-Israel conflict. Carter's political suasion

efforts also included undertaking to split the Jewish community away from Israel (disassociation) using tactics common to political combat: divide and conquer and widening the circle so as to dilute the power of your critics and empower those likely to support you. The President's "power to persuade" (as Neustadt terms it) was employed with great finesse to control the climate of discussion and set the political agenda. Political suasion efforts were further assisted by the imperfect information available to the Jewish leadership. For instance, unbeknownst to them the Administration was periodically conducting secret negotiations with the PLO. They were also unaware of the extent to which neutralizing American Jewish advocacy for Israel was part of the Administration's grand strategy. Deft use of insinuation was yet another building block of the Administration's political suasion efforts as experienced by the Jewish leadership. Political suasion also benefits from a sense of crisis sometimes exacerbated by time constraints. The tension of time constraints also contributed to Israeli concessions at the Camp David talks. The atmosphere of crisis in Black-Jewish relations, engendered in the wake of the Young Affair, signaled the Jewish community that their standing and interests at home could be challenged by continued support of "intransigent" Israeli policies. Finally, U.S. efforts at political suasion were also exemplified by "salami tactics" so that the embrace of a stance essentially neutral toward the PLO was developed incrementally. The full panoply of American efforts at political manipulation on the PLO issue can best be intuited from the description of Carter Administration activities depicted later in this chapter. For now it is enough to emphasize that the Administration successfully controlled the political agenda, key to political suasion, by riveting attention on the Palestinian-Arab issue.

Political Suasion by U.S. Jews

There is also another vantage point through which the political suasion analysis can be employed in an effort to better understand the role of the American Jewish community in the U.S.-PLO relationship. Political

suasion efforts were not limited to one actor alone. As U.S. Jewish leadership elements were persuaded that the essential course (if not tone) of American policy toward the Palestinian-Arabs was correct, they too engaged in political manipulation, so that within the Jewish community, the internal opposition, outside elite, peace camp activists and various trans-national actors all engaged in political suasion. Their targets included American Jewish public opinion as well as Israeli decision makers. With the exception of the peace activist camp, which favored unconditional dialogue with the PLO, the mission of these groups was to hold the U.S. to its commitment not to talk to the PLO unless and until it met the conditions set forth in 1975. In fact, this was the consensus position of the organized Jewish community as a whole. What distinguished the dissidents from the Presidents Conference was the alacrity with which they looked forward to seeing the 1975 conditions met based on their perception that the nature of the Arab-Israel conflict was indeed being transformed in a non zero sum direction.

One need not make the argument that Jewish critics of Israeli policies operated in collusion with the Administration to assert that the outcome of the combined campaign was potent. Political suasion by Jewish elements included making strategic choices forcing choices. For instance, critics deftly publicized their differences with the Begin Government in the American media by regularly demanding "territorial compromise." The Likud was unable to successfully articulate why, in the long term, "territorial compromise" was a bad idea. Situational advantage seeking was also employed. An Israeli announcement of the establishment of a new settlement in the Administered Territories was often followed by statements intended to disassociate American Jews from the Likud government's West Bank policy. Steps were taken to split the majority and manipulate dimensions by holding "unauthorized" meetings with Arab leaders or by denouncing "consensus" statements painstakingly sculpted by the Presidents Conference almost as soon as they were issued. By never pressing Jewish historic, strategic and religious claims to the West Bank (except for Jerusalem),

the organized Jewish community, in tandem with their critics, contributed to the shaping of the political agenda. Insinuation, another tool of manipulation, was used repeatedly. For instance, Jewish "exasperation" with Begin both personally and politically was leaked to the press. Crisis conditions were orchestrated between the American Jewish community and the Likud Government. Cleavages were publicized which served to undermine support for Israeli policies within the American Jewish community. A fuller description of political suasion undertaken within the Jewish community on the U.S.-PLO issue is presented later on in the chapter.

Perceptual Factors

A careful review of events during this period suggests that from the start of the Carter years, American Jewish perceptions of the Arab-Israel conflict were more non zero sum than zero sum. By the end of the Carter years there was no ambivalence. The Palestinian-Arab dimension was accepted as being at the core of the Arab-Israel conflict. The categorization of the conflict, during the Carter years, was that of a struggle in transition from the Arabs v. Israel to the Palestinian-Arabs v. Israel. Attitudes toward the Palestine Liberation Organization were, however, another matter. With the exception of iconoclasts such as Nahum Goldmann, who was rumored to have been prepared to meet Arafat in 1979, American Jews held a highly negative image of the PLO. Their self-image was that of a liberal Jewish leadership forced to defend the hardline conservative policies of the Begin government in the face of pressure from an insensitive (to Jews and Israel) Carter Administration. Their image of the Arabs was going through a process of transformation. Clearly, Egypt was willing to trade de jure peace in exchange for territory. Arafat and the PLO insinuated a willingness to accept Judea, Samaria, Gaza and Jerusalem in exchange for a vague de facto arrangement with Israel, thus changing the perception that the Arabs were committed to drive the Jews into the sea.

The fluidity of Jewish perceptions can be gauged by contrasting, on the one hand, Arthur Hertzberg's 1977 comment that Jews should tell the Administration "to go hang" if it tries to impose a settlement "for Israel's own good" with a 1978 letter signed by 37 Jewish critics of Israel which included this argument: "Even as we continue to oppose aspects of American policy which threaten to diminish Israel's security...we are disturbed by the Begin Government's response to President Sadat's peace initiative."

To provide cognitive consistency to this self-contradictory stance Jewish critics could argue: despite changes in the Arab line, Israel still faces security threats and dangers. Conversely, at a time of great opportunity, Israel is being led by the wrong man with the wrong ideology. Their criticism could then be justified by maintaining that Begin's settlement policy did not enhance the Jewish State's security; that Begin contributed to a bad image for Israel and Jews generally; and that Begin was obsessed with Eretz Israel (the Land of Israel) while their own concern was with Medinat Israel (the State of Israel).

Jewish perceptions are reflected in several consistent objectives: pressuring the Carter Administration to adhere to the 1975 U.S. pledge about not talking to the PLO; undermining Begin's status and policies among U.S. Jews; and developing a new criteria for being "pro-Israel." The community opposed U.S. pressure on Israel to return to the 1948 borders; it opposed an imposed solution which circumvented face-to-face talks between the parties; and it opposed pressure aimed solely at Israel and the Carter Administration's apparent preoccupation with the Palestinian-Arab dimension of the conflict.

The political psychology of perceptions also includes a schemata for approval and self-justification. Arguably, the American Jewish leadership sought the approval of the liberal media (pundits, editorial writers, journalists with the prestige press and television networks) with whose worldview they closely identified. Their principle self-justification, it can be

easily argued, was saving Israel from all that Begin stood for (namely, Jewish parochialism) .

I argue that cognizance of the role played by the Jewish leadership is fundamental to a comprehensive understanding of how the U.S. approached the issue of negotiating with the PLO. Individual Jewish leaders contributed to the perceptual dynamics of this issue in two interrelated ways: the actions they took affected how events within the political arena were perceived. Meanwhile, they were themselves effected by the perceptual environment.

During the Carter years, a number of individuals played important supporting roles in the overall US-Israel-PLO chronicle. Many of them continued, long after the Carter years, to be combatants on the political battlefield upon which this issue was fought between 1977 and December 1988. They include: Alexander Schindler, chairman of the Presidents Conference; Albert Vorspan, Schindler's deputy at the Reform movement; Rita Hauser, who quit the Connally for President campaign because the former Texas Governor had called on Israel to withdraw to its 1948 borders; Philip Klutznik, who moved from the World Jewish Congress to the Carter cabinet; Edgar Bronfman, who replaced Klutznik at the WJC; Arthur Hertzberg, who became the Vice President of the WJC; Leonard Fein, an academic, who helped lead the anti-Likud movement among scholars on the college campus; and Ted Mann of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, who served as chairman of the Presidents Conference directly after Schindler. Based on their public comments during the Carter years, it is a fairly straightforward task to identify the belief system to which they generally adhered: they believed in a liberal (Labor-Left oriented) interpretation of Zionism stressing democratic values. They opposed imbuing the movement with strains of nationalism or religion. Consequently, they opposed claims to the West Bank based on nationalism and religion. In a non-zero-sum setting, strategic requirements could be negotiated in the

course of the evolving peace process.

Disassociation (Psychological Warfare) Model:

I argue that, for reasons of political expediency, the Carter Administration engaged in a policy of disassociation whose goal or mission was to slacken American Jewish opposition toward the establishment of a Palestinian homeland (perhaps a state), thereby enabling a solution of the Palestinian-Arab problem. Strategically, the Administration sought to focus attention on the mounting long term costs of not accommodating Palestinian-Arab aspirations. It also sought to foster debate among American Jews (and others) on Israeli West Bank policies.

Disassociation was intended to give succor to the nascent peace movement inside Israel. My focus, however, is on another aspect of disassociation which was intended to induce Jewish American criticism of Israel's handling of the peace process. The underpinnings of disassociation included these premises:

- Post 1967, the Arabs are willing to reach an accommodation (non zero sum)
- A comprehensive approach is better than an incremental one.
- The Palestinian-Arab problem is absolutely fundamental to the Arab-Israel conflict
- The West Bank and Gaza can be used to solve the Palestinian-Arab problem
- The Likud Government will not cooperate by agreeing to withdraw from the West Bank and Gaza
- A Labor Government will likely cooperate and withdraw from the West Bank and Gaza
- Under the right set of circumstances most Israelis will favor an exchange of land for peace

Tactically, disassociation justified U.S. pressure on Israel by arguing that America did not want to be associated, in the eyes of the Arab world, with any part of the occupation. In all other spheres U.S. support for Israel would remain undiminished. In particular, this dual approach was intended to encourage American Jewish criticism of Israeli policies by demonstrating that such criticism did not debilitate Israel's overall security position.

For disassociation to work, attempts to orchestrate a partial or step-by-step settlement would have to end. A more tractable political situation would have to be incubated. A political environment would have to be created which fostered American Jewish (and Israeli) elements willing to accommodate Palestinian-Arab aspirations. Ideally, American military and economic aid to Israel should be used to shape the debate over the Administered Territories. Disassociation depended on a number of specific ingredients:

- A continuation of high levels of military and economic aid to Israel
- Repeated reassurances of U.S. support for Israel's security
- Expressions of opposition to any and all aspects of the "occupation" in an explicit, concrete, public and regular manner
- Blaming the Likud government for blocking the peace process

Diplomatically, the U.S. had to be prepared to deduct funds spent on settlements from U.S. aid to Israel; UN condemnations of Israel should no longer be blocked even if they were one-sided; Public debate over Israel's West Bank and Gaza policies should be encouraged; Meanwhile, the U.S. should establish an informal dialogue with the PLO intended to encourage the group

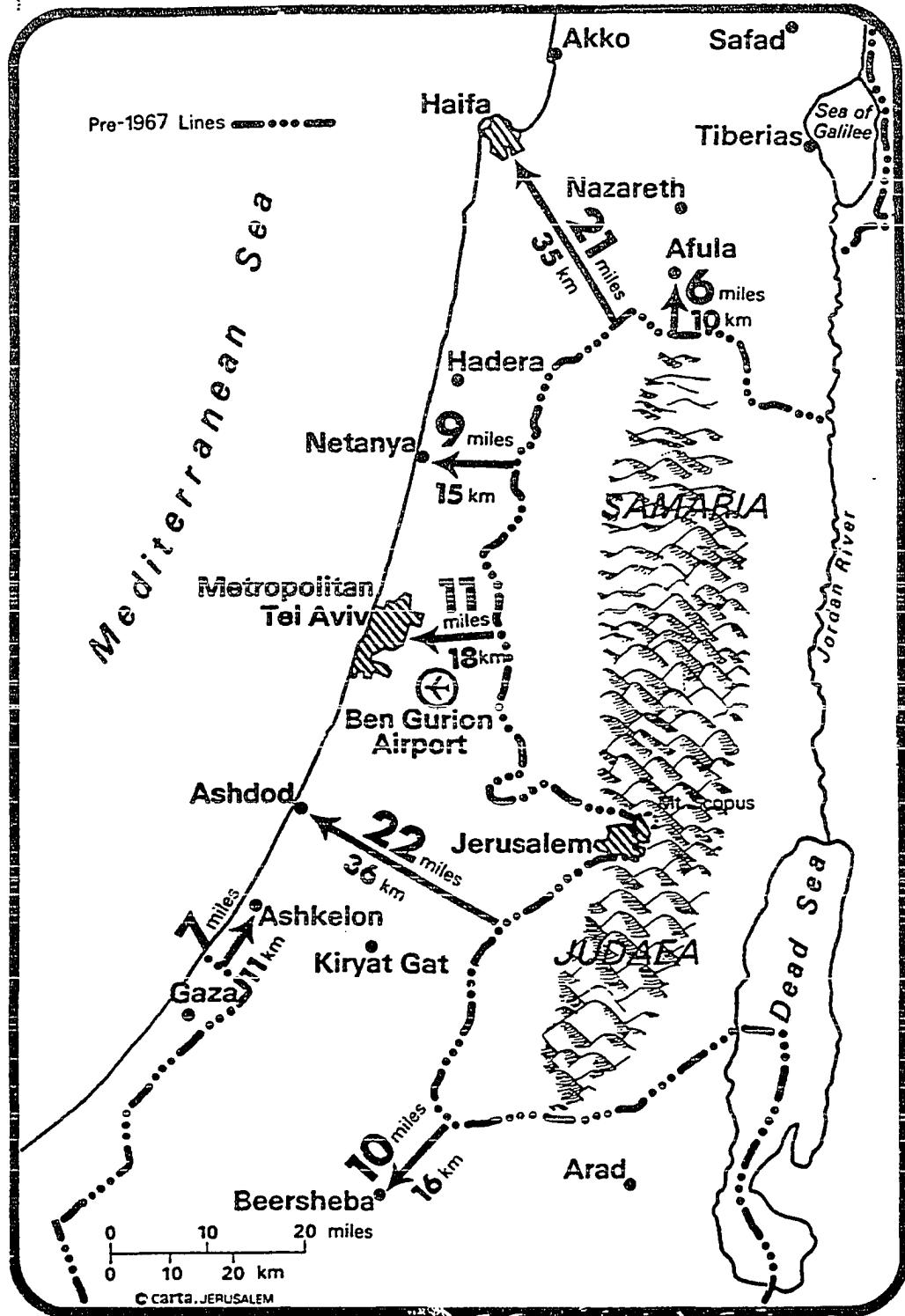


FIGURE NO.4

to be more responsible and forthcoming vis-a-vis U.S. peace process demands. ¹

II

To understand the nature of US policy toward the PLO and the pivotal role played by the American Jewish community in defining that relationship it is necessary to understand how the American Jewish image of the PLO shifted. In what was a recurring cycle, several weeks before Carter took office, the PLO denied that it had signed a joint statement with a group of Israeli doves recognizing Israel's right to exist.² This led Israel's Ambassador to the U.S., shortly after Carter took office, to lament the willingness of some American Jews to meet with PLO officials.³

Perceptions of the conflict were affected by a range of environmental factors. One catalyst which gave the PLO-cause a major boost was the first ever *New York Times Magazine* essay on the Palestinian-Arabs. Edward R. F. Sheehan's feature story advocated the creation of a Palestinian state on the West Bank alongside Israel. Sheehan also called for Israeli reparation payments to the PLO-led state. ⁴ Sheehan's essay reverberated within the community just as Carter was about to take office.

¹ This model of psychological warfare is based on Ian S. Lustick, "Kill The Autonomy Talks," *Foreign Policy* (Winter 1980-81). Lustick served in the Department of State briefly between 1979 and 1980 as a Council on Foreign Relations Fellow. Lustick's model was largely, though not entirely, implemented. Lustick been a prolific campaigner against Jewish retention of Judea and Samaria with numerous scholarly articles to his credit. In a speech given at the University of Pennsylvania to a Peace Now convention on November 12, 1993, Lustick spoke of the need to "eliminate" the "settlers." He declared: "The Israeli Army will have to eliminate the settlers' resistance and evacuate them."

² JTA, January 4, 1977

³ JTA, January 25, 1977

⁴ Edward R.F. Sheehan, "A Proposal for a Palestinian State, *The New York Times Magazine*, January 30, 1977.

Jewish Criticism of Israeli Policies: Breira

It is worth recalling that American Jewish unease with Israeli policies predates the Carter years. Some Jewish criticism of Israel, especially in its Left-wing (peace camp) incarnation, can be traced back to 1973. The year American involvement in the Viet Nam war ended was also the year when the Yom Kippur War demonstrated the continuing volatility of the Arab-Israel conflict. Some "progressive" Jews, who had been active in the anti-Viet Nam war movement, now turned their attention to the Arab-Israel conflict. These Jews felt "dis-empowered" within the community and were searching for "connection" and "meaning." They were uncomfortable with, in the words of Marla Brettschneider, "the subservience of American Jewish communal concerns to Israeli issues" and embarked on a campaign to redefine what it meant to be "pro-Israel."⁵ By the early 1990's it could be easily posited that they succeeded.

One of the earliest efforts by the ultra-Left to redefine pro-Israelism came as a result of the establishment of Breira. Its formation posed the question: was it beyond the pale for a Jewish group to champion PLO participation in the peace process and to tenaciously promote the Palestinian-Arab cause? For the organized community the challenge was to decide how sweeping Jewish organizational structure should be and whether it ought to encompass groups like Breira.

The lesson of the Yom Kippur War for the Jewish left was that "the situation in the Occupied Territories was untenable and could not last."⁶ In November 1973, with the support of 250 Reform and Conservative rabbis,

⁵ I am indebted to Dr. Marla Brettschneider for allowing me to read a draft of her Ph.D dissertation which deals, in large part, with why the Jewish Left felt a need to redefine the meaning of being pro-Israel. My material on the origins of Breira is drawn heavily from her work. *The Liberal Roots of Group Theory: A Case Study in American Jewish Community*, Ph.D Dissertation (draft) Department of Politics, New York University, March 1993.

⁶ Brettschneider, op. cit., p. 127

Robert Loeb helped launch Breira. Within two years the group evolved into a fairly structured membership organization. Breira (Hebrew for alternative) was a play on the Labor Party slogan "ain breira (there is no alternative)." The group took a neo-Marxist line on Israeli domestic politics. Its core leadership elements were drawn from academia, "rabbinical students and Jewish professionals from such establishment organizations as the American Jewish Committee and B'nai Brith and the editors of Jewish and Zionist magazines such as *Hadassah Magazine*, *Sh'ma* and the *Jewish Spectator*."⁷ The group received positive attention in the prestige press in 1976. Together with the American Friends Service Committee, Breira was active in promoting Jewish-PLO contacts.⁸ By 1977, Breira's efforts to redefine the parameters of legitimate Jewish communal advocacy and its demand for "open discussion and debate" drew a sharp negative response from the establishment.

In 1976, with Labor's Rabin in the Prime Minister's office, Breira's pro-PLO dialogue stance was vigorously rebuffed by Israeli officials in the United States as "poison."⁹ In February 1977, the Jewish Community Council of Greater Washington, an umbrella group of local institutions, rejected Breira's membership application. Robert Loeb, Breira's Executive Director, rejected charges that the dissenters' calls for "diversity" and "discussion" were contributing to Jewish disunity.¹⁰ But clearly many establishment Jewish leaders saw things differently. Judah Cahn, President of the New York Board of Rabbis, for example, denounced Breira as a danger to Israel's security.¹¹ This early history of Breira helps establish the perceptual yardstick on the US-PLO dialogue issue. The extent to which perceptions among the Jewish elite

⁷ Brettschneider, op. cit. p 129

⁸ JTA, Feb. 2, 1977

⁹ Tivnan, op. cit. p. 22

¹⁰ JTA, February 4, 1977

¹¹ JTA Feb. 23, 1977

deviated from 1977 to 1988 is depicted in the pages which follow. While recognizing that many factors contributed to this perceptual evolution, I call explicit attention to the role of political suasion in influencing the change.

While these events were occurring within the Jewish community, the Carter Administration was engaged in a multi-level effort to create a new "peace process" agenda. One pillar of this strategy required the Administration to induce the PLO into modifying its zero-sum stance. Criticism and punishment of PLO activities were balanced by frequent expressions of understanding about the Palestinian problem. Characteristic of this calibrating technique was the State Department decision to bloc the PLO's Sabri Jiryis from participating in a Quaker political meeting which he had been invited to address.¹² The PLO response to Carter's efforts at political suasion was to remain steadfast. The organization wanted diplomatic links with U.S without having to sacrifice its fundamental positions. PLO leader Farouk Kaddumi said, in February 1977, that his organization was not willing to change its "Covenant" calling for the destruction of Israel.¹³

One environmental factor in helping to shift perceptions was Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's public call for the PLO and Israel to mutually recognize each other.¹⁴ Not likely, came the retort from Israel's UN Ambassador Chaim Herzog. Speaking at a Chicago UJA gathering, he lambasted American Jews who proffer the "illusion" that the PLO was capable of changing.¹⁵ Israeli Defense Minister Shimon Peres took public cognizance of the shift in US policy toward the PLO. The change was later made explicit by Carter aide Robert Lipshitz when he said that the Palestinian issue was "central" to resolving the Middle East conflict.¹⁶

¹²JTA Feb. 9,1977

¹³ JTA, Feb. 28, 1977

¹⁴JTA Feb. 28, 1977

¹⁵ JTA , March 3, 1977

¹⁶ JTA, March 17, 1977

A comprehensive catalog of environmental factors which contributed to the change in the political image of the PLO need not be compiled in order to make the prima facie case that the Jewish community was influenced by its political habitat. Typical of events which served to boost the PLO's image was an invitation from UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim for the group to attend a UN session at which President Jimmy Carter was scheduled to speak. The White House portrayed developments as mere serendipity, directing inquiries to the State Department and the UN.¹⁷ The import of such happenstance was not lost on the official Jewish leadership. Arthur J. Levine, Acting Chairman of the Presidents Conference, sent a telegram to the White House expressing "concern" over the UN invitation to the PLO. Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg of the American Jewish Congress said it was regrettable that Carter "should permit himself to be placed in a position of personally greeting a representative of the PLO."¹⁸

Agenda Setting

It was President Carter who forcefully placed the idea of a Palestinian homeland on the American political agenda. Controlling the agenda and the political climate is crucial to political suasion. Practitioners of political suasion often combine agenda setting with tactics of "incrementalism" ("salami tactics"). For instance, throughout his White House stewardship, Carter repeatedly insinuated (and occasionally made explicit) his opposition to a PLO-led state in the West Bank and Gaza. The President advocated not a Palestinian-Arab state but rather a Palestinian homeland (which to some might conjure visions of a pastoral American Indian Reservation). He first introduced this approach at a town meeting in Clinton, Massachusetts.¹⁹ Nevertheless, in the special vocabulary of Middle East politics, the President

¹⁷ JTA, March 17, 1977

¹⁸ JTA, March 17, 1977

¹⁹ JTA, March 18, 1977.

appeared to be on the brink of calling for the establishment of a Palestinian state. It did not take long for the significance of the "homeland" phrase to elicit a PLO response. Appearing on the CBS Television program *60 Minutes* shortly after the Carter speech, Arafat praised the President for his pronouncement.²⁰

On the periphery of environmental factors contributing to a change in perceptions on the part of the American Jewish leadership was criticism from various respected "wise men." Typical were the writings, in *Foreign Affairs*, of George Ball. He called for saving Israel from itself by forcing the Jewish State to confront the centrality of the Palestinian issue.²¹ This saving-Israel-from-itself theme gained much currency across the political spectrum. For political suasion to be effective, both positive messages as well as critical ones need to be made in an unambiguous and reinforcing manner. Thus, US Ambassador to the UN Andrew Young followed up the President's Clinton Massachusetts speech with a Presidents Conference meeting. He said Carter's use of the terms "defensible borders" and "Palestinian homeland" were deliberate.²² Imperfect information further contributed to the manipulation campaign. These included media reports, officially denied, that Carter and Sadat had already agreed on the need to establish a Palestinian state led by the PLO.²³

For disassociation to be effective, the President needed to be portrayed as a friend of the Jewish community respectful of Jewish history and apprehensions but nevertheless dedicated to establishing a Palestinian-Arab homeland. Thus, one need not be overly cynical to suggest that the decision by President and Mrs. Carter to publicize their participation in a 1977 Passover

²⁰ JTA, March 28, 1977

²¹ George Ball, "How To Save Israel From Itself," *Foreign Affairs*, April 1977

²² JTA, March 31, 1977

²³ JTA, April 7, 1977. "Our basic position on the PLO is unchanged," was the State Department response to the rumor.

Seder at the home of his aide, Robert Lipshutz, was tied to the Administration's overall political suasion efforts. Despite the symbolism, some Jewish leaders who discerned an acceleration in U.S. pressure on the Rabin Government were not placated. Hertzberg, President of the American Jewish Congress, said that if the Administration tries to pressure Israel into a precipitous peace American Jews should tell them "to go hang." Hertzberg said: "A hurried settlement may not be a settlement at all...peace cannot be imposed for 'Israel's own good' or 'in spite of herself.'" ²⁴ Thus, only four months into its stewardship, the Administration's relationship with the organized Jewish community was already frayed. In response, the White House backed away slightly from its strident tone, saying it was too early to define the nature of Palestinian participation in a Geneva peace conference or to decide on the PLO's role. ²⁵

Plainly, American perceptions of Arab intentions and American Jewish perceptions of Arab intentions were diametrically opposite. In scrutinizing the Arab world, the Jewish leadership saw a continuation of the zero sum approach; thus they did not see the basis for Carter's receptivity of the Palestinian cause. Only recently, Arafat had made made a very strong zero-sum case to a Kuwaiti newspaper.

I am not a man for settlements or concessions. I will carry the struggle until every inch of Palestinian soil is retrieved...Our struggle in the occupied land will witness a violent and steady escalation, which will begin with a resurgence of our suicide strikes against the Zionist foe. The coming weeks will see many forms of the Palestinian struggle within the occupied homeland. I will leave it to the fedayeen ("self-sacrifice") activity to speak for itself and to translate these words into extraordinary deeds...our revolution is a revolution of liberation, not a revolution of concessions. We will not give up one inch of our lands, nor will we relinquish a single one of our rights. ²⁶

²⁴ JTA Daily News Bulletin, April 26, 1977

²⁵ JTA, April 27, 1977

²⁶ Al-Yakza, April 11, 1977 (Kuwait) disseminated by the Consulate General of Israel New York-Information Department.

Political manipulation, as noted earlier, depends in part on insinuation. Only a Machiavellian mind would suggest that Carter intentionally used religion to “send a message” to American Jews to ease off their frontal assault on his Middle East policies. Nevertheless, the effect of press reports which quoted Carter as telling a Church study group that the Jews killed Jesus was sobering. The President promptly denounced the accusation that Jews “crucified Christ,” saying he did not believe in collective Jewish guilt.²⁷ Possibly to further allay Jewish concerns about Carter Administration policy, NSC Advisor Zbigniew Brezinski met with a delegation from the Presidents Conference at the White House several days later. He assured them that ties between the US and Israel would continue to remain close.²⁸

Landmark Event
Political Turnabout In Israel- Likud Victory

Since 1967, under Prime Ministers Golda Meir, Yitchak Rabin and Shimon Peres, the U.S. and Israel quarreled over settlements, the handling of violent Arab unrest, and Israeli moves which hinted at long term retention of Judea, Samaria, Gaza, the Golan (and parts of Jerusalem). Low-key American Jewish chiding of Israeli West Bank policies, from some quarters at least, had also become part of the overall triangular relationship.

The 1977 election results sent shock waves through the U.S. foreign policy fraternity and the American Jewish leadership.²⁹ The Likud victory also created an unprecedented political context. Now, it became easier to “disassociate” the U.S. Jewish community from the policies of the new

²⁷JTA, May 16, 1977

²⁸ JTA, May 18, 1977

²⁹ Asked if she could pinpoint what turned her into a critic of Israeli policies, Rita Hauser said Begin's election was a key contributing factor. *Telephone Interview, April 27, 1994*

Government of Israel. Since before 1948, American Jewish leaders had identified pro-Israelism with the politics of David Ben Gurion and the Israeli Labor Party. Though Golda Meir, Ben Gurion and other Labor politicians would frequently clash with Diaspora leaders over various issues--mostly Zionism and security--there was nevertheless a certain commonality in their world view.³⁰ Now, the political nemesis of the very leadership with whom they most closely identified had wrested control of the Jewish State. It is reasonable to surmise that the President was made familiar with these facts almost immediately.

The predisposition of the media and Jewish leadership against the Likud world view preordained turbulence ahead. The foreign press portrayed Begin as a former terrorist.³¹ *Time* magazine helpfully instructed its millions of readers to pronounce Begin's name by rhyming it with the Dickens character Fagin. *Newsweek* called Begin a zealot and fundamentalist, beginning its report on his victory with: "The people of Camp Kadum greeted Menachem Begin like a conquering hero. The hard-scrabble settlements, built by Zionist zealots on Arab land of the occupied West Bank of the Jordan, had been declared illegal by the previous government of Israel."³² President Carter was reported "disappointed but not crushed." Few U.S. officials had any experience dealing with Begin or the Likud. The President said only that U.S. policy "will not be affected by changes in leadership" within Israel.³³ Portentously, the White House suggested that Begin would "moderate" his views as a result of interacting with U.S. Jewish leaders.³⁴

³⁰ One constant area of criticism was aliya (immigration). Ben Gurion often told American Jews that only by moving to Israel ("making aliya") could they find fulfillment as Jews. See for example, Philip M. Klutznik, *No Easy Answers*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy), 1961, p.130-131.

³¹ JTA, May 18, 1977. The international press immediately identified him as a "terrorist chieftain," see "Begin Seeks to Rectify Image in U.S.," *The New York Times*, May 23, 1977

³² *Time*, May 30, 1977 and *Newsweek*, May 30, 1977

³³ *Time* headlined its report, "Trouble in the Promised Land -Triumph of a Hawk," May 30, 1977. *Newsweek*, May 30, 1977

³⁴ JTA, May 27, 1977

Begin held a zero-sum image of the Arab-Israel struggle.³⁵ Nevertheless, immediately upon victory he called on the Labor Party to join in a coalition government. As for the United States, Begin declared: "The U.S. government should not be concerned because of the change in government. All of Israel is striving for peace." Begin, however, favored "peace for peace," seeing no merit in the "land-for-peace" formula, a diplomatic catechism embodied in the 1967 UN S/C Resolution 242. Begin asserted that Jews have an inalienable right to live in *Eretz Israel* (The Land of Israel), which includes the West Bank. To a newspaper reporter's question which implied otherwise he responded: "What occupied territories? If you mean Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip, they are *liberated* territories."³⁶

The White House determined not to offer Begin a "honeymoon" period. Political suasion efforts, utilizing insinuation, commenced straightaway. To set a demarche the White House released the following "Notice to the Press:"

As a matter of historical record, UN General Assembly Resolution 181 November 1947, provided for the recognition of a Jewish and an Arab state in Palestine and UN General Assembly Resolution 194 of December 1948, endorsed the right to return to their homes or choose compensation for lost property...(while) not binding on the U.S..Under the 1948 resolution, a Palestine Conciliation Commission consisting of France, Turkey and the US was to present the General Assembly with detailed proposals for a 'permanent international regime for the Jerusalem area...'³⁷

This was too much even for the Labor Party. Outgoing Foreign Minister Yigal Allon summoned the American Ambassador to Israel to express Israel's

³⁵ For insight into Begin's thinking see, inter alia, his history of the pre-1948 struggle for independence, *The Revolt*, (Jerusalem: Steimatzky, 1951) and Amos Perlmutter, *The Life and Times of Menahem Begin*, (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1987)

³⁶ "Impact on Israel and the World," (analysis) *The New York Times*, May 19, 1977.

³⁷ JTA Daily News Bulletin, May 31, 1977

vexation over the Administration's latest pronouncement on a Middle East peace formula.³⁸

Cautious Jewish Support for Begin

Carter's public calls on Israel to withdraw from almost all the Administered Territories undercut former Prime Minister Yitchak Rabin, contributing to Begin's victory, in the view of certain Jewish leaders.³⁹ In that light, they came to Begin's early defense when the Carter Administration opened its relationship with Begin on an adversarial plane. Schindler said the State Department declaration on UN Resolution 181 was at variance with previous statements about Judea and Samaria and a transparent response to Begin's election victory. He asked how the U.S. presumed to be an honest broker if it was going to make references to General Assembly resolutions of 1947 and 1948, now anathema to Israel, and which the Arabs had immediately rejected.⁴⁰

The White House now grew increasingly concerned by what it perceived as attacks by the Jewish leadership against Carter and Brzezinski.⁴¹ This was the context of a Brzezinski White House invitation to certain Jewish leaders at which he warned them not to support the Begin government's "extremist" policies. Some Jewish leaders openly charged the Administration with trying to split the American Jewish community away from the newly elected Begin government. Speaking in Tel Aviv, Jacques T. Torczner, a former President of the Zionist Organization of America, complained that the

³⁸ JTA Daily News Bulletin, May 31, 1977

³⁹ *The New York Times*, May 19, 1977. The same can be said for his remarks in Clinton, Mass about a Palestinian homeland.

⁴⁰ JTA, May 31, 1977

⁴¹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Advisor, 1977-1981*, (New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1983), p. 96

Administration was concurrently seeking to undermine the importance of the President's Conference.⁴² Actually, by June 1977 Carter and his closest aides were conferring on how to neutralize pressure from the organized Jewish community.⁴³

Concerned about the perception that U.S. Jews were "divided" over whether to support the new Israeli Government and about reported U.S. efforts to drive a wedge between American Jews and Israel as part of a strategy to force Israel to accept an American imposed peace plan, Schindler announced that the Presidents Conference would indeed support the policies of the Israeli government and made plans to lead a Presidents Conference delegation to Israel to meet with Premier Begin. Commenting that some of Carter's recent remarks had "frightened" Israel, Schindler also said: "The thrust of President Carter's statements suggest the outlines of an imposed settlement and creates the impression that this is an abandonment of standing US policies that the parties must resolve their own differences in face-to-face negotiations between Arabs and Israelis."⁴⁴

Schindler balanced these remarks by letting it be known that American Jews could unite more easily behind a broad based coalition government which included Labor.⁴⁵ After his meeting in Israel with Begin, Schindler noted their differences and offered a balanced assessment:

⁴² JTA, June 3, 1977. Brzezinski reports that prior to Carter's election he familiarized himself with Arab-Israel issues by visiting the region in the summer of 1976. A second "learning" experience was his participation in a project sponsored by the Brookings Institute together with Rita Hauser and Philip Klutznick. They agreed that a comprehensive peace making approach would be better than the Kissinger step-by-step method. See, Brzezinski, op. cit., pages 84-86. Parenthetically, Carter's personal relations with Rabin and, to a lesser extent, Peres were also cool, Brzezinski reports, *ibid.*, p. 90 and 92.

⁴³ Brzezinski, op. cit., p. 97

⁴⁴ JTA Daily, June 13, 1977. Privately, Labor's Simcha Dinnetz was already lobbying Schindler to break with Begin. *Telephone Interview with Rabbi Schindler*, November 28, 1993

⁴⁵ JTA Daily News Bulletin, June 6, 1977

I feel a kinship to Begin, for his sense of Jewish destiny and for his expectations of the Jewish future, despite the obvious political differences between us. I don't expect the majority of American Jews to embrace Begin's ideology now, but I'm sure they'll respond to him as a person....If he fails to convince Carter of his ideas, the question is -- will he be able to bend? Then will come the test of Begin's statesmanship, and the test of U.S. Jewry's willingness to follow him-- and how far...You realize that no matter who would have headed the government here, and under any circumstances, there would have been disagreements and friction now.⁴⁶

The Carter Administration remained resolute in its approach. The Palestinian issue was at the root of the continuing Arab conflict with Israel. Therefore, the central pillar in the Administration's Arab-Israel policy would remain the Palestinian issue. Speaking in San Francisco, at a meeting of the World Affairs Council, Vice President Walter Mondale called upon Israel to return "approximately" to its pre-1967 borders. Mondale argued that this would enable the Palestinian-Arabs to "shed their status as homeless refugees" and establish a homeland or "entity" linked, in some fashion, to Jordan.⁴⁷ Mondale's rhetoric intensified Jewish apprehensions that the Administration would try to impose a settlement rather than encouraging the Arabs and Israelis to negotiate one.⁴⁸

Begin Government signals regarding the PLO were slightly jumbled when Israeli Defense Minister Ezer Weitzman commented irreverently that he was prepared to meet with Yasir Arafat: "I shall tell Arafat what I think of him and he may tell me what he thinks of me. If he shoots me, I shall shoot back."⁴⁹

The Administration, however, continued to speak with one voice on the solution to the Arab-Israel conflict. The State Department, reiterating Vice

⁴⁶ *Jerusalem Post International Edition*, June 7, 1977

⁴⁷ JTA Daily News Bulletin, June 20, 1977

⁴⁸ JTA Daily News Bulletin June 22, 1977

⁴⁹ JTA Daily News Bulletin, June 27, 1977

President Mondale's speech, said that Israel must withdraw from the areas captured in 1967 and that the Palestinians must be granted a homeland. But, perhaps to ameliorate American Jewish concerns about an imposed solution, the statement offered that the "exact nature" of the homeland "should be negotiated between the parties." In the words of spokesman Hodding Carter:

The President has spoken of the need for a homeland for the Palestinians whose exact nature should be negotiated between the parties...We consider that this resolution means withdrawal from all three fronts in the Middle East dispute--that is, Sinai, Golan, West Bank and Gaza--the exact borders and security arrangements being agreed in the negotiations...no territories, including the West Bank, are automatically excluded from the items to be negotiated..⁵⁰

The long enduring chasm between U.S. and Israeli perceptions over the essence of the conflict had become more pronounced because of the Carter Administration's focus on the Palestinian issue and the willingness of certain Arab leaders to speak, however obliquely, about Israel's right to exist.⁵¹ As the *Jerusalem Post* reported from Washington:

The U.S. and Israel fundamentally disagree over the Arab states' willingness to live in peace with a secure Israel, U.S. officials said last week...U.S. policy makers firmly believe that the Arabs are ready to live in peace with an Israel that includes only the pre-1967 borders, while Israeli leaders are not yet convinced of this Arab moderation...U.S. officials said if the Likud is serious about embarking on a major public relations campaign to convince Americans that Israel should not withdraw from any part of the Gaza Strip, Judea or Samaria, the prospective Israeli leadership should know that there is very little support in the U.S. Government or among the public at large for this position...Not many Americans will accept Israel's religious or national claim that these areas are an integral part of the historical Land of Israel...⁵²

⁵⁰ *The New York Times*, June 28, 1977

⁵¹ See for example, JTA Daily News Bulletin, May, 25, 1977 regarding Saudi comments on Israel's right to secure borders in connection with the establishment of a Palestinian homeland.

⁵² "U.S. and Israel Disagree on Arab Readiness for Peace," *Jerusalem Post International Edition*, June 10, 1977

Isolated support for the zero-sum assessment as well as Jewish rights to the West Bank could still be heard. For example, Senator Bob Dole (R-Kansas) told a Zionist Organization of America meeting in Jerusalem that the West Bank--far from being occupied-- had been "liberated" by Israel.⁵³ However, the Administration displayed a greater receptivity to the opposing viewpoint. Thus, a delegation of American Arab officials led by William Small and Dr. M.T. Mehdi visited the White House to exhort one of the Administration's key Middle East staffers, William Quandt, to push for PLO recognition.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, the stature of the PLO was further elevated when two prominent members of the House of Representatives, Lee Hamilton (D-Ind) and David Obey (D-WI) met with PLO Chairman Arafat in Cairo. They recommended that the U.S. should open direct negotiations with the PLO because, Arafat told them, the PLO accepted Israel's right to exist and was willing to live in peace with the Jewish State.⁵⁵

Civility at First Carter-Begin Meeting

President Carter prepared for his first meeting with Begin, in part, by "poring over Menachem Begin's book *The Revolt* in a studious search for clues to the personality of the new Israeli Prime Minister."⁵⁶ Observers expected the two to get on poorly. Expecting the worse, even Golda Meir {Begin's long-time political rival} remarked: "If the Americans put pressure on Israel to give in to the Arabs, I'm ready to spend the last days of my life fighting for Begin's government."⁵⁷

Actually, the two men did not quarrel at their first meeting. Begin termed his first trip to the U.S. as Premier "a success" and said he was leaving

⁵³ JTA, July 1, 1977

⁵⁴ JTA Daily News Bulletin, July 13, 1977

⁵⁵ JTA July 13, 1977

⁵⁶ *Newsweek*, July 25, 1977

⁵⁷ *Newsweek*, July 25, 1977

the country "a happy man."⁵⁸ In fact, mutual civility did not signal a shift in policy. Indeed, the American offensive against Jewish claims to Israel's post-1967 boundaries intensified. Only days after Begin departed from the United States, the State Department leaked documents purporting to show that President Truman wanted Israel to withdraw to its UN authorized borders after the 1948 Israeli War of Independence.⁵⁹ The message was transparent: Israel could hardly claim to have a legitimate birthright to the West Bank, when even its proprietorship to territory inside the "green line" could be so easily challenged.

The State Department's relentless opposition to Jewish inhabitation in the Territories was sustained when several days later it released a statement expressing "disappointment" over the building of three new Jewish villages on the West Bank.⁶⁰

US Restates "Talk" Position

Whether and under what circumstances the U.S. would talk to the PLO was an issue which took on a life of its own. Behind the scenes, the Administration was inclined to discuss with the PLO conditions for its participation in the peace process.⁶¹ The publicly avowed United States policy was to forego contacts with the PLO until it recognized Israel, as Secretary of State Cyrus Vance explained prior to embarking on a visit to the Middle East in August 1977. He did "not expect there will be any meeting" with the PLO "on this trip." Vance acknowledged that the U.S. was receiving "communications" from the PLO through intermediaries but was not

⁵⁸ JTA, July 22, 1977. Carter agreed to tone down his emphasis on the Palestinian Arabs and calls for Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank. He asked Begin to stop Jewish settlement in Judea and Samaria but received no commitment. See, Brzezinski, op. cit., p. 100

⁵⁹ JTA, July 25, 1977

⁶⁰ JTA, July 27, 1977

⁶¹ Brzezinski, op. cit., p. 102

responding.⁶² The fundamental US-Israeli dispute over PLO intentions, the nature of the conflict, and Israeli claims to the West Bank took a back-seat to the charade over possible U.S. plans to talk to the PLO.

Unable to articulate a persuasive argument on behalf of the zero-sum character of the dispute, incapable of explaining why what the PLO *said* about Israel was irrelevant to the organization's true essence, and uncomfortable supporting Israeli claims to the West Bank, the Presidents Conference was left only to react negatively to hints and clues that the U.S. was moving closer to "talking" to the PLO. As "peace process" modalities were being bandied about, the PLO issue was catapulted to the forefront of the political agenda by a Presidential press conference remark. At an impromptu news conference in Plains, Georgia, Carter said he had received reports through third parties that the PLO may be willing to recognize Israel's right to exist. The President said: "If the Palestinians should say 'we recognize UN resolution 242 in its entirety, but we think the Palestinians have additional status than just refugees' that would suit us o.k." The PLO torpedoed Carter's offer by denying it had signaled a willingness to accept Israel's existence.⁶³ Israel, at any rate, vehemently opposed a role for the PLO in the peace process.⁶⁴ Warning that Labor and Likud were united on the issue, Knesset Member Abba Eban criticized U.S. overtures to the PLO.⁶⁵

Integral to political suasion, as noted previously, are efforts to manipulate the dimensions of discussion. In Carter's case this involved an almost continuous flirtation with the PLO interspersed with episodic reassurances to the Jewish community that the Administration was not flirting with the PLO. The cycle of overtures, retractions, hints, and clarifications by U.S. policy makers toward the PLO had become routine.

⁶² JTA, August 1, 1977

⁶³ JTA, August 9, 1977

⁶⁴ JTA, August 10, 1977

⁶⁵ JTA, August 17, 1977

Again in August, Secretary of State Vance spoke out on the PLO: "If they recognize Israel's right to exist, we will talk to them." ⁶⁶

Though fragmented and bewildered over what Israel should do about the West Bank and the Palestinian-Arabs, the Jewish leadership was largely united in opposition to the PLO. More than merely contemplating various scenarios out loud, Joseph Sternstein of the Zionist Organization of America said, Administration statements showed the U.S. was making plans to deal with the PLO.⁶⁷ Presidents Conference Chairman Schindler and Premier Begin agreed, in Jerusalem, that U.S. Jewish leaders would organize a public campaign against the Administration's PLO policy.⁶⁸

Sanitizing PLO's Image in US⁶⁹

Even as the PLO was reiterating its vow to escalate the armed struggle against the Jewish State, the Carter Administration had embarked on an effort to sanitize the image of the PLO so as to legitimize its presence at anticipated Middle East peace talks.⁷⁰ Through a confidential emissary, the Administration was privately working to achieve some sort of understanding with the PLO.⁷¹ Allowing the PLO to operate its Washington, D.C. Information Office unhindered was intended to be interpreted as a positive U.S. signal to the PLO.

Adding to the mix, other voices were also being raised in support of

⁶⁶ JTA, August 10, 1977

⁶⁷ JTA, August 10, 1977

⁶⁸ JTA, August 15, 1977. Arguably, elements in the U.S. Jewish leadership were taking their cue from the level of unity on this issue within the Israeli political arena.

⁶⁹ A poll conducted for NJCRAC revealed that public opinion, while confused, was growing more positive toward the Palestinian cause. Still, the overwhelming majority of Americans viewed the PLO as abhorrent. *Jerusalem Post International Edition*, August 9, 1977

⁷⁰ JTA Special Analysis by Zuckoff and Polakoff, August 25, 1977

⁷¹ Brzezinski, op. cit., p. 105

US-PLO ties. While there is no evidence to indicate they acted in concert, the Administration's PLO stance was nevertheless bolstered elsewhere in the political system. One source of support was Senator George McGovern (D-S.D) who cited the Helsinki accords as applicable to the PLO, in calling upon the State Department to ease access for PLO members to enter the US for informational purposes.⁷²

Carter- US Jews Discuss Pledge Not To Talk to PLO

As tensions between the Administration and the pro-Israel community continued to rise, the President discussed the PLO issue at a private White House meeting with Rabbi Schindler and Yehuda Hellman, Executive Vice President of the Presidents Conference. The Jewish leaders gave Carter a letter noting that the United States had committed itself since September 1, 1975 not to deal with the PLO until it recognizes Israel's right to exist and accepts UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. Their letter said that the President's recent public remarks seemed to be backing away from this commitment. He had publicly implied that the PLO no longer had to accept Israel's right to exist and that it could modify the terms of 242 in accepting it.⁷³ Carter wrote back to the President's Conference the very same day. His handwritten note assured the Jewish leadership that the US position on the PLO remains unchanged. "I can assure you," the President wrote "that our position regarding the PLO is consistent with commitments previously made voluntarily to the Israeli government."⁷⁴ Despite these assurances, press reports surfaced the following month suggesting that Yasir Arafat and US Ambassador to Lebanon Richard B. Parker had met in Beirut.⁷⁵

⁷²JTA, August 29, 1977

⁷³JTA August 20, 1977

⁷⁴JTA, Sept. 2, 1977

⁷⁵JTA, Sept. 30, 1977. At the same time, British and Dutch policymakers were making overtures to the PLO even as Left-Wing Zionists had met with PLO representatives in Holland; See JTA, September 9 and September 16, 1977

U.S.-Soviet Joint Declaration on Mideast

Political suasion efforts also call for strategic choice selection or making choices which force choices. Catching many of the key Middle Eastern players by surprise, the United States and the Soviet Union issued a joint statement, in October 1977, on the Arab-Israel conflict. The statement accentuated the Palestinian issue by calling for the participation of "representatives... of the Palestinian people" and hinted at the prospect of a superpower imposed solution.⁷⁶ Specifically, the superpowers agreed that the Palestinian-Arabs should be allowed to establish an "entity" in the West Bank. Furthermore, the statement used the politically loaded expression "legitimate rights" of the Palestinian people, implying the right to statehood. The *Jerusalem Post* reported that: "American sources hint that Carter himself decided to move on the joint American-Soviet statement as a means of demonstrating his displeasure with Israel's attitude on settlements in the territories."⁷⁷ Israel would have to choose to cooperate or face concerted diplomatic pressure from both superpowers.

Reaction from U.S. Jewish leaders, as well as from the Israeli government, was harsh. The superpowers were seeking to impose a solution in place of encouraging face-to-face negotiations among the parties, Jewish critics charged. Schindler viewed the statement ominously as an abandonment of America's commitment to Israel.⁷⁸ Mobilized, the pro-Israel camp went into full gear. Senator Henry Jackson (D-Washington) and AFL-CIO president George Meany both criticized the President's "courtship" of the PLO. "The fox is back in the chicken coop. The American people must certainly

⁷⁶ JTA , Oct. 3, 1977. For more on Parker's views and those of other State Department officials see: Robert D. Kaplan, *The Arabists, The Romance of An American Elite*, (New York: The Free Press, 1993), p. 118-120.

⁷⁷ *Jerusalem Post* , October 3, 1977

⁷⁸ JTA , Oct. 3, 1977

raise the question of why bring the Russians in at a time when the Egyptians have been throwing them out," Senator Jackson told NBC-TV's *Meet the Press*.⁷⁹ The Presidents Conference called an emergency meeting on October 3rd to deal with the administration's "betrayal" of Israel.⁸⁰ The pro-Israel community further mobilized 8,000 telephone calls to the White House critical of the Soviet-US joint statement. Mark Siegel, the White House liaison to the Jewish community, received 170 "angry" telephone calls in one day. Meanwhile, the President's overall approval rating in the polls was 46 percent.⁸¹

The level of Jewish vexation over the enhanced position of the Palestine Liberation Organization in the wake of the joint statement can be gaged by Schindler's reaction. Fearing that PLO participation at proposed Geneva-based Middle East peace talks was now a real possibility, Schindler and Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan jointly launched a major public relations effort, traveling to a number of American cities to campaign against the joint statement.⁸² Dayan had previously been scheduled to visit the U.S. on UN business and planned to meet with the President. Actually, in speaking with American Jews across the United States, Dayan sought to play down the US-Israel rift. He warned against backing the President into a corner.⁸³ When Dayan finally met with Carter at the UN, differences were papered over. Dayan announced that Israel was prepared to go to Geneva for peace talks. The Foreign Minister and the President agreed that after an opening "plenary group" the discussions would break-up into bilateral talks and multi-lateral working groups. Israel was prepared to negotiate with Palestinian representatives, but the PLO itself was not mentioned. While still holding to the view that Carter was naive about Arab intentions, the Carter-

⁷⁹ *Jerusalem Post*, October 3, 1977

⁸⁰ *Jerusalem Post*, October 3, 1977

⁸¹ *Newsweek*, October 17, 1977

⁸² *JTA*, Oct. 4, 1977

⁸³ *Newsweek*, October 17, 1977

Dayan meeting helped ease the level of tension between the Administration and the organized Jewish community. Schindler remarked: "We have to watch developments—and developments will be watched."⁸⁴

Carter Reiterates Palestinian Angle

The President fully expected the PLO to recognize Israel based on indirect messages he was getting from Arab sources and from Landrum Bolling, president of Lilly Endowment Inc., who had been meeting with Arafat.⁸⁵ This helps explain Carter's continued emphasis on the centrality of the Palestinian issue. At his UN appearance the President reiterated that "the legitimate rights of the Palestinians must be recognized."⁸⁶ But he backtracked slightly some days later when he told a visiting Congressional delegation that he opposed a Palestinian state although he did not want to say so publicly.⁸⁷

White House Lobbies U.S. Jewry

Essential to the disassociation policy was the need to drive a wedge between Israel and her American Jewish supporters. The Administration's approach was to use suasion, where possible, to split the Jewish community away from Israeli policies. Intent on bringing the Administration's message directly to the Jewish community, Robert Lipshutz, Counsel to the President, held several speaking engagements before the Maryland Jewish community in October. He emphasized that solving the Palestinian problem was something Israel needed to do for its own "viability."⁸⁸

⁸⁴ *Newsweek*, October 17, 1977

⁸⁵ *Newsweek*, October 17, 1977

⁸⁶ JTA October 5, 1977

⁸⁷ JTA, October 7, 1977

⁸⁸ JTA, Oct. 19, 1977

Politically sensitive to charges that the President had turned against Israel, Administration officials sought to reach out to the Jewish community with frequent sessions pressing the point that Jimmy Carter remained committed to the Jewish State.⁸⁹ Indeed, the "disassociation" strategy made it absolutely vital for the Administration to reassure the American Jewish leadership of its continued support for Israel. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, for instance, held a series of meetings with the Jewish leadership in an effort to stem Jewish opposition to Carter's perceived policy tilt towards the Palestinian Arabs and the PLO.⁹⁰ Apparently pursuing a two-track approach, the Administration worked to bolster its frayed bone fides within the pro-Israel community while simultaneously promoting the PLO as a potential partner in the peace process and asserting that one could be pro-Israel while not holding the PLO in odium. This approach was again manifested when, late in October, the State Department allowed Mahmoud Salem Darwish, a junior PLO official, to enter the US for purposes which were not made clear.⁹¹

The idea of a PLO-led State continued to gain momentum. Support for the PLO-cause was snowballing. In Washington, the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator John Sparkman (D-Alabama), announced that he supported the creation of a Palestinian state. Sparkman

⁸⁹ JTA, Oct. 21, 1977. The unease felt in the Jewish community is captured in a *New York Times* editorial, "The Jews and Jimmy Carter," published on November 6, 1977: "What is unspoken is the further fear of a revival of anti-Semitism and of the charge of 'dual loyalty.' Yet there are troubling aspects in the present posture of the American Jewish community...(they) could cease to be taken seriously in Washington ...if, at every turn, the most that a President hears from them is a dutiful echo of Israeli policy...Political divisions in Israel have enfeebled the diplomacy of all its recent governments, causing it too often to be pegged to the lowest common denominator--the most zealous of its parties.If the views of American Jews are also reduced to that level, they will surely lose the capacity to instruct Israelis in the perceptions and imperatives of American opinion and policy.(U.S.) help is assured so long as the failure of any negotiations is perceived in the United States as the failure of the Arab nations to respond to a truly forthcoming Israeli diplomacy. The best link between that Israeli diplomacy and American perceptions is a credible, independent and influential American Jewish community."

⁹⁰ JTA, Oct. 27, 1977

⁹¹ JTA, Oct. 26, 1977. The State Department Spokesman said the US was acting under the McGovern bill in admitting Darwish.

also called upon the Palestinians to recognize Israel as a *quid pro quo*.⁹² Abroad, meanwhile, British Prime Minister James Callahan called for the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank. While in West Germany top officials of the PLO were already holding talks with ranking politicians.⁹³ An unmistakable diplomatic signal that the the U.S. favored, at the least, a West Bank in Arab hands came when Ambassador Young abstained in a General Assembly vote against Jewish settlements in the Administered Territories.⁹⁴

III

Landmark Event: Sadat's Jerusalem Initiative

Carter's single-minded focus on the Palestinian problem explains his initially cool reaction to Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's momentous announcement that he would travel to Jerusalem. In effect, and despite denials, Sadat diverted attention away from the Palestinian aspect of the Arab-Israel conflict back to the state level. His historic November 1977 visit to Jerusalem heralded a return to a more diffuse peace making approach with the Palestinian facet *one* of several core issues to be confronted.⁹⁵

⁹² JTA, November 1, 1977

⁹³ JTA, November 16, 1977. Isam Sartawi held talks with former Chancellor Willy Brandt. Later the Germans offered to arrange a PLO meeting with FM Moshe Dayan which Dayan rejected.

⁹⁴ JTA, November 1, 1977

⁹⁵ Carter's concern over Sadat's initiative was captured by *Newsweek*'s headline: "BYPASSING THE PLO?" Elsewhere the magazine reported: "Washington's immediate reaction to Sadat's speech was cautious...The low-key response reflected the Administration's desire to gauge reactions...A senior White House aide said the U.S. response would be designed 'at the very least to prevent the summit from becoming a setback.'" *Newsweek*, December 5, 1977

On the background of the Sadat initiative: Schindler relates that while Rabin was Prime Minister, Ceausescu offered to arrange a visit for the rabbi so that he could be a conduit to Sadat. But Rabin urged Schindler not to meet with the Egyptian leader. Upon becoming Prime Minister, Schindler further relates, Begin welcomed contacts from the Romanians and used them to send a message to Sadat about Israel's serious desire for peace. *Telephone Interview with Rabbi Schindler*, November 28, 1993

Still, President Carter was not easily dissuaded. Just days after Sadat's trip to Jerusalem, Carter reprised his call for an international conference in Geneva based upon the joint US-USSR resolution. Only in mid-December did Carter acknowledge that the PLO had ruled itself out of the conflict resolution process--and, there being no other suitable representative of the Palestinian-Arabs-- leaving advocacy of their cause to Egypt.⁹⁶ As events unfolded, (and even though Begin thought prospects for Geneva talks were good) the spotlight shifted to a Cairo conference where the only Arab party willing to attend was Egypt itself. Then, on December 19, 1977, Begin proposed "self-rule" for the Arab residents of Judea, Samaria and Gaza. Distinguishing between autonomy for people as against dominion over the land, Begin also emphasized that Israel would never deal with the PLO.⁹⁷

U.S. Jews Back in Play

In New York, Begin briefed the Conference of Presidents on his self-rule game plan.⁹⁸ It did not take Sadat long to recognize the expediency of establishing channels of communication to the Jewish leadership.⁹⁹ By the end of January 1978, Sadat had issued an "open letter" to American Jews urging them to pressure Israel into making concessions to Egypt.¹⁰⁰ Not wanting to be used to influence the talks, the Presidents Conference announced that it would not allow itself to serve as a surrogate for direct Egyptian-Israeli negotiations.¹⁰¹ The White House and Sadat were forced to

⁹⁶ JTA, December 16, 1977. The President said the PLO had removed itself "from any immediate prospects of participation in a peace discussion."

⁹⁷ JTA, December 19, 1977

⁹⁸ JTA, Dec. 20, 1977

⁹⁹ JTA, January 9, 1978. Rabbi Schindler and Yehuda Hellman were making plans for a trip to Aswan to confer with Sadat. .

¹⁰⁰ JTA, January 30, 1978

¹⁰¹ JTA, February 6, 1978. Schindler confirms that Carter made a habit of seeking to preempt the Presidents Conference in his quest for Jewish support. *Telephone Interview with Rabbi Schindler*, November 28, 1993

turn elsewhere. Arrangements were already under way for Sadat to meet with Philip Klutznick, the head of the World Jewish Congress. Meanwhile, Klutznick was aware that the Presidents Conference was about to convene in order to discuss precisely Sadat's efforts to use meetings with the Jewish community as a form of leverage against the Israelis. Klutznick explains:

I tried to reach Schindler by phone to tell him about the meeting I had already scheduled with Sadat, but he did not get my phone call until after the conference adopted a ban on such meetings. I did not cancel the event set for the Egyptian embassy; to do so would be an affront to the president of Egypt and to the White House as well...

The scheduled meeting in the Egyptian embassy, held during a pause in the official U.S.- Egyptian negotiations, was marked by spirited exchanges not only about the possibilities for a settlement in the Middle East but on the relationship between the American Jewish community and Israel and its perceptions of dangers to that state. President Sadat throughout the encounter was ebullient and charming, but I could not tell whether his attitudes were affected by what he heard from our group. Later, however, I learned why the White House was anxious for the meeting to happen. They wanted Sadat to know that American Jews would support moves toward peace if the proposed terms were fair to all parties in the Israeli-Arab conflict...¹⁰²

Palestinian Centrality

Whatever the efforts to build support for Sadat within the Jewish community, the Administration maintained its strategic policy focus on the Palestinian issue. The United States denied it was making overtures to the PLO to entice it into the peace process.¹⁰³ Indeed, Brzezinski protested that the PLO had disqualified itself from participating in the peace process because of

¹⁰² Phillip M. Klutznick, *Angles of Vision: A Memoir of My Lives*, (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1991), pp.342-343. Klutznick had been in and out of government when he was not making his living in the building industry. All the while he remained active in Jewish communal affairs. About a year after the Sadat-Klutznick meeting, Carter appointed him Secretary of Commerce. See too, *JTA Daily*, February 6, 1978.

¹⁰³ *JTA*, Jan. 5, 1978

its intransigence. Moderate Palestinians would take the place of the PLO, Brzezinski asserted.¹⁰⁴

Some officials within the State Department were apprehensive that an Egyptian-Israeli state-to-state remedy was in the works and that it would relegate the Palestinian-Arab problem to the back burner. For example, U.S. Ambassador to the Netherlands Robert J. McClosky publicly complained that the United States did not have an apparent blueprint for a Palestinian homeland.¹⁰⁵ Meanwhile, Representative Paul Findley (R- Ill.) emerged as a key champion of the PLO on Capitol Hill. After meeting with Arafat in Syria early in 1978, Findley contended that the group had moderated its position and could not be ignored in conflict resolution efforts.¹⁰⁶

Sadat Continues Lobbying

Sadat met with Schindler in Aswan, Egypt to lobby the American Jewish leader to intervene with Israel. He promised that Egypt would guarantee Israel's security if it were forthcoming at the negotiating table. But Schindler said he could not support the establishment of a Palestinian-Arab state because it posed a security threat for Israel. He also suggested that Sadat did not particularly favor such a state either.¹⁰⁷ Some days later, Sadat published an open letter to U.S. Jews urging them to "contribute" to the peace process. Schindler's reply was that embracing Egypt's negotiation position was not the only way to foster the peace process.¹⁰⁸

The President continued in his efforts to control the political climate

¹⁰⁴ JTA, Jan. 9, 1978

¹⁰⁵ JTA, Jan 4, 1978. Actually, Brezinski was intent on not letting this happen. Brezinski, op. cit., 114

¹⁰⁶ JTA, January 9, 1978

¹⁰⁷ JTA, January 12, 1978

¹⁰⁸ JTA, January 30, 1978

and set the agenda. Carter persistently underscored, in his public remarks, the centrality of the Palestinian problem to the conflict. Visiting President Sadat in Aswan during January, Carter stressed that peace would depend on resolving the "Palestinian problem in all its aspects," recognition of the "legitimate rights" of the Palestinians, and Israeli withdrawal from "territories occupied" in 1967.¹⁰⁹

Determined to press the Palestinian cause through his disassociation policy, Carter and Mondale invited elements of the American Jewish leadership to a three and a half hour White House Dinner. Schindler, chairman of the Presidents Conference, was conspicuous by his absence. The guests included: Frank Lautenberg of the UJA, Richard Mass of the American Jewish Committee, Theodore Mann of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, Philip Klutznik of the World Jewish Congress, David Blumberg of B'nai B'rith, Max Greenberg of the Anti-Defamation League, Ed Sanders, a former President of the America-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), and Albert Picker of Miami.¹¹⁰ Later in the month, the White House invited 31 federation community leaders from 19 cities to hear Mondale and Brzezinski defend the sale of U.S. weapons to Arab countries as well as American opposition to Jews establishing towns on the West Bank.¹¹¹ The wooing of American Jewry was supplemented by a verbal offensive against Israel's diplomatic stance. In mid-February, the State Department issued a blistering attack on Israel's West Bank policy.¹¹²

The Other War Being Lost

Plainly, given its continuing dependence on the United States, Israel needed the support of American public opinion and for the American Jewish

¹⁰⁹ JTA, February, 1, 1978

¹¹⁰ JTA, February 10, 1978

¹¹¹ JTA, February 27, 1978

¹¹² JTA, February 13, 1978

community to serve as the vanguard of that support. However, several ingredients undermined Israel's standing in public opinion. The facts-on-the-ground were that the Palestinian-Arabs wanted Israel out of the West Bank and Gaza; Sadat's trip to Jerusalem meant that the most populous Arab state had recognized Israel's right to exist in the Arab world; the United States publicly committed itself to support Israel, except for its West Bank policies; The perception of the conflict was being transformed from a largely zero-sum contest-- pitting one Jewish State against legions of Arab and Islamic countries--into a non-zero-sum dispute between Israelis and stateless Palestinians. In this new setting, Israel was hard pressed to explain why it was not more conciliatory. The agent of this change had been, in no small measure, the President of the United States himself.

None of this was lost on Schindler. Speaking at the 29th World Zionist Congress in Jerusalem, he said that Israel's image in American public opinion had suffered a "major setback." Carter was moving toward imposing his own solution on an Israel whose image had been transformed. The Jewish State was made to appear "untruthful" and "conniving." President Sadat's analysis of the Arab-Israel conflict had largely been accepted by the American people. State Department assertions that Jewish settlements in Judea, Samaria and Gaza were "illegal" further contributed to Israel's sagging image. Finally, the American news media held Israel and the Arabs to different standards.¹¹³

One casualty of the friction between the White House and the Jewish leadership was Mark Alan Siegal, a 31 year old political scientist, who had been the Administration's point-man on Jewish concerns. Citing differences with the President's Mideast policy, Siegal withdrew from the liaison role

¹¹³ JTA, Feb. 23, 1978. Yet, U.S. Jews were convinced that Arab intentions had not sincerely changed. Underscoring their misgivings was the March 1978 terror attack on the costal road between Tel Aviv and Haifa which killed 37 civilians including American Jewish photographer, Gail Rubin. Operation Litani, Israel's incursion into Lebanon, was launched in retaliation. See JTA, March 17, 1978.

(and days later resigned from the White House). Lipshitz and Stuart Eizenstat were assigned to fill the vacated job in addition to their regular responsibilities.¹¹⁴

Schindler-Carter Duel

Over time, Carter came to see Schindler as being too close politically to the Begin government and personally obdurate in the face of the President's efforts to resolve the Arab-Israel conflict. Disassociation was suffering because of Schindler. This was especially ironic given that, privately, Schindler and Begin held few political views in common. Notwithstanding Administration hints that Carter would be pleased to see Schindler's term as Chairman of the Presidents Conference come to a close, the Conference voted, in an unprecedented move, to extend Schindler's term beyond its second year.¹¹⁵ The Jewish leadership was sending Carter an obvious message. Schindler later denied telling *The New York Times* that "Carter was a question mark" regarding his personal feelings toward Jews. Another question mark was NSC Advisor Brezinski whose sentiments with respect to Jews were also grist for the rumor mills.¹¹⁶

After the the coastal road massacre, the U.S. Jewish leadership again called upon the Administration to close the PLO offices in the United States. But State Department spokesman Tom Reston said that due to U.S. laws it

¹¹⁴ JTA, March 9, 1978

¹¹⁵ JTA, March 17, 1978. As Schindler explains, he was not looking for a confrontation with Carter. He did not offer the "question mark" comment. It came out in answer to a reporter's question. In his own mind, Schindler did not want history to compare his performance with that of Rabbi Stephen Wise, leader of the American Jewish community during the destruction of European Jewry. Schindler says did not want to put a good face on a bad situation. But he did not intend to insinuate that Carter was an anti-Semite. To this day, Schindler believes that the White House engaged in a deliberate attempt to discredit his leadership. *Telephone Interview, Rabbi Schindler*, November 28, 1993

¹¹⁶ *New York Times*, March 10, 1978. This despite the fact that Begin had publicly thanked Brzezinski for the work his father did as a Polish diplomat saving Jews during the 1930's. Brzezinski, op. cit., p.100

was impossible to do so.¹¹⁷ It was in this atmosphere that the next Carter-Begin meeting was held.

On Sunday, March 4, 1978, Carter met with Begin at the White House in an atmosphere marked by "cold formality."¹¹⁸ The Administration, according to press reports, held Begin accountable for lack of progress in the peace process. The Carter-Begin sessions had been "very, very rough."

The exchange had been so bitter, so acrimonious, so offensive, Carter said, that he was unable to sleep afterward--and, as one aide said, "He *never* has trouble sleeping." ...As soon as the Israelis were seated, Carter delivered a somewhat stern lecture...(Carter) told Begin that Israel would be making a serious mistake if it let this chance for a settlement collapse. The President, according to these sources, said he would not hesitate to go to the American people and put the blame for failure squarely on Israel...¹¹⁹

The American Jewish leadership was being placed in an unenviable position. From Washington, Begin went to New York to address the Presidents Conference. He urged the Jewish leaders to mobilize public opinion on Israel's behalf: "Go around, take our peace plan, make it known, ask for support."¹²⁰ Emboldened, Schindler told the gathering: "Away with the counsel of timidity. Away with the caution of cowardice. Away with those who would flatter themselves into the good graces of the powerful. Away with those who have no convictions. Away with those who would beg for good-will and toady for favor. Who are we? We are Americans with our roots deep in the soil of this land. We are also Jews."¹²¹ But despite the tough talk, U.S. Jewish leaders were decidedly uncomfortable about being publicly cast in the role of Begin supporters in an intemperate political clash with the

¹¹⁷ JTA, April 7, 1978

¹¹⁸ JTA, March 23, 1978

¹¹⁹ *Newsweek*, March 19, 1978. Shortly afterwards, Carter personally took new US proposals which had been accepted by the Israelis to Egypt.

¹²⁰ JTA, March 27, 1978

¹²¹ JTA, March 27, 1978

President of the United States.

IV

Disassociation Realized

Carter's efforts to separate American Jews from Begin's West Bank policies came to fruition a month later. A front page report in *The New York Times* announced that a group of 37 prominent American Jews had signed a letter supporting "Peace Now."¹²² They opposed Jewish settlements on the West Bank and urged Begin to show "greater flexibility." They said: "...Even as we continue to oppose those aspects of American policy which threaten to diminish Israel's security...we are disturbed by the Begin Government's response to President Sadat's peace initiative." Signatories included Rabbi Schindler's own deputy at the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Albert Vorspan, political sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset, Irving Levine and Ira Silverman of the American Jewish Committee, Saul Bellow, the Nobel Prize laureate, Breira leader Eugene Borowitz, Leonard Fein of Brandeis, former Conference of Presidents head Rabbi Joachim Prinz and others.¹²³ The path-breaking manifesto legitimized protest against Begin's

¹²² *New York Times*, April 25, 1978

¹²³ *New York Times*, April 21, 1978. Here is the complete list: Robert Alter, Kenneth Arrow, Daniel Bell, Rabbi Saul Berman, Rabbi Ben Zion Bokser, Rabbi Eugene Borowitz, Professor Lucy Davidowicz, Professor Leonard Fein, Rabbi Robert Gordish, Rabbi Arthur Green, Irving Howe, Rabbi Wolf Kelman, Walter Laqueur, Irving Levine, Rabbi Eugene Lipman, Seymour Martin Lipset, Jesse Lurie, Rabbi Israel Moshowitz, Jack Neusner, Michael Pelavin, Alan Pollack, Martin Perett, Rabbi Joachim Prinz, Gary Rubin, Rabbi Max Rutenberg, Benjamin Schwartz, Meyer Shapiro, Arden Shenker, Charles Silberman, Ira Silverman, Marie Syrkin, Albert Vorspan, Michael Wolzer, Lewis Weinstein and Leon Wiselitzer. The then-independent *Jewish Week & American Examiner* editorialized: "The naivete of some of the signers of the statement...is incredible. We can understand their political attitude of impatience with the Begin leadership, but how could they fail to realize that the Carter Administration's pressuring of Israel is by far the most important issue facing Israel and American Jewry. Surely, the timing of the statement cannot fail to encourage Washington to persist in demanding concessions that would imperil Israel's security." See *The Jewish Week-American Examiner*, April 30, 1978. The paper was later sold to the UJA/Federation of Jewish Philanthropies.

policies by aligning criticism with the Prime Minister's domestic antagonists.¹²⁴

Only days prior to the "letter of 37" another group of Jewish leaders, associated with liberal organizations, testified before a Knesset committee hearing. They warned that continued Jewish settlement beyond the "Green Line" was damaging to Israel's image in the United States. Participants included Howard Squadron and Naomi Levine of the AJCongress, Bert Gold of the AJCommittee, Burton Joseph and Benjamin Epstein of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, as well as Theodore Mann and Albert Chernin of the National Jewish Community Advisory Council.¹²⁵

Some of these very leaders were present at a late April meeting in Washington D.C. between a Presidents Conference delegation and Vice President Mondale. The President himself briefly greeted the gathering. Some in the delegation debated with Mondale, arguing that the West Bank settlements were not technically "illegal."¹²⁶

Now, a year and a half into the Carter Administration, Jewish criticism of Israeli policies came from diffuse sources with differing motives. With some Israelis calling for an exchange of land-for-peace, individual U.S. Jews became increasingly vocal in criticizing Israeli policies.¹²⁷ Along the lines of the disassociation strategy, a number of American Jewish leaders wanted to calibrate their support: advocating continued U.S. support for Israel while withholding backing for the Government's West Bank policies. Schindler,

¹²⁴ Peace Now's campaign continued to receive wide coverage. See for example, *The New York Times* April 27, 1978.

¹²⁵ JTA, April 21, 1978

¹²⁶ JTA, April 28, 1978

¹²⁷In late April, Begin told the IDF Reserve Officers who had originally formed "Peace Now" and which called for a "land-for-peace" trade with the Arabs that he would not hand over Judea, Samaria and Gaza to "foreign rule." See JTA, April 25, 1978.

meanwhile, appeared to be leading Begin to believe that the level of U.S. Jewish support for his stance was stable while, at the same time, telling the media something else entirely. Nahum Goldmann bluntly told NSC Advisor Brezinski that the Carter Administration would have to “break the Jewish lobby” to foster the peace process.¹²⁸

What impact, if any, all this was having on PLO diplomatic inroads in the United States is difficult to assess. Around this time, though, the State Department allowed the PLO to open an information office in Washington D.C. The Administration claimed it had no legal way to block the move. But some Jewish groups, including the ADL, insisted that the Administration could shut the PLO's New York and Washington operations if it really wanted to.¹²⁹ The Administration was sending a tactful perceptual message that changes in PLO goals had earned it a diplomatic bonus. Now, the lure of moderation was attracting the attention of the PLO leadership. Arafat promoted the non-zero sum message by stating that the PLO would accept the existence of Israel alongside a PLO-led state. The PLO, he explained, was willing to establish its state on land “liberated or from which the Israelis have withdrawn.”¹³⁰

In the wake of the “letter of the 37,” a new etiquette in Diaspora-Israel relations prevailed. Criticism of Israeli policies by prominent Jewish figures became unexceptional. Arthur Hertzberg of the American Jewish Congress told Israel TV that polls demonstrated American Jewish support for the State of Israel was not the same as support for Israeli Government policies in the Territories. He reiterated this distinction in a Hebrew newspaper Op-Ed

¹²⁸ *Newsweek*, April 24, 1978. Schindler says, emphatically, that he never misled Begin about where the Jewish establishment stood. Begin had a tendency to mislead himself. He would receive letters of support from American rabbis who had little establishment influence and delude himself into thinking that he had the backing of US Jewry. *Telephone Interview with Rabbi Schindler, November 28, 1993*

¹²⁹ JTA, May 11, 1978

¹³⁰ “Arafat Hints Easing of P.L.O.'s Attitude,” *The New York Times*, May 2, 1978

essay.¹³¹ There was almost a palpable sense of relief on the part of some Jewish leaders that they could join Carter in criticizing Israel instead of having to defend Israel from Carter's criticism.

Perhaps not surprisingly, given her recent defense of Begin, the Prime Minister found an ally in former Prime Minister Golda Meir. She chastised Peace Now for suggesting that a trade of "land for peace" in the Jordan valley and the Golan was a viable negotiating position for Israel. Peace, she suggested, could not be purchased at any price.¹³²

The Administration now engaged in an effort to sanitize the PLO's image even as it sought to moderate PLO policies. So, while deploring the June 1978 bombing of Jerusalem's *Mahne Yehuda* open-air market, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State William Harrop refused to characterize the PLO as either a "terrorist" or "non-terrorist" group.¹³³ From the Administration's perspective, the Palestinian cause had to be unlinked from the scourge of terrorism. It had to be judged on its own merits. Only that way could U.S. Jews play their assigned role in promoting the peace process.

During nearly 30 years in opposition, Begin had maintained a tradition of not criticizing the Israeli government while abroad or in writings aimed specifically at a non-Israeli readership. This is worthwhile noting because, as I argue, it was partly their exposure to Israeli criticism of Begin (added to

¹³¹ JTA, May 16, 1978. Earlier in the month, Begin had been on a tour of the U.S. appealing to Jews to unite behind Israel. He received a relatively warm White House reception with Carter muting differences between the two leaders. See "Support for Israel Affirmed by Carter on 30th Anniversary," *The New York Times*, May 2, 1978 and JTA Daily May 4, 1978. Some days later, however, the Carter Administration was able to override objections from the pro-Israel community and announced plans to sell advanced military aircraft to Saudi Arabia. Carter Aide Robert Lipshutz received a decidedly unfriendly reception while addressing the AIPAC Policy Conference in Washington, See JTA, Daily May 10, 1978.

¹³² JTA, May 23, 1978

¹³³ JTA, June 20, 1978

Administration admonishment of Begin) which countenanced, indeed inspired, so much of the American Jewish protest against Begin. Thus, in the summer of 1978, Labor Party Leader Shimon Peres published an Op-Ed essay in the *New York Times* advocating an exchange of some West Bank land-for-peace and implying that, unlike the Begin-led Israeli Government, Labor was sensitive to the conflicting considerations which needed to be taken into account in order to promote peace. He recalled that Begin "vehemently and consistently opposed the idea of partition, which enabled Israel to be born." Labor's aim was: "A fair solution, under which as many Palestinians as possible would be under an Arab flag while" Israeli security needs were protected. This could be accomplished by turning over parts of the West Bank to Jordan (which was largely a Palestinian state anyway).¹³⁴

Ted Mann

In late June 1978, Theodore R. Mann, a Czechoslovakian-born attorney based in Philadelphia, and head of the umbrella National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council (NJCRAC), replaced Schindler as Chairman of the Presidents Conference. His policy differences with the Israeli Government were widely known.¹³⁵ Confronted with the Andrew Young Affair and Carter's adversarial approach to Begin, Mann did his duty and pursued the course established by previous chairmen. He would react to crises as they developed and try to be generally supportive of Begin's approach. However, the President's Conference would not actively champion Begin's line with regard to the Administered Territories.

The importance Carter attached to garnering American Jewish support

¹³⁴ "Herut and Labor," Op-Ed by Shimon Peres, *The New York Times*, August 6, 1978. Only days earlier, the ADL had urged Labor to desist in personal attacks against Begin since their effect was to damage Israel's standing in the United States. *JTA, Daily*, July 26, 1978.

¹³⁵ *JTA*, June 30, 1978

for his policies can be gleaned from his appointment of former AIPAC chairman Ed Sanders as the White House liaison with the Jewish community.¹³⁶ Mark Alan Segal, an earlier liaison, leveled an unprecedented and blunt indictment of Carter, calling the President “hostile toward Israel.”¹³⁷ But Carter’s alleged insensitivity toward Israel did not inhibit other American Jews from criticizing Begin. An ad carrying 700 names of American Jews supporting Peace Now was published in the *Jerusalem Post* in July.¹³⁸ On the other hand, the quarrelsome mood between the Administration and Israel did seemingly lead some establishment supporters of “disassociation” to having second thoughts. Given the Begin Government’s line, it was difficult to calibrate pressure on Israel to abandon the Territories while simultaneously preserving the essential fabric of U.S.-Israel relationship. This led AJCongress head Howard Squadron to warn against an “imposed” peace.¹³⁹ Ted Mann adhered to a similar position in urging the Egyptians to resume their talks with Israel. He said it would be a serious error for the U.S. to press for Israeli concessions.¹⁴⁰

Camp David

In August 1978, the White House announced that Sadat and Begin would meet at Camp David to continue their quest for an agreement. The Camp David negotiations are tangentially linked to the U.S.-PLO dialogue topic in the sense that the process helped solidify the Arab-Israel struggle in non-zero sum parameters. In Israel, “Peace Now” mobilized fifty thousand demonstrators in Tel Aviv on the eve of the Camp David talks to urge Begin to show “flexibility.”¹⁴¹ Meanwhile, in the U.S., Howard Squadron, a

¹³⁶ JTA, June 30, 1978

¹³⁷ JTA, July 13, 1978

¹³⁸ JTA, July 12, 1978

¹³⁹ JTA, July 13, 1978

¹⁴⁰ JTA, August 8, 1978

¹⁴¹ JTA, September 5, 1978

sometime Begin critic now serving as Acting Chairman of the Presidents Conference, expressed ostensible support for Israel's position going into the Camp David talks.¹⁴²

The Administration was clearly frustrated by its inability to gain concessions from the PLO. Talks would have to proceed without direct input from the Palestinian-Arabs. Unable to persuade the PLO to make the necessary concessions, the Administration shifted tactics. The United States announced it would bar entry of PLO representatives into the country as part of a program to keep out anyone advocating the assassination of U.S. government officials.¹⁴³ President Carter went so far as to equate the PLO with the Ku Klux Klan and Nazis, saying it would be nice if they would all just go away. This get-tough course was maintained for some time. Nevertheless, it did not prevent Carter from enigmatically commenting that: "As a result of Camp David, the people of the Palestinian area will have a chance to administer their own affairs including the right to worship."¹⁴⁴

When finally achieved, the Camp David Agreement, which included an Israeli commitment for a three month settlement freeze, was denounced by virtually the entire Arab world as well as the Palestine Liberation Organization. Almost immediately, the United States and Israel differed on how the agreement was to be interpreted and implemented. Unconnected to Administration efforts, but worth noting because they contributed to the overall political environment, the UN and the American media helped keep the spotlight on the Palestinian-Arab issue. ABC television broadcast a documentary approbative of the PLO-cause;¹⁴⁵ at the UN, a \$500,000 pro-PLO

¹⁴² JTA, August 17, 1978. On the right of the U.S. Jewish political spectrum, pro-Begin supporters sought to mobilize support with a petition campaign. See JTA, August 13, 1978.

¹⁴³ JTA, Sept. 12, 1978

¹⁴⁴ JTA, Sept. 26, 1978

¹⁴⁵ JTA, Oct. 25, 1978

informational program was well under way.¹⁴⁶

Carter and the Jewish leadership remained at odds over Camp David interpretation and implementation issues. White House pressure on Israel intensified. The Presidents Conference complained that Carter was championing the Egyptian side. A litany of seemingly unconnected events exacerbated tensions, including: the duration of the settlement freeze agreed to by Begin; “off the cuff” remarks by Hodding Carter terming Begin a “terrorist;” a White House snub of Begin during his brief visit to North America; Carter’s insinuation that U.S. Jews were making too much of the PLO issue; the President implying that the PLO was capable of evolving in a moderate direction; and Carter’s comments on the future of Jerusalem, contributed to a deepening estrangement between the White House and the Presidents Conference.¹⁴⁷

US-Israel tensions were now shaped by Israel’s desire to exploit the opening with Egypt in order to solve the Arab-Israel conflict at the state-to-state level. But the US seemed to be encouraging Sadat to hold the prospect of an Israel-Egypt peace treaty hostage to the Palestinian-Arab component. Meanwhile, Israel sought to avoid linking the lack of a West Bank autonomy breakthrough with the signing of a peace treaty. Now, Begin’s Jewish critics, even those who had signed a public letter on behalf of Peace Now, denounced the Administration for siding with Egypt. Ted Mann led a Presidents Conference delegation to a meeting with Secretary of State Cyrus Vance where they told Vance that the U.S. should serve as a mediator rather than take sides.¹⁴⁸

Both the Administration and the PLO worked assiduously to keep

¹⁴⁶ JTA, November 8, 1978. The United States said it would not take part in the program but would also not cut off funding.

¹⁴⁷ JTA, November 14, 1978

¹⁴⁸ JTA, December 20, 1978

Camp David from eclipsing the PLO cause. Reiterating his earlier message, implying that it no longer demanded the dismantling of Israel, Arafat announced in December 1978 that the PLO was willing to form a state in any part of Palestine evacuated by Israel.¹⁴⁹ Illustrative of how the Administration shaped the agenda and made choices which forced the Jewish leadership into making its own selections, UN Ambassador Andrew Young insinuated that American diplomacy was being hampered by the lack of an “effective relationship with the Palestinian people.” He argued that the United States ought to “have some way of relating to the Palestinian people” and noted that Washington was working on this problem. The PLO’s UN delegation, Young further implied, was a moderating influence on the group. Palestinians believed that the peace process did not offer them self-determination. A link between the US and the PLO would address Palestinian concerns.¹⁵⁰

Hodding Carter balanced Young’s remarks by stating: “We have not changed our policy regarding the PLO. Our only contacts with the PLO in New York City—and nowhere else—are incidental and related to our responsibilities as host country to the UN.”¹⁵¹ But Jewish leaders were not mollified. Some suggested that Young was the Administration’s point-man in laying the groundwork for a US-PLO relationship.¹⁵²

On the Friday after Young’s comments, Mann led a Presidents Conference delegation to the White House for a meeting with Carter. The President again assured the Jewish leaders that the United States would not

¹⁴⁹ JTA, December 4, 1978

¹⁵⁰ Ironically, at around this time, King Hussein told an interviewer with *Munchner Merkur*, (October 28-29, 1978): “The PLO as the sole representative of the people of Palestine? Ridiculous! How can a half dozen splintered organizations - partly ruled by criminals who quarrel among themselves about radical ideologies - make such a claim? What they call representation, or war of liberation, is nothing but terror.” [distributed by International Information Center, Jerusalem, 23 January 1979].

¹⁵¹ JTA, Jan. 18, 1979

¹⁵² JTA, Jan. 22, 1979

deal with the PLO until it accepts Israel's sovereignty and its right to exist.¹⁵³ The Administration's tacit commitment to bring the PLO into the negotiations under previously enunciated conditions was something the Israelis reluctantly acknowledged. Foreign Minister Dayan remarked that it would be difficult to keep the PLO out of the peace process. His political confidant, Zalman Shoval, said that Dayan was not advocating a PLO role but merely facing reality.¹⁵⁴ The idea of the centrality of the Palestinian problem was on Carter's mind when, in March 1979, he traveled to the region in order to personally pursue the talks started at Camp David. While in Cairo for talks with Sadat, Carter restated his view that peace depended on including the "Palestinian people" in the process.¹⁵⁵

Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty Signed

With the exception of Sadat's trip to Jerusalem two years earlier, no event contributed more to recasting the Arab-Israel conflict along non-zero sum terms than the U.S. brokered peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. Decades of overt hostility and war between Egypt and Israel officially came to a close on March 26, 1979. The treaty was premised upon the Camp David Accords which called for negotiations over the West Bank to take place in stages. Broadly speaking, this was to involve:

- Electing a self-governing Authority in the Administered Territories.
- This Authority would negotiate a transitional arrangement for the West Bank and Gaza for a period of five years aimed at providing autonomy to the area's inhabitants.
- The five year period would begin after the Authority was elected.
- At the third year point talks would start to determine the final status of the

¹⁵³ JTA, Jan. 18, 1979. Also present for the meeting were Vice President Mondale, Zbigniew Brezinski, William Quandt and Harold Saunders. Evidently weary over the strain in relations, Mann told a Cincinnati audience some days later that American Jews should not be regarded as 'yes men' for either Israel or Washington. See JTA Daily, January 23, 1979

¹⁵⁴ JTA, February 14, 1979

¹⁵⁵ JTA, March 9, 1979

West Bank and Gaza.¹⁵⁶

From the vantage point of political suasion analysis, the American handling of the post treaty era reveals how a determined player can manipulate dimensions so as to gain situational advantage. Far from encouraging the Egyptian-Israel relationship to serve as a stepping stone toward similar arrangements with other Arab states, and far from diminishing the stature of the PLO, the Administration toiled assiduously to keep the PLO in the game. Notwithstanding what they were telling the Israelis and their American Jewish supporters, U.S. authorities were leaving the door more than slightly ajar to the prospect of PLO participation in the peace process. The PLO would not be allowed to participate based on its platform calling for Israel's dismantlement. But the U.S. seemed committed to teasing the PLO into transforming itself into an acceptable player.

The U.S. romanced the PLO while rejecting Jewish settlement in Samaria, Judea and Gaza. These mutually reinforcing tactics were based on the assumption that the PLO could be coaxed into accepting something less than the destruction of Israel, namely: the West Bank and Gaza, so long as there was something tangible left to offer the Palestinian-Arabs. Therefore, Israeli actions which connoted retention of the Territories had to be

¹⁵⁶ A full text of the Camp David Accords is available in *The Israel-Arab Reader* edited by Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin, pages 609-615 (1984 edition). Begin assured the Knesset that, "Israel will never return to the pre-1967 lines...mark my words, united Jerusalem is the eternal capital of Israel. It will never be divided again...Thirdly, in Judea, Samaria and Gaza there will never be a Palestinian state...We never agreed to autonomy for the territories but only for the inhabitants." Labor Party leader Peres immediately challenged this premise: "Realistically, I cannot see how you can separate self-government of people and self-government of a territory...Can you realistically distinguish between a man and his house, a farmer and his field? It's impossible." Peres called for annexation of parts of the West Bank necessary for Israel's security leaving the rest of the area for the Arabs. In any event, Labor voted for the Egyptian-Israel peace Treaty in the Knesset. For additional details see *The New York Times*, March 21, 1979. Peres speech closely paralleled Carter's vision of the treaty. With Carter, Vance and other U.S. officials in the Knesset chamber Peres said: "We are aware that the Egyptian leaders to whom you have just spoken are concerned with the future of the still unresolved Palestinian issue. So are we." While Labor was prepared for "mutual compromise" he ruled out the PLO as a partner to the peace process citing its covenant which calls for Israel's destruction.

denigrated and undermined. So, for example, in early April 1979, the PLO's Beirut chief Shafik al-Hout was granted a special waiver to tour U.S. Ivy League college campuses. He had been invited to the U.S. by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations. Hodding Carter, the State Department spokesman, said in response to a question, that the U.S. had no knowledge linking Al-Hout with terrorism.¹⁵⁷ Subsequent press reports revealed that Vance had apparently arranged for the Immigration and Naturalization Service to allow him into the United States. Later, two Administration officials stumbled upon Al Hout at the Syrian Embassy on the occasion of Syrian Nation Day.¹⁵⁸ The State Department position before a Senate Subcommittee was that the United States could have "informal" contacts with the PLO without violating its "no talk" agreement with Israel.¹⁵⁹

The success of the American flirtation with the PLO depended on making clear what was expected of the group. Thus, the President told a news conference that he would not negotiate with the PLO unless it endorsed UN resolution 242.¹⁶⁰ This was the message that would be affirmed time and again. Carter also let it be known that his Administration was not surreptitiously negotiating with the PLO.¹⁶¹

Presidents Conference Consensus on Settlements

Jewish life in the West Bank, PLO contacts and the prospect of trading

¹⁵⁷ JTA, April 6, 1979. These affairs had become so frequent that, often, there was no recorded Jewish reaction. Some leaders felt that responding would serve only to increase the importance of the PLO.

¹⁵⁸ JTA, May 1, 1979

¹⁵⁹ The official, Assistant Secretary Harold Saunders answered yes when asked by Rep. Paul Findley, an advocate of US-PLO ties, "whether the U.S. can have informal direct communication with the PLO without first securing Israel's prior approval." See "A GOP Voice Urges US Talk to PLO," *Christian Science Monitor*, May 8, 1979.

¹⁶⁰ JTA, April 9, 1979

¹⁶¹ JTA, May 23, 1979

captured land in anticipation of peace were inextricably linked issues. Despite their discomfiture over Begin government policies, the Administration's relentless, determined criticism of Jewish settlements in the Territories as illegal was not well received within the Presidents Conference. Carter's focus on settlements seemed disproportionate compared to other elements of the dispute. Even "land-for-peace" advocates, such as American Jewish Congress president Howard Squadron, viewed the Administration's approach as counter-productive. Ted Mann, Chairman of the Presidents Conference, said that American Jews accepted Jewish settlement in the Territories as 'legal' and 'necessary.' Though, as *Ha'Aretz* reported, Mann was critical of one particular settlement at Elon Moreh.¹⁶²

But a nascent internal opposition within the Jewish establishment had, by now, emerged. So, the Presidents Conference effort to speak with one voice on this divisive issue was hardly successful. Allen Pollack of the Labor Zionist Alliance and Frieda Leeman of the Pioneer Women issued a joint statement asserting: "There is no consensus in the American Jewish community or even in the Conference of Presidents regarding the Israeli government settlement policy." Indeed, sixty-two "prominent" settlement opponents issued a public letter critical of Begin's West Bank policy.¹⁶³

In mid-June, Mann, Israel Miller and Yehuda Hellman met with Begin on the settlement issue. Reports leaked to the press suggested that the Jewish leaders opposed the creation of the Elon Moreh settlement because of its

¹⁶² JTA, June 15, 1979. Several days earlier, NSC Advisor Brzezinski said that Jewish settlements in the Administered Territories "troubled" the United States. See JTA Daily, June 12, 1979. Schindler challenges the analysis that there was even a temporary consensus on the settlement issue. "We never said we had a consensus and we never had a consensus on the settlement issue." *Telephone Interview with Rabbi Schindler, November 28, 1993.*

¹⁶³ JTA, June 18, 1979. Leonard Fein, a competing dissident leader, spoke out against Elon Moreh and challenged Mann regarding the level of support for the settlements inside the U.S. Jewish community.

location near an Arab population center.¹⁶⁴ Elon Mora, portrayed as being situated on “expropriated Arab land,” served as a catalyst for a new spurt of anti-Israeli Government criticism. Spearheaded by the publicity know-how of Martin Peretz, owner of the *New Republic*, fifty-nine well-known American Jews, including composer Leonard Bernstein, said they found Jewish retention of Samaria and Judea, with its 750,000 Arab inhabitants, “morally unacceptable.” Publicly, Mann said: “That such settlements are legal is not only my view but the consensus in the American Jewish community.”¹⁶⁵

Mann’s comments followed on the heels of a Presidents Conference attempt at a consensus stance regarding West Bank settlements. The common position proclaimed that:

- Jewish settlements in Judea, Samaria and Gaza were legal.
- Jordan is Palestine and no second Palestinian state should be established.
- Jerusalem is indivisible.
- The US should have no relations with the PLO.
- Israel will respect Camp David.

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While the Jewish leadership was grappling with the issue of what should be done in connection with Jewish settlement in the Territories, the

¹⁶⁴ Elon Mora was a *Yishuv* established by the Gush Emunim movement. After seven attempts were blocked by the Labor Government an eighth attempt at a compromise location near the IDF camp at Kaddum at Sabaste in Samaria (north of Nablus) was successful. These settlements were intended to make it politically difficult to give up the land. Immediately after his 1977 election victory, Begin visited the Kaddum camp. Virtually all of the land upon which West Bank hill settlements were erected was on “dead land” (claimed by no one) or state property and largely unfit for agriculture. See *Encyclopaedia Judaica, Decennial Book, 1973-1982*, p. 352.

¹⁶⁵ Time, July 23, 1979. Bernstein was closely associated with classical music in Israel. Until his death in 1990, Bernstein championed a variety of other causes as well, including hosting a dinner party on behalf of the Black Panthers

¹⁶⁶ JTA, June 29, 1979. Likely contributing to the consensus effort was the fact that the Autonomy talks had begun and the U.S. was seeking a way of bringing the Palestinian-Arabs into the negotiations. U.S. pressure on Israel was intense. An Israeli-Syrian aerial dog-fight over South Lebanon led the Administration to express concern over the use of American weaponry.

State Department continued its ongoing efforts to draw the PLO into the peace process. The standard proviso remained operative: the United States was willing to talk to the PLO if it recognized Israel's right to exist. According to Hodding Carter:

We continue to hope that the PLO will change its firmly held position and concede and grant Israel's right to exist--in which case the President has said he would be willing to talk to the PLO. There is no assumption that anybody else will be willing. Our efforts are aimed specifically at the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza to indicate we want them to be participants as called for in the peace treaty.¹⁶⁷

Strategic choices force choices but in the interim they can also cause frustrations. Because of the Administration's unswerving accent on the Palestinian question, the Jewish leadership was being pressured into making a choice it was not ready to make. This resulted in worsening relations between the Jewish leadership and the President. The pressure was kept on in various ways. For instance, Carter showed little acceptance of Israel's course of harsh reprisals in response to acts of Arab terrorism. Mann felt prompted to complain that "the equation of Israeli attempts to wipe out terrorism with terrorism itself, is a moral outrage."¹⁶⁸

Never had a United States President offered so heartfelt an embrace of the Palestinian-Arab cause as did Jimmy Carter. To the Jewish leadership's consternation, Carter likened the Palestinian-Arab cause to the United States

¹⁶⁷ JTA, July 10, 1979. Interestingly, on June 25, 1979 the Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko signaled a shift in his country's policy toward the PLO's zero-sum policy. He said the USSR favored "a small, I repeat a small, state of their own." The *Christian Science Monitor* reported: "This was the first time analysts here recall Mr. Gromyko saying that the Soviets favored a 'small' Palestinian state--giving the impression that the Soviets backed the Palestinian demand for all or part of Israel. Now, however, Mr. Gromyko has specifically limited the Soviet view of the future state, in line with what Moscow probably has wanted all along...Some Western analysts here think this may confirm reports that the PLO itself has drawn away from its former hard-line stand, and also is willing to lay claim to a 'small' state only." See *Christian Science Monitor*, June 26, 1979.

¹⁶⁸ JTA, July 27, 1979 and *The New York Times*, August 1, 1979

civil rights movement. He spoke of the Arab right to return to homes in what had become Israel. And he pointed to his Jewish advisors, Sol Linowitz and Robert Strauss, as fully supporting the Administration policy on the Palestinians. ¹⁶⁹ Jewish dismay and disappointment over the civil rights analogy was almost immediate. ¹⁷⁰ The White House promptly issued a statement clarifying the President's reference to the U.S. civil rights movement: Carter wanted his remarks to be interpreted as referring to the fact that the civil rights movement in the U.S. was largely successful because it was peaceful. ¹⁷¹

Categorization of the Conflict

Incrementally, the perception of the conflict was in transition. The non zero sum configuration took on greater vitality. The American focus on the Palestinian issue was the end product of a number of concrete changes on the ground since 1967. Nevertheless, a policy tilt toward the Palestinian-Arabs at Israel's expense was contingent upon a transformation of the perceptions. This had to be accomplished in real terms --by getting the Arab camp to accept Israel's existence-- and on a more sublime psychological level by changing

¹⁶⁹ JTA August 2, 1979

¹⁷⁰ JTA, August 2, 1979. Carter had opened up an issue the pro-Israel community considered closed. The PLO's demand for the "right to return" was also a non-starter from Israel's point of view. The refugees had left in the hope of returning after an Arab victory in 1948, was the long-standing Zionist line. As far back as 1952 Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett had outlined Israel's position on the "right of return" question: "Israel does not need to be reminded of the problems of Arab refugees. The problem, again, is largely the handiwork of the Arab states. Had they waged no war, not a single Arab need have left his dwelling. The plans prepared by us early in 1948 for the setting up of the Jewish State was based on the definite assumption that it would comprise a considerable Arab population. But with that war as an immutable background experience and in face of the far-reaching transformation wrought in the country's structure by the Arab exodus, it would be suicidal folly for Israel to accept the undoing of what history has decreed. Israel's most vital security considerations now forbid the restoration of the *status quo ante bellum*." Quoted in *Myths and Facts: A Concise Record of the Arab-Israel Conflict*, (Washington, D.C.: Near East Reports, 1992), p.138.

¹⁷¹ JTA, August 2, 1979

popular (especially Jewish) attitudes toward the Palestinian vanguard.¹⁷² The fundamental question remained: was the Arab camp's relatively recent concern about the *appearance of moderation translatable into actual moderation?*

Even in the wake of Sadat's 1977 peace overture, elements of the Jewish leadership remained suspicious of Arab intentions. In particular, Arafat's image--so closely associated with the struggle he represented-- had been thoroughly demonized in the minds eye of many Jews. Remarks by Congressman Paul Findley about Arafat's image "problem" together with his suggestion that what the PLO leader needed were some pointers on public relations, only served to heighten Jewish suspicions.¹⁷³ Furthermore, many in the Jewish leadership surmised that the Administration was tacitly cooperating in refining Arafat's image.¹⁷⁴ Increasingly, Arafat came to be presented in the Western press and through meetings with Western European leaders, as a moderate willing to negotiate a plan of coexistence with Israel.¹⁷⁵ With American acquiescence, Arafat was welcomed in Vienna in 1979 for contacts with the Socialist International. In return the PLO promised to stop terrorist activities outside of Israel. Some U.S. officials suggested that adherence to this pledge would show "Arafat has power and is of good faith." According to the *Christian Science Monitor* :

It is also believed that the Socialist International is maintaining PLO contacts in consultation with the United States. According to some diplomats, President Carter recently asked Willy Brandt to 'sound out the PLO.' Austrian

¹⁷² For their part, Arafat and the PLO also faced psychological dilemmas of trust and betrayal in inching toward moderation. *Interviews* with ICPME's Drora Kass, October 20, 1992 (Jerusalem) and Jerome Segal op. cit.

¹⁷³ JTA, August 6, 1979

¹⁷⁴ A sense of Jewish skepticism about how the media was portraying PLO moderation is exemplified by a full-page critical analysis appearing in *The New York Jewish Week*, August 31, 1979 by Martin H. Miller.

¹⁷⁵ See for example Arafat's interview with Joseph Fitchett in the August 2, 1979 *International Herald Tribune* and the front page *Washington Star* story dated June 7, 1979, both cited by Miller, op. cit.

Chancellor Bruno Kreisky claims that I also informed the American Ambassador [in Vienna, Milton A. Wolfe] a day before Arafat's arrival...[U.S. officials] point to the fact that [Kreisky and Brandt] would not do something which would make the US in the long run unhappy...These officials point out that Washington's attitude toward the Palestinians has changed, but the US has 'limited possibilities' of expressing this without endangering its role as mediator in the Egyptian-Israeli peace process...¹⁷⁶

For all his efforts to "diplomatically mainstream" the PLO, it is perhaps ironic that Carter continued to profess an aversion to creating a PLO-led state:

I am against any creation of a separate Palestinian state. I don't think it would be good for the Palestinians. I don't think it would be good for Israel. I don't think it would be good for the Arab neighbors of such a state... We must address and resolve the Palestinian question in all its aspects...(they) should have a right to a voice in the determination of their own future.¹⁷⁷

V

Andrew Young Affair

From the viewpoint of political suasion analysis, the import of the Andrew Young affair cannot be overstated. Andrew Young's personal relationship with the President of the United States seemed especially significant. The stunning revelation that, in his capacity as Ambassador to the UN, Young had held secret contacts with the PLO's Zehdi Labib Terzi, coupled with the news that U.S. Ambassador to Austria Milton Wolf had been holding talks with Issam Sartawi, shocked the Jewish leadership. Here was an Administration making a strategic choice that left the Jewish leadership little room to maneuver. Jewish leaders were incensed, with some, individually, calling for Young's resignation.

¹⁷⁶ *Christian Science Monitor*, July 19, 1979

¹⁷⁷ JTA, August 13, 1979

Inasmuch as the PLO had not met conditions for a dialogue with the United States, the August 1979 disclosure that the Carter Administration was nevertheless engaged in secret contacts with the PLO dramatically heightened tensions between the White House and the Jewish community. In announcing that Wolf (who is Jewish) also had contact with the PLO, the State Department seemed to be trying to draw some of the focus away from Young. Vance publicly rebuked Young for his unauthorized contacts with the PLO.¹⁷⁸

The event contained all the ingredients needed to foster saturation media coverage: the nation's first Black American U.N. Ambassador was under fire from the U.S. Jewish community over the PLO. Two days after the meetings were made public Young resigned, blaming Israel for the notoriety attached to the expose.¹⁷⁹ Even as the Wolf-Sartawi meetings were being downplayed as having little significance, Young's resignation only exacerbated frictions. Resentment developed between American Jews and the Black community over charges that Jews had driven Young from office. Meanwhile, the tensions between the Jewish community and the White House persisted, despite a meeting between Mann and Robert Strauss.¹⁸⁰

What was serendipity for the Administration proved ruinous for Jewish efforts to contain the PLO-cause. Whatever his initial designs, Young became a vocal advocate of closer US-PLO ties after his resignation. He said the policy of not talking to the PLO was "ridiculous." On the CBS broadcast *Face the Nation*, he also said that American Blacks would suffer most if an Arab oil embargo were again imposed on the United States. Israel, he charged, did not appreciate the impact of such an embargo on the Black community in the United States.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Wolf later went on to head the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

¹⁷⁹ JTA, August 16th & 17th, 1979

¹⁸⁰ JTA August 17, 1979

¹⁸¹ JTA, August 20, 1979

In the face of White House silence, Mann wrote Carter to reiterate the position of the Jewish leadership: "As you know we did not ask for Ambassador Young's resignation, nor is his resignation an issue in the relationship between the Jewish and the black communities. Our differences are with State Department policy. Those differences remain."¹⁸² That was, decidedly, not the position many key African-American leaders took. Days after Young resigned, Dr. Joseph Lowery, President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, William Jones, Wyatt Walker, Harry Gibson, Philip Cousin and George Lawrence held a conspicuous meeting with New York-based PLO officials.¹⁸³

The Jewish leadership found that holding the dike against the pressure of PLO public relations advances was becoming progressively burdensome. Every new revelation undermined the legitimacy of holding the PLO in odium. The Jewish community was further shaken by rumors--unfounded it turned out-- that Dr. Nahum Goldman, president of the World Jewish

¹⁸² Mann's letter to the President, dated August 16, 1979, is in the archives of the Presidents Conference. See also JTA, August 20, 1979. Schindler underscores that the Presidents Conference did not call for Young's resignation. He suggests that a call by ZOA leader Rabbi Joseph Sternstein, which received coverage in *The New York Post*, gave such an impression. Nevertheless, Schindler's terms White House handling of the Young Affair, "the first use of political anti-Semitism," by an Administration. Someone in the White House, Schindler believes, leaked the idea that the resignation was "forced" by Jewish pressure and suggested that the resignation would cause Black-Jewish tensions. *Telephone Interview, Rabbi Schindler, November 28, 1993.*

¹⁸³ JTA, August 21, 1979. See too *The New York Times*, August 20, 1979. A fuller treatment on the impact of these events on Black-Jewish relations appears in Carl Gershman, "The Andrew Young Affair," *Commentary*, November 1979. The Young affair further solidified the perception that the Arab-Israel conflict had evolved into a non-zero sum struggle. "Blacks," Young told 5,000 guests at a Congressional Black Caucus dinner, "always supported the underdog." The PLO issue was not just "White folks' business."

Congress, was now set to meet Yasir Arafat.¹⁸⁴ Toward the end of August, White House envoy Robert Strauss met with a Presidents Conference delegation led by Mann in Washington. Having just returned from a round of talks in the Middle East, Strauss said U.S. policy on the PLO had not changed but he also insisted that the Palestinians had to be brought into the peace process.¹⁸⁵

The Administration continued to demonstrate an unprecedented regard for Palestinian-Arab sensibilities. For example, an Israeli Air Force strike against PLO targets in Lebanon induced the State Department to charge Israel with practicing "terror."¹⁸⁶ In Paris, at one of his final appearances as U.S. Ambassador to the UN, Young said that American blacks "now believe that the Palestinians are oppressed and will act accordingly." He would "continue to oppose the fact that Israel can take decisions concerning the national interests of the United States." Young predicted that the time would come when the U.S. would engage the PLO in a diplomatic dialogue.¹⁸⁷ In Geneva, meantime, U.S. Ambassador to the UN Human Rights Commission Beverly Carter voted affirmatively on a resolution supporting the

¹⁸⁴ JTA August 24, 1979 The eighty-four year old globe trotting Zionist leader was something of an iconoclast. It was Goldman who was "largely responsible for initiating negotiations with the Federal Republic of Germany on the payment of reparations to Israel and indemnification for Nazi victims." His mainstream leadership activities made him a prominent personality in organized Jewish life. In fact, he took part in founding the President's Conference and was a leader of the freedom for Soviet Jewry movement. Toward the end of his life he divided his time between Israel and Europe. He often criticized the Labor Government (the party in power from 1948 to 1977) for not being sufficiently flexible in its policies towards the Arab states. Goldman even flirted, in 1970, with the idea of meeting Egyptian President Nasser. He dropped the plan in the face of Israeli disapproval. For details about this most interesting figure see *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 7 page 725.

¹⁸⁵ JTA August 27, 1979

¹⁸⁶ JTA, August 31, 1979. Meanwhile, Carter said that he "never met an Arab leader that in private professed the desire for an independent Palestinian state." *The New York Times*, August 31, 1979

¹⁸⁷ JTA, Sept. 4, 1979

PLO.¹⁸⁸

Evidently, these U.S. policy signals (whether purposeful or inadvertent) did not convince Arafat that the time was ripe for an explicit overture to the United States. In an interview with Barbara Walters on the ABC news television program *Issues and Answers*, he refused to directly address the issue of coexistence between a Palestinian and Jewish state.¹⁸⁹

Environmental Factors

The PLO's fortunes were on the rise everywhere and the Presidents Conference worked strenuously to keep pace with Arab diplomatic achievements. For example, Mann and Yehuda Hellman met with the Spanish Ambassador to the United States in Washington to protest an Arafat visit to Spain.¹⁹⁰ But the shifting perceptual climate within the American political system contributed to intensifying support for a US-PLO dialogue. The National Council of Churches endorsed Young's actions and urged both the United States and Israel to negotiate with the PLO.¹⁹¹ The NAACP also joined the chorus calling for a dialogue with the PLO. Its Executive Director Benjamin Hooks urged Carter to rethink his "no talk" PLO policy.¹⁹² B'nai B'rith, the American Jewish Committee and the Synagogue Council of America (all members of the Presidents Conference) challenged the promotion of a US-PLO dialogue. The Presidents Conference also worked diligently behind the scenes to block the seemingly inexorable momentum toward a US- PLO dialogue. Mann reported that he had received new

¹⁸⁸ JTA, September 7, 1979. Because Ambassador Carter is an African-American the vote further exacerbated Black-Jewish tensions. The State Department disassociated itself from the vote.

¹⁸⁹ JTA Daily News Bulletin News Bulletin, Sept. 10, 1979

¹⁹⁰ JTA, Sept. 17, 1979

¹⁹¹ JTA, September 11, 1979

¹⁹² JTA September 11, 1979

assurances from the Administration that it would not openly deal with the PLO. He told *US News and World Report* that he opposed Arafat's involvement in the "peace process" even if the PLO accepted Israel's right to exist: "It gains us nothing to try to put words in PLO leaders' mouths that they are unwilling to say themselves. We've learned from the last couple of generations that when somebody threatens to extinguish a whole people, he deserves to be taken at his word. The PLO is no better than the Nazis and dealing with them is appeasing them."¹⁹³ Meanwhile, Mann tried to put the best possible face on the Black community's apparent support for US-PLO talks.¹⁹⁴

American political suasion efforts, aimed at getting the U.S. Jewish community to embrace the Administration's evaluation that the Palestinian issue was central to resolving the Arab-Israel conflict, took various forms. At a dinner speech sponsored by the World Jewish Congress in New York, Brzezinski urged Israel to accept the "legitimate" rights of the Palestinian-Arabs.¹⁹⁵ A related message came from Douglas Bennet, head of the Agency for International Development, who warned, while on a visit to Israel, that failure to embrace the Administration's viewpoint would result in US public opinion turning anti-Israel particularly when the Jewish State requested more economic aid.¹⁹⁶

Arguably, from the Administration's vantage point, it was fortunate that the Jewish community came out of the Andrew Young affair badly bruised politically. Their lesson was that continued support for Israel now carried a domestic political and social penalty. Belatedly, late in September, in the face of continued Black-Jewish tensions, Carter revealed that the Jewish

¹⁹³ *U.S. News & World Report*, September 3, 1979

¹⁹⁴ JTA, September 13, 1979

¹⁹⁵ JTA, Sept. 19, 1979

¹⁹⁶ JTA, Sept. 20, 1979

leadership had not approached him to dismiss Ambassador Young.¹⁹⁷

The ambience of crisis, another ingredient in political manipulation, persisted in Black-Jewish relations. Now out of Government, Young was even more adamant in his advocacy of a US-PLO dialogue. On the occasion of the Jewish High Holy Days, Young instructed Jews to repent for Israel's treatment of the Palestinians.¹⁹⁸ Then in October, Arafat received a delegation of black leaders, including Jesse Jackson, thereby keeping the issue of US-PLO relations very much in the news.

In this overall perceptual climate, the Administration continued to maintain that American policy on the PLO had not changed.¹⁹⁹ Responding to a news conference question, Carter repeated that the U.S. would not talk with the PLO until it recognized Israel's right to exist and UN Resolution 242.²⁰⁰ Among State Department Arabists, there was widespread support for Carter's line. U.S. Ambassador Talcott Seelye met with PLO officials during a Damascus reception held on behalf of Jesse Jackson. But officially the State Department dismissed the presence of Seelye as "a set-up."²⁰¹

For reasons that remain unclear, in mid-October, Andrew Young let it

¹⁹⁷ JTA, Sept. 25, 1979. Meanwhile, Ambassador-designate Donald McHenry declared that he would not meet with Arafat or other PLO officials.

¹⁹⁸ JTA Daily News Bulletin News Bulletin, Sept. 26, 1979

¹⁹⁹ JTA Oct. 11, 1979. Jackson's focus on foreign policy was challenged by Alfred Sharpton: "He does not speak for us, for our congregation or the people of New York City...Rather than give aid to a foreign and belligerent people, we should be concerned with urban New York and spend money on the people of Brownsville, East New York..." Meanwhile, old style moderate liberal Black leaders, such as Bayard Rustin and James Farmer, who had forged strong alliances with the Jewish community, publicly supported Israel's stance vis-a-vis the PLO.

²⁰⁰ JTA, Oct. 10, 1979. It is particularly interesting given Brezinski's insinuation that Hauser had advocated just this line since their mutual service at the Brookings Institute.

²⁰¹ JTA, Oct. 18, 1979. For more on Seelye's views see Kaplan, op. cit. especially pages 115-116.

be known that Israel was, after all, not to blame for his resignation as UN Ambassador.²⁰² But Black-Jewish tensions about the PLO had been a sideshow. The constant reality was that the PLO issue would not go away. The Atlantic Council, an influential "think tank," issued a study authored by Brent Scowcroft and Andrew Goodpaster urging that informal US-PLO contacts be maintained.²⁰³ Representative Lee Hamilton (a proponent of a US-PLO dialogue) challenged the Administration on whether it also refused to talk with PLO sympathizers.²⁰⁴ Tangentially linked to the PLO issue, and certainly to Jewish perceptions about Begin, was the October 1979 resignation from the Israeli Cabinet of Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan. Dayan's departure reverberated within the American Jewish leadership, leaving the impression that the Israelis were themselves divided on the future of the West Bank.²⁰⁵

VI

Elections

Liberal Jewish leaders were in a quandary. The Presidential elections now loomed on the horizon and some of them found it difficult to offer knee-jerk support for the liberal Democrat incumbent. The Carter Administration's handling of the Palestinian issue --making it the centerpiece of its Arab-Israel policy -- resulted in lasting negative repercussions within

²⁰² JTA, Oct. 18, 1979, Young never fully explained this tact. One might speculate that it was the prospect of the approaching Presidential campaign which led Young to try to cap Black-Jewish tensions. Meanwhile, the Department of Justice announced that the Logan Act had not been violated by the Black leaders who held talks with PLO officials. See JTA, October 24, 1979

²⁰³ JTA, Nov. 6, 1979

²⁰⁴ JTA, November 2, 1979

²⁰⁵ JTA, Oct. 18, 1979. Beyond policy differences, a contributing factor may have been Dayan's cancer surgery three months earlier. No doubt, however, that he and Begin differed on whether Israel should extend its sovereignty over Judea & Samaria after the five year period envisioned by the Autonomy talks. According to his daughter Yael Dayan: "Father was opposed to a Palestinian state," but favored "implementation of autonomy unilaterally if necessary." See, Yael Dayan, *My Father, His Daughter*, (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1985), p.250. See also *The New York Times*, September 5, 1979 regarding Dayan's six meetings with PLO-supporters between April and October 1979.

the Jewish community. Staunchly liberal Jewish leaders, including Schindler, the former chairman of the Presidents Conference, could not bring themselves to forgive the President. Schindler made a number of damnatory charges: that the Carter Administration had exploited Jews for political gain and that its handling of the Andrew Young affair was nothing short of 'political anti-Semitism.'²⁰⁶ Still, it was hardly surprising that both major parties reiterated their commitment to a secure Israel and a "no-talk" policy toward the PLO.²⁰⁷

The appointment of Philip Klutznik, a former World Jewish Congress president (and strong Begin critic), as Secretary of Commerce was seen by some as an effort by the Administration to make amends with the Jewish community.²⁰⁸ Coincidentally, or not, other signals were also forthcoming. Senator George McGovern, visiting Jerusalem, said that "for the moment" he endorsed American policy of not talking to the PLO.²⁰⁹ Sol Linowitz offered that some Israeli settlements on the West Bank were demonstrably necessary for Israel's security.²¹⁰ In one of the season's more unseemly episodes, Carter was virtually "endorsed" by former Israeli Defense Minister Ezer Weitzman. Weitzman had gone through a political metamorphosis (having served as the Likud campaign manager in 1977 but winding up on the Israeli left).²¹¹

The Administration sought to walk a fine line between political expediency at home and the pursuit of its policies abroad. There was no

²⁰⁶ JTA, November 14, 1979

²⁰⁷ JTA, November 7, 1979. See for example, *The New York Times*, October 23, 1979 on the Republican party platform.

²⁰⁸ JTA, November 19, 1979. Klutznik's admits only that "Different sources ascribed different political motives to the president's decision..." Philip M. Klutznik, *Angles of Vision: A Memoir of My Life*, (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1991), p. 355.

²⁰⁹ JTA, December 11, 1979

²¹⁰ JTA Daily News Bulletin News Bulletin, December 6, 1979

²¹¹ JTA Daily News Bulletin News Bulletin, January 7, 1980. US Jewish leaders criticized Weitzman for his pronouncements. In May 1980 Weitzman quit the Begin Cabinet. In 1993, with the support of the Labor-Meretz left-wing Government, Weitzman was elected President of Israel.

reaction, for instance, to Farouk Kaddoumi's warning that Arabs participating in the Autonomy talks with Israel would be considered traitors.²¹² During the Teheran hostage ordeal, the State Department downplayed the PLO's role in training and supporting the anti-Shah forces aligned with Ayatollah Khomeini. The United States said that, in fact, the PLO was playing a constructive role in the hostage crisis.²¹³ Carter must have been frustrated that the Presidential election season made it politic to tone down the rhetoric about Arab-Israel conflict resolution. Others, however, were available to step into the limelight. At the start of 1980, a House delegation appointed by Speaker Tip O'Neil met with Arafat in Lebanon. Congressman Toby Mofett said the Arafat meeting had been "unscheduled." But the delegation said it intended to promote the creation of a Palestinian state. At the meeting, Arafat "pledged to keep his promise not to attack Israel anymore from Lebanon -- whatever that is worth," according to Mofett.²¹⁴ They, in turn, urged the PLO chief to maintain a "moderate stance."²¹⁵

Still, the PLO remained anathema to mainstream American politicians. While perceptions of the Arab - Israel conflict were in transition, it is worth noting that politicians nevertheless viewed an association with the PLO as a political liability. For instance, Senator Edward Kennedy, who was contemplating a run for the Democratic presidential nomination, called upon the Administration to end its flirtation with the PLO.²¹⁶ Leaks to the news media suggested that the Administration was pursuing a new "Middle East

²¹² JTA, December 11, 1979

²¹³ JTA, December 14, 1979

²¹⁴ JTA, January 9, 1980. The delegation included: Toby Moffett (D-Conn.), Mary Rose Okar (D-Ohio), Nick Joe Rahall (D-W. Virginia), all American Arabs. Also in the group were Robert Carr (D-Michigan), Harold Hollenback (R-NJ), and Paul McClosky (T-California).

²¹⁵ JTA, January 15, 1980

²¹⁶ JTA, January 20, 1980

doctrine" which downgraded Israel as a strategic asset.²¹⁷ Countervailing pressure came from the Protestant, politically liberal, National Council of Churches which had become an important booster of the PLO in the United States. The NCC held "hearings" on the Middle East to which Jewish groups were invited to testify. None did.²¹⁸

Jewish Opposition Takes Shape

The division of anti-Likud opposition, which for purposes of exposition I define as internal opposition, outside elite and peace camp, would not take firm shape until the Reagan years. But its basic outlines had come into focus. Jewish dissidents critical of the Begin Government were given a major boost when Arthur Hertzberg, Vice President of the World Jewish Congress, embraced the line long espoused by WJC head Nahum Goldman. Hertzberg had traversed the philosophical distance from wanting to tell the Ford Administration to "go hang," when it appeared that the U.S. would impose a solution to the Arab-Israel conflict, to becoming a key Israel government critic. Hertzberg shifted from being a supporter of Israeli policies to opposing these same policies from within. Eventually, he would wind up as a party to the outside elite. Toward the end of the Carter years, Hertzberg insisted that: "The single most dangerous thing that can happen to Israel is the muting of dissent."²¹⁹

Also by early 1980, Rabbi Alexander Schindler abandoned his stance of publicly supporting Israeli policies. Breira and the New Jewish Agenda had already trail-blazed the road the peace camp would take. And Nachum Godlmann of the WJC had earlier set the stage for the trans-national and

²¹⁷ JTA, January 18, 1980. It is reasonable to assume that Carter's political opponents would have wanted this alleged shift revealed in order to embarrass the President with American Jews. Carter later said that the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty was a US strategic asset. See JTA, January 25, 1980.

²¹⁸ JTA , February 7, 1980

²¹⁹ JTA , December 21, 1979

outside elite to lobby against Israeli policies. Schindler's defection significantly promoted efforts to dissociate American Jews from Israel's policies in Judea and Samaria. Equally important, it facilitated the development of a legitimate internal opposition within Presidents Conference affiliated groups.

The fact that Schindler was a former Presidents Conference chairman lent a great deal of prestige to his complaint that funds spent in the West Bank would be better allocated within the "green line."²²⁰ During his tenure at the Presidents Conference he felt it inappropriate to openly challenge Begin. But Schindler's criticism now was a public re-affirmation of the views he had held before assuming the top Jewish leadership position.

Illustrative of disassociation, the prestigious American Jewish Committee, under the leadership of Richard Maas and Bert Gold, told Begin that he was overestimating support for his policies among American Jewry. In conjunction with a Presidents Conference session in Jerusalem, the AJCommittee warned Begin that they would not defend his plans to re-establish the Hebron Jewish community (which had been wiped out during the Arab uprising in 1929).²²¹ Yet as much as the Jewish leadership wanted to disassociate themselves from Israel's retention of Judea and Samaria, they found it difficult to support the tone and nuance of the Administration's approach. They were troubled by a U.S. supported United Nations Security Council resolution calling upon Israel to dismantle Jewish settlements in "Palestinian territories." The Carter Administration was merely pursuing its policy of political suasion. Tactically, situational advantage seeking

²²⁰ JTA, February 26, 1980

²²¹ JTA, February 14, 1980. Though it held only "observer" status (at its own insistence) the AJCommittee was an influential player inside the Presidents Conference. Regarding Jewish settlement in Hebron (where the Patriarchs of the Jews are set to be buried), the DMC faction in the Begin Cabinet, led by Yigal Yadin, opposed the return of Jews into the now all-Arab town; see JTA, March 24, 1980. At the same time some US Jewish groups were instrumental in establishing two new communities in Judea and Samaria, Ma'ale Adumin and Efrat with the strong support of Rabbi Stephen Riskin of the Lincoln Square Synagogue on New York City's West Side. Riskin now serves as Efrat's Chief Rabbi, see JTA, March 26, 1980. There is also, now, an American support group for the Jews of Hebron called the Hebron Fund.

opportunities presented themselves regularly at the UN. The Jewish leadership, however, had never embraced the idea of an Israeli withdrawal from Jerusalem. The State Department explanation was that U.S. support of the resolution was based on "the understanding that all references to Jerusalem would be deleted" but that a "communications foul-up" led to the U.S. vote.²²² Presidents Conference Chairman Ted Mann asserted that the inclusion of Jerusalem was "unacceptable to all segments of Jewish opinion."²²³

The Administration may have made some tactical political missteps, but its policy remained firmly grounded in the belief that the Palestinian-Arab issue was at the crux of the Arab-Israel conflict. As Assistant Secretary of State for Near East and South East Asian Affairs, Harold Saunders told a Washington policy conference, the "need to deal with the Palestinian problem" was basic to U.S. policy.²²⁴ But equally important was having domestic Jewish support for its policies. To that end Administration officials went out of their way to reassure Jewish leaders of the President's basic support for Israel. This was an absolutely essential element in the disassociation process directed at driving a wedge between Israel's West Bank policies and the U.S. Jewish community. To allay their concerns about U.S. support for Israel, Linowitz and Strauss addressed a closed door meeting of some 100 Jewish leaders at the Manhattan Club. The Jewish leaders insisted that Carter issue a "clear public statement stressing support for Israel."²²⁵ There was no reason such a request could not easily be met. Within days the President vowed that the guiding premise of his Mideast policy was Israeli

²²² *New York Times*, March 3, 1980

²²³ JTA, March 6, 1980. This left Vice President Mondale to defend President Carter in a previously scheduled session before the World Jewish Congress in New York.

²²⁴ JTA, March 6, 1980

²²⁵ JTA, March 12, 1980. Some days later, Republican candidate Ronald Reagan held meetings with influential New York Jews, see JTA, March 21, 1980

security and that he, furthermore, favored an “undivided” Jerusalem.²²⁶ Later, the President even reaffirmed his opposition to the establishment of a Palestinian state.²²⁷

Disassociation was a highly nuanced policy. New York’s grass-roots Jewish voters could not distinguish it from outright anti-Israel hostility. Politically, the President’s Middle East policy may have cost him the New York State Democratic primary elections which Senator Edward Kennedy won with strong Jewish support.²²⁸

Continuing its effort to gather support for Administration policies among American Jews, in late April, Carter designated Alfred Moses, who had ties with the American Jewish Committee, as his new liaison to the Jewish community.²²⁹ Synchronous with these outreach efforts, the President continued his quest of bringing the PLO into the diplomatic mainstream. On a trip to Zimbabwe for that country’s independence festivities, Andrew Young, serving as Carter’s official representative, once again took the opportunity to meet with PLO officials who were also attending the celebrations.²³⁰

Israeli Labor Party leader Shimon Peres may not have boosted Carter’s standing among U.S. Jews, even as he did his best to undermine Begin’s position. On a visit to the United States, Peres met with Carter and said Labor opposed the Israeli government’s Autonomy plan for the Palestinian-Arabs. He said that while a self-governing authority in the Gaza District might be workable he continued to favor the Jordanian option for the West Bank.²³¹

²²⁶ JTA, March 13, 1980

²²⁷ JTA, March 24, 1980

²²⁸ JTA, March 27, 1980

²²⁹ JTA, April 15, 1980

²³⁰ *Near East Report*, April 23, 1980

²³¹ *The New York Times*, April 24, 1980

Many a Jewish leader who was thoroughly uncomfortable with Begin's policies found Carter's disassociation approach too heavy-handed. It was one thing to focus attention on the mounting long term costs of not accommodating Palestinian-Arab aspirations, but the imbalance was too great. Even though it was essential to effective disassociation, not enough emphasis was being placed on reassuring the American Jewish community of continued U.S. political support for Israel. The decision not to order a veto of a UN Security Council resolution critical of Israeli reprisal raids against PLO targets rankled. Schindler, by no means a Begin ally, lambasted Carter: "By refusing to exercise its right of veto, the White House has encouraged PLO terrorism, given the green light to those countries eager to follow the example of Austria in conferring legitimacy on Yasir Arafat, heightened Israel's diplomatic isolation and turned its back on the Camp David accords."²³²

The President's efforts to repeal the Wolf Amendment, passed by Congress to bar American financial support to United Nations programs promoting the PLO, further dismayed the Jewish leadership.²³³ Yet, because of their own criticism of Begin's policies, just where the Jewish leadership stood was obscure. Still, the perception that they privately supported U.S. pressure on Israel to force a change in its West Bank policies rankled. Mann, the Presidents Conference head, wrote *The New York Times* challenging columnist and Israel critic Anthony Lewis:

First let me try to end one of the myths that Mr. Lewis has perpetuated in so many of his columns. He suggests that I really agree with him but that I will

²³² JTA, April 28, 1980

²³³ JTA, May 7, 1980. Meanwhile, PLO diplomatic and public standing continued to make gains. The Council of Europe passed a resolution condemning Israeli settlements in the West Bank and approved of Palestinian "right to self-determination." The resolution also faulted UN SC Resolution 242 for defining the Palestinians as refugees and not a political entity. PLO representatives were accorded diplomatic status at virtually all UN agencies and at the UN sponsored International Women's Conference. Also, the National Press Club invited the PLO to take part in its "Arab Night" gala dinner.

not say so publicly because the American Jewish tradition “evidently demands solidarity above all.”

...The basic flaw in Mr. Lewis argument is his assumption that Israel has it in its power to resolve the conflict; that if Israel would only stop building settlements in the West Bank, the Palestinian Arabs and/or Jordan might enter the peace process.

...Oh, how I would like to believe that! But Mr. Lewis offers not a shred of evidence to support his assertion...Add to this the continuing refusal of the P.L.O. to amend the Palestinian National Covenant, which calls for the annihilation of Israel...

One can legitimately argue whether Israel’s current settlement policy is good for its image (it clearly is not) or even whether it is in Israel’s own best interest..But it is foolish and deceptive to suggest that if Israel’s policy were to change, Palestinians or Jordan would enter the peace process...If Israel’s enemies still regard peace with the Jewish State as unthinkable, are settlements not a legitimate way to prevent the West Bank from evolving into a sovereign state from which terrorist attacks will make life in Israel intolerable?²³⁴

Mann’s quandary found resonance elsewhere in the Jewish establishment. The American Jewish Committee chapter in Washington, D.C. voted 37 to 23 with 40 abstentions to stop criticizing Israel’s efforts to settle Judea and Samaria.²³⁵

No such qualms troubled the hard-left (ideologically identical on Arab-Israel issues with the peace camp). I.F. Stone and Milton Viorst of *The New Yorker* brought Arab leaders deported from the West Bank to public forums aimed at mostly Jewish audiences. The deportees were represented as forces for moderation interested in a non-zero sum outcome to the conflict. Arrangements were made for the deportees to meet with Congressional supporters of a US-PLO dialogue such as Representative Lee Hamilton (D-

²³⁴ Letters to the Editor, *The New York Times*, May 29, 1980

²³⁵ JTA Daily News Bulletin News Bulletin, May 13, 1980

Tenn.) of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.²³⁶

Two Leadership Changes

Edgar Bronfman, the Canadian billionaire, became acting President of the World Jewish Congress, after Carter formally appointed Klutznik to be Secretary of Labor. His great wealth allowed him to salvage the moribund WJC. An outspoken critic of Begin, Bronfman promised to refrain from criticizing Israel.²³⁷ Nevertheless, with the WJC as a platform Bronfman became an even more important transnational political actor.²³⁸ Also in June 1980, New York attorney Howard Squadron was elected Chairman of the Presidents Conference.²³⁹ Like other Jewish leaders, Squadron took a “pragmatic non-zero sum” approach. Squadron's analysis of the Israel-Egyptian peace talks is illustrative: “Sadat would probably prefer that Israel was not there but as long as its there, its better to make peace with her.”²⁴⁰

Yet another complication encountered by the Administration in its attempt to articulate a carefully calibrated critique of Israel's West Bank policies, while simultaneously espousing overall support of the Jewish State, was that it left the White House open to criticism that the United States was

²³⁶ JTA Daily News Bulletin News Bulletin, June 5, 1980

²³⁷ JTA, June 17, 1980. Klutznik and Bronfman were close associates of Nahum Goldman. Bronfman's father, Sam, held the Candian “portfolio” before Edgar. Klutznik, *Angles of Vision*, op. cit., p.355.

²³⁸ Through foundation funds, Bronfman financially supported Israelis interested in promoting a dialogue with the PLO. Some years later when the influential English language *Jerusalem Post* shifted ideologically away from Labor (as a result of a change in ownership), Bronfman helped establish *The Jerusalem Report* as a journalistic counterweight.

²³⁹ JTA, June 11, 1980. He had served as Chairman of the UN Association. Primarily, he was associated with the theologically liberal Society for the Advancement of Judaism founded in 1922. SAJ is the organization of Reconstructionism which sought to transform Judaism away from its religious orientation (God, the chosen people, etc.) towards social progressiveness. The movement did not oppose a Jewish state in Palestine. However, references in ancient Jewish prayers recited daily by traditionally observant Jews to the return of the Jewish people to a restored homeland in Israel were interpreted by SAJ metamorphically.

²⁴⁰ JTA, June 23, 1980

sending mixed messages. Senator George McGovern criticized Carter along precisely these lines and, surprisingly, urged him to reject European efforts to bring the PLO into the peace process.²⁴¹ Befuddlement was, however, a two way street. Bolstered by none other than Schindler's criticism of Israel's settlement policy, Senator Adlai Stevenson (D- Ill.) reproached Begin for "blithely, sometimes insultingly" ignoring American policy on the West Bank.²⁴²

Rita Hauser

Rita Hauser came to prominence as a pro-Israel activist associated with the AJCommittee. After Begin's election, while still with the AJCommittee, Hauser became publicly critical of Israeli policies. After leaving the Committee, she became a paramount outside elite actor. Her role in the U.S. decision to enter into a dialogue with the PLO will be examined, in greater detail, later on. The evolution in her thinking can be gleaned from Hauser's first public denunciation of Israeli West Bank policy in June 1980. She argued that while Camp David was a success the Administration's overall approach was muddled.

A consistent U.S. position on such issues as the PLO might have brought forward a more moderate Palestinian entity. The U.S. "sent conflicting signals, convincing the most extreme elements in the Mid East that there is no reason to change their position." Hauser saw the current stalemate as disastrous for Israel too. "The current settlement policy is a disaster. It is provocative. You just can't establish Jewish settlements in places like Nablus and Hebron. The sooner Begin is replaced the better. His policies are not accepted by Israelis; they are dangerous policies."

²⁴¹ JTA, June 13, 1980. Needless to say, the same line of criticism can be applied to the U.S. Jewish leadership.

²⁴² JTA, June 19, 1980. To underscore his point about Israel, seemingly, taking the U.S. support for granted, Stevenson recalled the 1967 Israeli attack against the USS Liberty.

Only months earlier she had quit the Connally presidential campaign to protest a pro-Arab tilt in his Middle East policy. In particular, she criticized his call for a total Israeli withdrawal to the pre-1967 borders. Connally said that the Palestinians should decide the nature of the homeland they would establish after a withdrawal.²⁴³

Rita Hauser's views surfaced publicly again when she asserted that Republican Presidential candidate Ronald Reagan would be more pro-Israel than Carter. Reagan's steadfast support of Taiwan demonstrated that he was the kind of politician who would never abandon Israel for the sake of political expediency, Hauser said. She again accused the Carter Administration of having "flirted with the PLO" suggesting that if not for the "stink" raised by American Jews, "Carter would have appeased the Arabs in every way he could."²⁴⁴

VII

As its annual report proudly notes, "The 1980 Presidential campaign catapulted the Presidents Conference onto the front pages of the nation's newspapers as each major candidate appeared before it to present his views and answer questions on critical foreign policy issues that American Jews would take into account as they cast their ballots."²⁴⁵ Squadron held pre-election sessions with both Carter and Reagan but, as is traditional, issued no endorsement of either candidate.

56 For Disassociation

Brandeis University professor Leonard Fein, later operative in the

²⁴³ JTA, Oct. 16, 1979

²⁴⁴ JTA, August 29, 1980

²⁴⁵ *Report of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations For the Year Ending March 31, 1981.*

outside opposition, helped orchestrate a major anti-Begin public relations coup by enlisting the support of key establishment figures including Ted Mann. Implying that the non-zero sum nature of the Arab-Israel conflict was an established fact, 56 Jewish intellectuals and leaders --including three past-Chairmen of the Presidents Conference (Joachim Prinz, 1965-67; Alexander Schindler, 1976-78; and Theodore Mann, whose term had expired only the day before) --criticized "extremists" in the Begin government for wanting to maintain Jewish control over Judea and Samaria.

While issued in Jerusalem, their statement quickly made its way onto the front page of *The New York Times*. According to Fein: "We are trying to make a clear distinction between Israel and certain policies of Israel." The 56 signatories supported "land-for-peace." An advertisement aimed at U.S. Jews put the pro-"Peace Now" position this way: "Our way is the way of coexistence and tolerance. Our way is the way of peace and security through territorial compromise on the West Bank. Our way seeks to unite the Jewish people around its Jewish and humanist heritage."²⁴⁶ Official Jewish reaction to the declaration was as swift as it was indecisive. Presidents Conference Chairman Howard Squadron did not dispute the substance of the critique. Instead, Squadron said that it was better to stress those issues on which there was a consensus since the negative publicity created by the statement was divisive and unhelpful.²⁴⁷

Undoubtedly, with so many disparate signals being sent, Jewish opponents of a US-PLO dialogue were apprehensive about a possible American policy shift. Leaders of the Orthodox Agudath Israel, led by its president Rabbi Moshe Sherer met with White House officials in early July. While raising concerns about several domestic issues, Agudath leaders used

²⁴⁶ JTA, July 3, 1980

²⁴⁷ JTA, July 3, 1980 Shortly thereafter, the U.S. abstained in a UN Security Council vote condemning Israel for activities inside Jerusalem.

the session to press the Administration not to negotiate with the PLO until it meets the terms set by the United States. Sherer argued that even if the PLO met these terms their actual compliance should be intensively monitored.²⁴⁸

Insinuating Carter Administration plans for its second term, Secretary of State Edmund Muskie (Cyrus Vance had resigned over the Iranian hostage rescue attempt) told the Foreign Policy Association in New York: "Perhaps we must" recognize the PLO but "not before Israel, Egypt and the US reach agreement on autonomy for the West Bank."²⁴⁹ Innuendo, used in this way, can facilitate political suasion.

Ted Mann endorsed Carter's re-election bid.²⁵⁰ Mann, immediate past Chairman of the Presidents Conference, told a Jerusalem news conference that American Jewry was united behind the idea that the West Bank had security value to Israel but not in support of Jewish settlement on ideological grounds: "The propriety of having to stay in the West Bank for security reasons is well within the worldwide Jewish consensus. The idea that Israel should stay there in order to make the borders of 'Medinat Yisrael' (the State of Israel) coterminus with those of 'Eretz Yisroel' (the Land of Israel) is far, far

²⁴⁸ July 8, 1980 The Agudah movement represents strictly orthodox non-Zionist (non-Hassidic) European Jews. Founded in Europe during the early 1900's, Auguda is not a member of the Presidents Conference but very much a political player. The U.S. arm is associated with the Israeli political party Agudat Israel. *New York Magazine* identified Rabbi Sherer as one of "The Most Powerful Rabbis in New York," on January 22, 1979.

²⁴⁹ JTA, July 8, 1980

²⁵⁰ Mann was an infant when his parents emigrated to the US in 1929 from Czechoslovakia. He attended orthodox day schools and he went on to law school where he developed liberal political interests. He argued the *Lemon v. Sloan* case before the US Supreme Court to block government aid to non-public schools. He headed the Philadelphia JCRC and the City's AJCongress chapter. Later, he chaired the Israel Task Force of NJCRAC. In that capacity, Mann became Chairman of the Presidents Conference. *Encyclopaedia Judaica, Decennial Book, 1973-1982, p.,461*. Since leaving that position in 1980, Mann has been a key internal opposition figure while also joining in the process of "redefining" pro-Israelism.

outside that consensus.”²⁵¹

The political price of a successful disassociation policy came to light even on the Jerusalem issue. American Jewish leadership viewed the Likud controlled Knesset’s surprise declaration that Jerusalem was the undivided capital of Israel as unnecessarily antagonistic. Their lack of public support may have incorrectly signaled the Administration that disassociation extended to Jerusalem. In the wake of the Knesset vote, Muskie met with a Presidents Conference delegation at the State Department. Afterwards, Squadron said that he had “no position” regarding the Knesset decision. The U.S. then abstained at the UN on a vote condemning Israel for the Jerusalem law.²⁵² Squadron and others, in turn, expressed disappointment with the Administration’s abstention. Even Schindler complained: “Once again the Carter Administration has followed the path of appeasing the Arab states and the terrorist PLO.” In an effort to clarify their position on Jerusalem, 39 prominent American Jewish critics of Israel including Leonard Fein, Albert Vorspan and Schindler issued a new statement proclaiming that Jerusalem was the eternal capital of Israel and expressing regret that the U.S. failed to veto the anti-Israel UN resolution.²⁵³

With the election drawing nearer, Carter accelerated his efforts to woo the American Jewish electorate. In an appearance at the Forest Hills Jewish Center in Queens, New York he reaffirmed his opposition to a Palestinian

²⁵¹ JTA, July 16, 1980

²⁵² JTA, July 17, 1980. The U.S. was struggling to bring the PLO into the peace process. While alienating the pro-Israel camp, the abstention fell far short of what the PLO demanded. Before the abstention, the PLO had hinted it was ready to meet US conditions for a dialogue. While elsewhere in the IR arena the PLO’s position continued in the ascendant. Arafat had met with Austrian Chancellor Kreisky and with former West German leader Willy Brandt; the PLO had received permission to open an office in Ankara; and overtures to Sadat were becoming public when a PLO official had “indirect contact” with Sadat at an OAU meeting in Liberia. See “PLO Weighs Move Toward Tacit Recognition of Israel,” *Christian Science Monitor*, July 24, 1980

²⁵³ JTA, August 28, 1980

State and to the PLO.²⁵⁴ Elsewhere, Reagan weighed in with the comment that the PLO was a terrorist organization and its actions were not those of commandos or freedom fighters.²⁵⁵ In the course of a Presidential debate with Reagan, Carter matched Reagan by also terming the PLO a "terrorist organization."²⁵⁶ Meeting with Mann and other prominent Jewish supporters, Carter reiterated his anti-PLO stance and requested Jewish support in his re-election bid. Former Defense Minister Ezer Weitzman also publicly championed Carter's re-election bid.²⁵⁷

Public Remains Anti-PLO

Given Jewish establishment criticism of Israeli policies toward the Palestinian-Arabs and the degree to which their cause had been catapulted to center stage by the media and the Administration, it is remarkable that the American public continued to support the Likud Government's position on the PLO. World Jewish Congress head Edgar Bronfman privately commissioned a poll of Jews and non-Jews, conducted by Louis Harris, probing attitudes about Israel and the PLO. By a 62-23 percent majority, the public believed that "Israel is right not to agree to sit down with the PLO because the PLO is a terrorist organization and wants to destroy

²⁵⁴ JTA, October, 14, 1980. Carter's credibility with Jewish voters was not helped by his brother, Billy Carter's, meeting with George Habash on a "purely social" basis in Libya where he was attending a 10th Anniversary celebration of the Quaddafi government. See "Carter's Brother Tells of Meeting Palestinian," *The New York Times*, October 24, 1980. Around the same time, Harold H. Saunders, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South East Asian Affairs "exchanged brief pleasantries" with Zehidi Terzi and Farouk Kaddoumi at the United Nations, See *Near East Report*, October 24, 1980.

²⁵⁵ JTA, October 15, 1980

²⁵⁶ *Jerusalem Post*, October 28, 1980. The following day, the State Department issued a statement which "watered down" the President's remark. Reagan said: "President Carter refuses to brand the PLO as a terrorist organization, I have no hesitation in doing so." Vice Presidential Candidate Bush said: "The PLO--and let there be no doubt about this--is nothing more or less than an international Ku Klux Klan, pledged to hatred, violence and the destruction." See *Jerusalem Post*, November 2, 1980.

²⁵⁷ JTA, October 29, 1980. Weitzman accompanied Carter on a campaign trip. Begin said he regretted intervention in the U.S. elections. See *The New York Times*, October 28, 1980.

Israel."²⁵⁸

Involved in a tough re-election campaign, Paul Findley, one of Israel's sternest critics in the House of Representatives, defended himself with pro-Israel voters by arguing that Robert Strauss, President Carter's special Mideast envoy-- and at the time the President's campaign chairman-- gave him "full backing" for his contacts with PLO leader Arafat. Strauss disavowed Findley's depiction.²⁵⁹

Conclusion

On election day, in spite of his presumably weak political standing in the Jewish community, Carter managed to capture the Jewish vote (which is traditionally liberal-democratic). However, a larger percentage of Jews than is usual voted for Republican victor Ronald Reagan. In marked contrast to the first Reagan year, the Carter years were characterized by a high degree of Administration cohesiveness on Arab-Israel issues. The President, Brzezinski and Vance shared the view that the Palestinian issue was key to finding a solution to the conflict. They pursued a comprehensive solution rather than the step-by-step approach favored by Kissinger. The Administration sought but failed to bring the PLO into the peace process by getting Arafat to explicitly accept Israel's right to exist. As Vance wrote later on:

The President and I were convinced that no lasting solution in the Middle East would be possible until, consistent with Israel's right to live in peace and security, a just answer to the Palestinian question could be found, one almost

²⁵⁸ JTA, October 2, 1980. At this stage, Bronfman favored "due recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people" but opposed dealings with the PLO. See *The New York Times*, July 11, 1980.

²⁵⁹ JTA, November 3, 1980

certainly leading to a Palestinian homeland and some form of self-determination.²⁶⁰

Indeed, almost immediately after the election, cleavages within the Republican camp over the Palestinian-Arab issue came to public attention. Senator Charles Percy, about to take his seat as Republican chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, commented that there could not be a solution to the Middle East conflict without the Palestinians. Percy said that he favored a West Bank federated to Jordan.²⁶¹ Later, on a visit to the Soviet Union, Percy privately told Soviet leaders that the U.S. did not oppose the establishment of a PLO-led state on the West Bank. To Percy's dismay, classified U.S. Embassy cables from Moscow summarizing his talks were leaked. The leak seemed to involve a contest of wills among foreign policy decision makers. Richard Allen, the incoming National Security Advisor, made it known that Percy's views did not reflect Reagan Administration thinking.²⁶² Predictably, meanwhile, Schindler and other Jewish leaders criticized the observations about a PLO-state attributed to Percy.²⁶³

A week later Secretary of State-designate Alexander Haig said that he opposed U.S. talks with or recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization.²⁶⁴ Percy backpedaled his views, announcing that while favoring a Palestinian "entity" he did not support a PLO-led state. Opponents of the evolving US-PLO relationship were heartened by the selection of Dr. Jean Kirkpatrick as the new U.S. Ambassador to the UN as well as the previously announced appointment of Richard Allen as the incoming National Security Advisor. Both were on record as opposing the PLO and Carter's non-zero sum

²⁶⁰ Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982).

²⁶¹ JTA, November 20, 1980. The Republicans had captured the Senate along with the White House.

²⁶² JTA, December 9, 1980

²⁶³ JTA, December 8, 1980

²⁶⁴ JTA, December 17, 1980

analysis of the Arab-Israel conflict.

Reagan's election did not lead Jewish opponents of Israeli policies to retire from the scene. Vigorous opposition from within the Jewish community could be anticipated from a new peace camp group, New Jewish Agenda, established by Rabbi Gerald Serrotta and other left-wing Jews in Washington DC. Some NJA founders had been associated with Breira (and its advocacy work on behalf of the PLO). Moreover, in remarks which were both prescient and self-fulfilling, Arthur Hertzberg, a leader of the American Jewish Congress and a Begin critic, told the British Board of Deputies in London (a body similar to the Presidents Conference in the United States) that problems between the U.S. and Israel would continue under the Reagan Administration. He ridiculed the notion that Israel-US relations would now stabilize because the Reagan Administration would treat the Jewish State as a first class ally.²⁶⁵

Between 1977 and 1980 the Carter Administration had fostered the emerging centrality of the Palestinian issue. Israel's political position was greatly weakened by orchestrated divisions between it and the American Jewish establishment. As a result of the Sadat trip to Jerusalem, the nature of the conflict was now seen as full of nuances. The American Jewish leadership, while not ready to embrace an unreformed PLO, had already moved closer to the Palestinian-Arabs. For the Israeli Government this was a distinction without a difference. The Jewish leadership was ignoring their warnings that accommodating Palestinian aspirations would be the first stage in the PLO's plan to destroy Israel.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁵ JTA, January 4, 1981

²⁶⁶ JTA, December 3, 1980

CHAPTER 8

The Inexorable Momentum of the Reagan Years 1981-1988

Israel has never had a greater friend in the White House than Ronald Reagan...Yet, the atmosphere of American relations underwent a change. Israel came under unprecedented and sometimes exasperated public criticism from officials of the Administration. The power of Israel and its friends to influence American policy in the Middle East weakened. . .

Alexander Haig 1

Ronald Reagan, viscerally pro-Israel, could have been the one president able to redirect the U.S.-led peace process away from its focus on the Palestinian-Arabs. Instead, he embraced Jimmy Carter's legacy of disassociation with a pliancy that was astonishing. Dazed and worn out, the Jewish leadership offered virtually no opposition when his State Department maneuvered the PLO into saying the "magic words" recognizing Israel and forswearing terror. Providence ordained that, in the final days of Reagan's second term, a formal US-PLO dialogue was authorized. This historic action codified a redefinition of the nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

An interest group cannot be expected to influence policy when it is made politically frail by internal divisions and required to operate in a politically inhospitable environment. Ravaged by cleavages and obliged to champion the "no talk" issue whose fundamental *raison d'être* was made moot by changing events, the U.S. Jewish leadership was completely outmaneuvered by a focused and determined Administration. The irony was that elements in the Jewish leadership played a critical role, throughout the Reagan years, in paving the way for a US-PLO dialogue.

I

This section identifies instances of political suasion and other episodes in the political environment during 1981 which contributed to a perceptual shift on the part of the Jewish leadership. Examined by the American Jewish leadership from this vantage point, the conflict remained in transition though now more non-zero sum than total and more Palestinian versus

¹ Alexander Haig, *Caveat, Realism, Reagan and Foreign Policy*, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1984), p. 167.

Israel than Arab versus Israel. The Jewish self-image was that of a liberal Jewish leadership constrained to defend a hardline "right wing" Israeli Government, while contesting plans by a conservative Republican President to sell lethal weapons to Israel's Arab enemies. Their image of the Arabs was also in flux: Egypt had exchanged de jure peace in return for Israeli-held land. The Saudi regime accelerated its public diplomacy which hinted at a willingness to embrace a non zero sum approach. The consistent goal of the Jewish leadership was to see progress in the West Bank Autonomy talks. In addition to opposing arms sales to the Arab countries, they consistently pressed the U.S. to adhere to its 1975 policy toward the PLO. With equal constancy, they loathed Begin's personality and held his policies in disdain.

Joseph Polakoff, the veteran Jewish Telegraphic Agency journalist, identified disassociation as a guiding mechanism of American policy in the Carter years. He did so before it became evident that Reagan would pursue much the same strategy. The essence of disassociation was encouraging Jewish support for American (and Israeli) pressure aimed at forcing Israel to disgorge the West Bank. Polakoff traced the policy to Professor Ian Lustick, who worked briefly at the State Department on Middle East issues in 1979 - 1980:

Lustick plainly called for the U.S. to treat Israel with disdain. "A policy of steady, public, convincing disassociation from Israel's policies toward the West Bank and Gaza would help an "international political context supportive of elements in Israel that already are or will be aware of the necessity to reach a political accommodation with Palestinians." He did not identify those elements. "A policy of disassociation rather than mediation or pressure," he said, "would help the growing numbers of those both in Israel and in the U.S. Jewish community, who are striving to frame Israel's choices in a way that focuses attention on the long term costs of fulfilling maximalist ideological commitment. Under the policy of "disassociation," Lustick wrote, "the U.S. would continue current very high levels of military and economic aid to Israel but would publicly, concretely and regularly express its opposition to settlements, land expropriation, deportations, seizure of water sources, annexation of East Jerusalem, or any other aspects of the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza reflecting Israel's ambitions that go beyond insuring

order and security. Like other Administration articulations legitimizing the PLO, Lustick suggested altering Camp David provisions because the peace processes “weaken U.S. credibility in the Arab world” and “an atmosphere develops in which Syria, Saudi Arabia and the PLO become less convinced of the possibility of a political accommodation with Israel.”²

It is debatable whether Lustick did any more than give coherence to a policy that had been desultory and incremental since Kissinger’s days and had simply matured under Carter. It is significant that Reagan’s State Department pursued much the same policy. To be sure, there were differences in nuance as well as substance as a result of the Administration’s early emphasis on the global context of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Carter’s defeat at the polls was seen as a deliverance from heaven for many in the pro-Israel community even if they found Reagan’s conservatism anathema. “Carter saw Israel through the warp of biblical history and the weft of hard-ball Jewish domestic power,” Samuel W. Lewis explains.³ Had he been re-elected, Carter would have had a free hand to impose his own solution to the Palestinian problem. Even outside of government, many Carter Administration officials persevered as staunch advocates of the Palestinian cause. Hermann Eilts, former Ambassador to Egypt, called for “*open* (emphasis added) U.S. contacts with the PLO leadership,” so as “to gauge whether the PLO would be willing and able to participate responsibly in broader peace negotiations.”⁴

But expectations that a Reagan White House would turn the tables on the State Department and reverse U.S. policy toward the PLO were dashed, when Secretary of State-designate Alexander Haig told *The New York Times*

²“Focus on Issues: Carter’s Relations With Israel Ending Much Like They Started,” JTA, January 15, 1981.

³ Samuel W. Lewis, “The U.S. and Israel: Constancy and Change,” in William B. Quandt, editor, *The Middle East Ten Years After Camp David*, (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1988), p. 228.

⁴ JTA, January 14, 1981

that: "one must be careful in the use of the term PLO. The PLO is an organization made up of elements with various interests. Some are just and reasonable while others are obviously dominated by the East financially as well as ideologically."⁵ John West, whom Carter had appointed Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, criticized the policy of not talking to the PLO (though the State Department spokesman said that West was speaking for himself).⁶ A more significant policy clue was the retention of Harold Saunders as Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs. Saunders had helped both Kissinger and Vance formulate a policy grounded in the "legitimate rights" of the Palestinians.⁷

There were many in the Jewish leadership who were crestfallen by the election of a conservative President. On the assumption that this might mean less pressure on Israel to abandon Judea, Samaria and Gaza, Edgar Bronfman of the World Jewish Congress warned Israel not to expect "blind support" from world Jewry.⁸ Regardless of any discomfiture with Reagan, an unreformed PLO remained the central nemesis of the Jewish establishment. Growing acceptance of the importance of the Palestinian problem did not translate into a readiness to embrace the PLO as a peace process participant. In an effort to ascertain how far US-PLO ties had developed under Carter, the

⁵ The New York Times, December 18, 1980

⁶ JTA, January 27, 1981. Within a few months, West, a former governor of South Carolina, was replaced by Robert Neumann, an Austrian born Jew and concentration camp survivor who had converted to Christianity. Coincidentally, Neuman was a classmate of Bruno Kreisky. He played a crucial role lobbying in support of the AWACS sale later in the year. See, *New York Jewish Week*, May 17, 1981. For Jewish attitudes toward Neuman see JTA, June 3, 1981.

⁷ JTA, January 14, 1981. Under Carter, Saunders sought to accentuate the positive. He explained that the U.S. would enter into talks with Arafat when he recognized Israel and accepted UN S/C Res. 242. During the Iranian hostage crisis, Saunders wanted the PLO to use the crisis to enhance its image: "We had an interest not just in the PLO's getting the hostages out but in their playing a role in the larger context..." Under Reagan the formula was changed somewhat. The PLO was still expected to renounce terror. In 1986 Congress enacted a law prohibiting "substantive" talks unless (1) the PLO accepted Israel's right to exit (2) endorsed 242 & 338 and (3) renounced terror. See, Wallach & Wallach, op. cit., p. 403 and 427. In any event, Saunders unexpectedly quit the State Department in mid-January. See JTA, Jan. 19, 1981

⁸ JTA, January 22, 1981. At around this time Labor leader Shimon Peres was holding meetings with Chancellor Bruno Kreisky in Vienna, See *The New York Times*, January 24, 1981.

American Jewish Congress, meantime, filed a Freedom of Information (FOIL) request with the federal government searching for documents relating to the PLO.⁹

Despite mixed signals from the Administration there were indications that Israel would enjoy a less strained relationship with the Reagan White House. That Haig would continue the policy of not dealing with the PLO while it advocated "views incompatible with the peace process" was hardly revolutionary.¹⁰ As with previous Administrations, U.S. policy would be to "neither recognize nor negotiate with the PLO for as long as they refuse to accept the provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 242 and other UN resolutions."¹¹ But there was an evident change in tone. First, the Secretary publicly linked the PLO to Soviet support for terrorism.¹² More significantly, Reagan's perception of the essential nature of the Arab-Israel conflict and his views about Jewish rights to the Land of Israel were decidedly opposite those of Carter.

As to the West Bank, I believe the settlements there--I disagreed when the previous Administration referred to them as illegal, they're not illegal...I do think, perhaps now with this rush to do it and this moving in there the way they are is ill-advised because if we're going to continue with the spirit of a Camp David, maybe this, at this time, is unnecessarily provocative...I know that's got to be a part of any settlement..I think in arriving at that, here again, there is the outspoken utterance that Israel doesn't have a right to exist; there is the terrorism practiced by the PLO. I never thought that the PLO had ever been elected by the Palestinians. Maybe it is recognized by them as their leadership, but I've never seen that that's been definitely established. But, again, it starts with the acceptance of Israel as a nation.

¹³

⁹ JTA, January 27, 1981

¹⁰ JTA, January 28, 1981 On the other hand, the following day he suggested that the status of Jerusalem remained to be determined.

¹¹ JTA, January 29, 1981 A State Department spokesman later explained that Haig was referring to UN S/C Res. 338 when he spoke of "other UN resolutions."

¹² JTA, January 30, 1981

¹³ JTA, February 4, 1981

President's Conference Meets Waldheim

The Presidents Conference turned its attention to the United Nations where the PLO's international standing continued on the ascendant. In a two hour meeting with UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim, a delegation from the Presidents Conference, led by Chairman Howard Squadron, cautioned Waldheim that the pro-Israel community in the United States was growing increasingly disenchanted with the world body.¹⁴ But the United States faced countervailing international pressure from Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky, who urged policy makers to use the PLO to induce Lebanese hostage takers to release their captives.¹⁵

Settlements "Unhelpful"

If Reagan did not personally believe that Jewish life in the Administered Territories was "illegal," the State Department swiftly convinced him that it was "unhelpful." The strategy of the United States was to facilitate the entry and participation of the Palestinians (the PLO under the right circumstances) into the peace process. That had not changed. The U.S. still wanted to keep the door open to the possibility of an exchange of West Bank land for a commitment of peace. Understandably, therefore, the U.S. opposed actions by Israel which would diminish the prospects of such an exchange. In February 1981, the State Department strongly criticized Israeli settlement activities as "unhelpful." The statement stopped short of embracing the Carter-line that they were also "illegal."¹⁶ Yitchak Shamir, the Foreign Minister, rebuffed the American criticism. But, there is little doubt that the American Jewish leadership was growing weary of the bickering. The

¹⁴ JTA, February 5, 1981

¹⁵ JTA, February 5, 1981. The Jewish leaders sought to diminish the political legitimacy of the PLO but could not in the face of prevailing support at the IR level. They were concerned, in particular, about the effect of pro-PLO sentiment by the leaders of Britain and France on the Reagan White House. Middle East Memo, Vol. 7. No. 10, (March 2, 1981), published by the Presidents Conference

¹⁶ JTA, February 12, 1981

Jewish leadership's overall assessment of the Arab-Israel struggle was undergoing an incremental deviation from Israel's appraisal.¹⁷

Any resemblance between Reagan and Carter Administration policies was offset by the new Administration's willingness to move away from an exclusive focus on the Palestinian-Arabs. In contrast to Carter who was riveted to it, Haig de-emphasized the Palestinian issue. Soviet expansionism in the Middle East was the focus of American policy; the Arab conflict with Israel, a sideshow. As Lewis points out, "Reagan looked at Israel through the prism of East-West global confrontation as a natural ally."¹⁸

The irony was that the cornerstone of the Reagan-Haig emphasis on the Arab states (not the Palestinian-Arabs) required the Administration to furnish them with the latest weapons in the American arsenal. Haig's first trip to the Mideast as Secretary of State revolved around the Administration's plans to sell sophisticated military aircraft, F-15's, to Saudi Arabia. Only secondarily was the visit billed as an effort to re-start the Autonomy talks. Prior to leaving for the Middle East, Haig met with Squadron and Hellman. The Presidents Conference leaders lobbied against the F-15 sale.¹⁹ They also sought American support for expediting the Autonomy talks along the lines outlined at Camp David.²⁰

Meanwhile, Nixon wrote Reagan to counsel that he go outside the Presidents Conference in his dealings with the U.S. Jewish community and suggested Max Fisher as a conduit: "He is one of those rare individuals supporting Israel's position who can always be counted upon for total, loyal

¹⁷ Still, zero-sum sounding statements from the Arab camp slowed the shift. For example, in an article published in *Al Madina*, Saudi Prince Fahd called on Moslems to mount "a persistent and long drawn jihad" as the "only answer to the Zionist racist arrogance." See *The New York Times*, January 21, 1981.

¹⁸ Lewis, op. cit., p. 229 Lewis goes on to say: "Unfortunately, Israel looked more like a problem than an asset to Weinberger, NSC Advisor William Clark and others..."

¹⁹ JTA, February 18 & 24, 1981

²⁰ JTA, February 25, 1981.

support for whatever decision is made by the administration. Equally important, he can keep his mouth shut."²¹ Haig later explained that Fisher was brought in because "it is always helpful to have an extra channel that influences more formal dialogue."²² Reagan did invite Max Fisher and another key Jewish Republican, Gordon Zacks, to the White House. They discussed events in Lebanon, the West Bank and the proposed arms sales. The President told his guests that he remained totally committed to Israeli military superiority.²³ Whatever the impetus, the Presidents Conference decided not to launch a full scale campaign against the F-15 sale.²⁴

Irrespective of the Administration's focus away from the Palestinian-Arabs, elsewhere in the political system, the attention of the prestige press remained fixated. The extent to which the Arab-Israel conflict had evolved into a Palestinian-Israeli affair, in which Israel was portrayed as a settler colonial state, is captured by a series of articles published in *The Washington Post* by William Clairborne and Jonathan Randal in mid March of 1981: "By all appearances, the spirit of humanitarianism--which Israel's political and military leaders invoke to this day as justification for waging sporadic war on sovereign Lebanese soil--had led Israel into the same kind of colonial trap of which it relieved Britain when it obtained independence in 1948."²⁵ This was the same tone underscored at a Palestine Congress of North America sponsored policy round table on "Domestic Implications of the Mideast Crisis and U.S. Policy" held at the Rayburn House Office Building. Under the auspices of Walter Fauntroy, the Delegate from the District of Columbia, the

²¹ Golden, op. cit., p. 426. This advice came very early in Reagan's first term and is in complete harmony with political suasion efforts to manipulate dimensions and widen the circle to fragment the opposition.

²² Golden, op. cit., p. 427

²³ JTA, March 10, 1981. AIPAC took the lead in vigorously opposing the sale. Squadron did write Reagan urging him to reconsider plans to sell the F-15s to Saudi Arabia. *Archives of the Presidents Conference, Letter to the President, March 10, 1981*

²⁴ JTA, March 20, 1981.

²⁵ See too *Near East Report*, March 27, 1981

gathering was aimed mostly at Black legislative aides and academics. Critics of Israeli policies, including Randall Robinson of TransAfrica, charged that there was a conspiracy between Jews in America, South Africa and Israel to support Apartheid.²⁶

Despite such snipping, U.S.-Israel relations, particularly with regard to the PLO, had never been stronger. Abba Eban, now an opposition Knesset member, told the Presidents Conference in New York that he was encouraged by the Reagan Administration's unfavorable attitude toward the PLO.²⁷ Indeed, NSC Advisor Richard Allen vindicated Israeli Air Force strikes against PLO bases in Lebanon, saying they were hitting the "source of terrorism."²⁸

Downhil

The Administration's strategy of building an anti-communist coalition called for the sale of advanced weaponry to pro-American Arab countries (even if they were technically still at war with Israel). The Carter Administration had pledged to sell AWACS (highly sophisticated early warning radar aircraft) to the Saudis. According to Haig, he and Shamir were quietly negotiating the sale when Weinberger stated publicly that "not only were we selling the Saudis AWACS, we were going to sell them [advanced sidewinder air-to-air missiles and extra fuel tanks designed to increase the AWACS range approximately 900 miles]. And then Shamir is blown out of the saddle by Begin..."²⁹ A crisis atmosphere conducive to political suasion had suddenly developed.

²⁶ *Near East Report*, March 13, 1981

²⁷ JTA, March 25, 1981

²⁸ JTA, March 31, 1981

²⁹ Golden, *op. cit.*, p. 428. Haig goes on to say: "The whole controversy was a direct result of the lack of discipline in the Reagan administration and Weinberger's Arabist proclivities." Haig's own realpolitik approach as we shall see, led him to press for a secret US-PLO dialogue.

Jewish opposition to the AWACS sale now eclipsed other issues in the US-Israel relationship. In early April 1981, the President's Conference warned that it was prepared for a bitter fight if necessary.³⁰ The organized Jewish community pursued the AWACS fight with its full political resources. In short order, the AWACS battle came to virtually dominate the Jewish community's agenda. In an effort to widen the circle, typical of political suasion, and bring in figures who would fragment the opposition, a White House meeting was arranged for leading Jewish Republican figures.³¹ Then on March 31 Reagan was shot. Haig's awkward "I'm-in control here" White House statement opened him up to ridicule and diminished his influence. With the AWACS battle looming, Haig met in Jerusalem with Begin and Opposition party officials Peres and Eban. They were left with the impression that the U.S. and Israel shared an identical outlook toward the PLO, that the PLO would not be a participant in any forthcoming peace talks and that the US continued to oppose a separate Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza.³² Also contributing to the sense of uniformity of views was the Reagan Administration's opposition to PLO involvement in the El Salvador civil war.³³ But it was the Arabist views of Weinberger and Vice President Bush which were in the ascendant.³⁴

The AWACS battle, subsequent Lebanese missile crisis, and the 1982 Lebanon War provide an environmental context necessary to understand the role of the Jewish community in US-PLO relations. For now it is enough to note that, beyond straining the US-Israel relationship, the corrosive political battle over the AWACS unnerved and psychologically debilitated the pro-

³⁰ JTA, April 6, 1981. Fisher thought the Jewish establishment was being imprudently confrontational.

³¹ Here again the White House sought to circumvent the Presidents Conference. It obtained the support of Max Fisher who (though opposed to the sale) tried to persuade Jewish leaders to go along with the deal rather than confront the President. See Peter Golden, *Quiet Diplomat: Max M. Fisher*, (New York: Herzl Press, 1992), pp. 427-429

³² JTA, April 7, 1981

³³ JTA, April 14, 1981. This was significant to the extent that it showcased the PLO in a negative light.

³⁴ Golden, op. cit., p. 431

Israel community.³⁵

Consolidation of the consensus the United States and Israel ostensibly shared with regard to the PLO, was further hampered by a series of events in Lebanon and Iraq. The chronology includes terrorist incursion attempts, artillery bombardments, and increased tensions along Israel's northern border. This was followed by the shooting down of two Syrian helicopters attacking Christian-Arab forces aligned with Israel. In retaliation, Syria sent SAM-6 anti-aircraft missiles into Lebanon, potentially restricting Israel's ability to strike at PLO targets. The President appointed Philip Habib to serve as his special envoy charged with resolving the Syria-Israel missile crisis peacefully.³⁶

Another instance of the Administration framing the agenda to its own advantage came in May 1981. The Administration ordered the closing of the Libyan Embassy in Washington, D.C. in order to prevent possible terrorism against U.S. targets. But a State Department official said that the PLO mission would not be similarly closed because it had been in compliance with American laws and was staffed by U.S. citizens or resident aliens.³⁷ Elsewhere, the PLO's international standing continued on the ascendant. West German Chancellor Schmidt called for PLO participation at an international peace

³⁵ Arguably, the AWACS battle wilted the resolve of the Jewish leadership to vigorously take on the Administration ever again. Frederick G. Dutton, the Washington lobbyist representing Saudi Arabia, said that Senators had to choose between "Begin and Reagan." *Near East Report*, September 25, 1981; Haig remarks: "There was a dangerous potential for anti-Semitism, or accusations of anti-Semitism, in this situation." But Haig concludes: "The American press never let this fire be kindled." Haig, op. cit., p. 193 US UN Ambassador Kirkpatrick said she was "personally and deeply disturbed at the implication that it was somehow inappropriate for the American Jewish community to state vigorously and emphatically any position they chose..." *New York Jewish Week*, December 29, 1981. *The New York Times*, in an editorial entitled "The Price of Five Airplanes," stated: "There was no compunction about uttering even the vilest threats, of retribution against Israel and of anti-Semitism in America." October 30, 1981. To compound matters, in the midst of the AWACS battle there was a controversy over the appointment of Warren Richardson, former General Counsel of the anti-Semitic Liberty Lobby to be Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Resources, thus inadvertently introducing a "whiff of anti-Semitism" into the political environment. See *The Economist*, May 2, 1981.

³⁶ JTA, May 4, 1981 and *New York Times*, May 15, 1981.

³⁷ JTA, May 8, 1981

conference. The Presidents Conference leadership met with Schmidt when he visited Washington to argue against the new West German stance.³⁸

The following month, the U.S. announced that the Autonomy Talks would resume in the Fall of 1981. In another important strategic choice selection, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South East Asian Affairs Nicholas Veliotos made clear that U.S. policy on the issue of Jerusalem remained firm. The status of the City would be determined through negotiations. The dexterous use of insinuation is an important component of political manipulation. In remarks analogous to Haig's preinaugural interview with the *New York Times*, Veliotos also reiterated that the PLO was an umbrella group with some "terrorist elements." Privately, the Administration was engaged in efforts to bring the PLO into the U.S. led peace process.³⁹

Attack on Iraqi Nuclear Plant

We do not know to what extent the Israelis were aware of State Department efforts to bring the PLO into the peace process. Ostensibly at least, the U.S and Israel were in broad agreement on the PLO issue. Once again, however, other factors intervened to undermine U.S.-Israel relations and force the American Jewish leadership to expend its precious political resources.

Characteristic of political suasion, the United States engaged in situational advantage seeking in its response to the Israeli air strike against

³⁸ JTA, May 22 & May 26, 1981. See too: *Briefing Memorandum to Member Organizations*, May 19, 1981, Archives of the Presidents Conference.

³⁹ JTA, June 3, 1981. By this time, Veliotos, who had replaced Saunders, was actively engaged in bringing the PLO into the peace process. He was approached by John Edwin Mroz, a somewhat shadowy figure identified as Vice President of the International Peace Academy, who had good contacts with the PLO. Mroz brought Veliotos a document from the PLO which explicitly mentioned Israel in connection with the right of all states in the region to exist. Later, Mroz brought Veliotos a handwritten message from Arafat asking for direct US-PLO contact. With Reagan's approval, Haig allowed Veliotos to designate Wat Cluverius as Mroz's handler and link to the State Department. See Wallach & Wallach, op. cit., pp. 429-430

Iraq. On June 8th, IAF planes destroyed Iraq's nuclear reactor facility near Baghdad. The United States condemned Israel's action as "unprecedented."⁴⁰ Irritation was expressed about whether, in violation of U.S. laws, American supplied planes had been used in the attack. The State Department added that it had no evidence that Iraq was working on nuclear weapons. The U.S. voted to condemn the Israeli military strike in the UN Security Council. Meanwhile, the American Jewish leadership became entangled in this latest controversy in US-Israel relations. Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger forcefully pressed the case within the Administration to penalize Israel. The State Department emphasized that there was no evidence to justify Israel's apprehensions about Iraqi nuclear aspirations. Ultimately, the Administration retaliated by suspending delivery of F-16's to Israel. The underlying message was that in a non zero-sum Arab-Israel theater military solutions were inappropriate. Beclouding the issue somewhat, the President made several conciliatory-sounding statements about the Israeli action.⁴¹

In this ambiance of crisis, Nahum Goldman, a founder of the Presidents Conference and now the iconoclastic former President of the World Jewish Congress as well as of the World Zionist Organization, called for the establishment of a Palestinian state as essential to an Arab-Israel peace.⁴² Goldman was the quintessential outside elite player (of the trans-national variety) engaged in facilitating PLO entry into the peace process. Goldman had entree into the corridors of power and the Op-Ed pages of the prestige press. Later, former Assistant Secretary of State Harold Saunders, in an address to the National Press Club, observed that Israel remained divided over what to do about the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Any solution will result in a "national trauma of some sort." He continued: "There is no doubt in my mind...the PLO will play a role in this process...If they are not at the table they

⁴⁰ JTA, June 9, 1981

⁴¹ JTA, June 11,12,18, and 22, 1981

⁴² JTA, June 23, 1981

will play a role behind the scenes."⁴³

More ominous still, from the Israeli viewpoint, was a *Los Angeles Times* report that for the past seven years the U.S. had held secret contacts with the PLO. Prime Minister Begin sought to downplay the revelation, saying that he was only aware of indirect US-PLO contacts on such issues as the release of American hostages.⁴⁴

But the attention of the U.S. Jewish leadership, publicly at least, was directed elsewhere. With Israeli officials stunned by the continued intensity of U.S. criticism over the IAF strike against Baghdad, Squadron and Presidents Conference Executive Director Hellman met in Jerusalem with Begin. In Squadron's view, the media had unfairly portrayed the Israeli moves.⁴⁵ They returned pledging to work harder at explaining Israeli actions in Lebanon and Iraq. The Presidents Conference decision not to politically target the newly revealed US-PLO talks may simply be a case of following Israeli cues. The leadership certainly had its hands full. But the decision not to forcefully raise the issue could not but have sent a signal to the Administration that, if handled discretely, US-PLO contacts were politically tolerable to the Presidents Conference.

The interlocking nexus of international and domestic political systems now benefited the PLO's stature as a legitimate actor on the world stage. Despite criticism from Peres and the Israeli Opposition that the recently U.S. brokered cease fire arrangement in Lebanon had enhanced the status of the PLO, there was nothing that could be done to reverse the inexorable

⁴³ JTA, June 30, 1981. Likud had just won the Israeli elections and was on its way to forming another government. But at the same time, PLO political fortunes were far from waning. The Swiss government invited the PLO's Farouk Kaddoumi for official meetings. He went on for talks with the French Foreign Minister in Paris.

⁴⁴ JTA, July 6, 1981 & *Los Angeles Times*, July 5, 1981

⁴⁵ JTA, July 27, 1981

momentum.⁴⁶ In Europe, Vatican officials were said to be in regular contact with the PLO.⁴⁷ Arafat met with French Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson, who advocated including the PLO in future Middle East peace talks.⁴⁸

By now, the Haig-Reagan policy of building a Middle East strategic consensus incorporating Israel *and* the moderate Arab states in an anti-communist coalition, relegating the Palestinian issue to the back-burner, had been discredited.⁴⁹ Indeed, Israeli moves aimed at crushing the PLO proved futile and counterproductive, and indeed propelled the Palestinian issue to center-stage.⁵⁰ Fierce Israeli retaliations against PLO targets in Lebanon often resulted in collateral damage to civilians and that undermined popular support for the Jewish State among Americans. The Administration and media portrayed Begin as obdurate. Each onslaught of anti-Israel media coverage stunned and virtually incapacitated the Jewish leadership. Some in the Jewish leadership shared the Administration's apprehension of Begin. Israeli Air strikes aimed at overwhelming the PLO militarily only served to distance the Administration diplomatically. In the face of mounting tensions, the Jewish leadership was irresolute and full of remorse.⁵¹ The strategic mindedness of American policy, on the other hand, remained steadfast. Toughness toward Israel did not translate into softness toward the PLO. Despite a direct appeal from Sadat to Reagan calling for US-PLO talks, the President and Haig stood by their commitment not to negotiate with the PLO unless U.S. demands were met.⁵²

Perceptually, it became ever more untenable for the pro-Israel

⁴⁶ Jerusalem Post, July 28, 1981

⁴⁷ JTA, July 31, 1981

⁴⁸ JTA, August 31, 1981

⁴⁹ It should be recalled that US-PLO talks were secretly underway even with the purported emphasis on the Arab states.

⁵⁰ That it was indeed trying to do so to undermine PLO diplomatic achievements is clear. See, *The New York Times*, July 23, 1981

⁵¹ For details on the mood of dismay in both general and Jewish public opinion see *The Economist*, July 25, 1981 pp.31-32

⁵² JTA, August 7, 1981

community to argue that the Arab side still sought a zero-sum outcome to the struggle. Media coverage of Israeli air strikes in Lebanon hardly fostered the image of a Hebrew David slaying the Palestinian-Arab Goliath.⁵³ Saudi King Fahd's peace plan, made public in the summer of 1981, tacitly accepted Israel's existence within its 1948 borders. The plan, not incidentally, also called for the creation of a PLO-led state, and payment of reparations to the Palestinian-Arabs.⁵⁴ Sadat, meanwhile, continued to lobby regularly for bringing the PLO into the peace process. During August, he directed his efforts at the American Jewish leadership holding a meeting in New York with a joint delegation from the Presidents Conference and World Jewish Congress. In spite of their discomfiture with Likud policies, Squadron was hardly ready to lobby the Israelis on behalf of the PLO. He told Sadat "that the PLO is a terrorist organization bent on the destruction of Israel." It was up to the PLO to recognize Israel first, Squadron said.⁵⁵

The focal point of political discourse remained on the Palestinian-Arabs, not on the confrontation states. Those advocating Palestinian centrality included former President Carter, who called on the Palestinians to recognize Israel and for the Jewish State to end its 'military occupation.'⁵⁶ Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's NSC Advisor, now openly called on the U.S. to

⁵³ The Biblical story of David and Goliath is told in I Samuel 49. Some advocates of the Arab cause now identify the "Palestinians" with the Biblical Philistines. Actually, the Philistines were "sea people" of Aegean origin. See Encyclopaedia Judaica, Vol. 13 p. 403

⁵⁴ JTA, August 10, 1981

⁵⁵ JTA, August 10, 1981. On July 30, 1981 Farouk Kaddoumi, head of the PLO political Department told the West German weekly *Stern* that: "We shall never allow Israel to live in peace. We shall never allow it total security. Every Israeli will feel that: behind every wall there might be a guerrilla who is aiming at me." Question: "Provided you get this state on the West Bank and Gaza--and there are not a few who wish you to have it with all their heart--what would then happen to the remainder, to Israel within the 1948 boundaries?" Answer: "I shall make it perfectly clear to you. We shall never recognize Israel...Yes, I want to destroy the enemy who keeps my homeland occupied..." Circulated by the Information Department, Consulate General of Israel, {"Let Them Speak For Themselves" series} New York, August 1981. Meanwhile, Arafat took a more moderate stance, hinting that the Saudi peace proposal was acceptable to the PLO. See *New York Times*, August 17, 1981.

⁵⁶ JTA, August 11, 1981

deal with the PLO.⁵⁷ Ezer Weitzman, the former Israeli Defense Minister (and Likud party campaign manager turned passionate dove) echoed these calls. Weitzman said it was time to consider a "Palestinian entity" in the Gaza and West Bank.⁵⁸

It remained difficult to convince the Likud Government that Arab intentions had sincerely changed. They were, at least, equally concerned about American objectives. The State Department's response to an August 1981 terrorist assault on a synagogue in Vienna, in which two people were killed and 18 injured, seemed characteristic of situational advantage seeking. While evoking a State Department condemnation, the United States refused to blame the PLO for the incident.⁵⁹

The idea put forth by various U.S. decision makers that the PLO was a complicated body, not merely a terrorist organization, was basic to sanitizing the group's image and a prerequisite to ushering it into the peace process. Indeed, calls for direct US-PLO talks became almost de rigueur. Adding their voices to the growing chorus were Talcott Seelye, the retiring U.S. Ambassador to Syria, and Senator Barry Goldwater.⁶⁰

Begin Visit to US

Begin no doubt knew that solidarity among American Jewish leaders for his policies was deteriorating. Though criticism was muted, Begin had to

⁵⁷ *New York Times*, August 12, 1981. Arafat commented: "What Brzezinski says is important because he is not an ordinary man—he is the man who said 'Bye-bye P.L.O.' We consider it a very important signal, a positive signal. But we don't know to what extent it is shared by the American Administration." See *The New York Times*, August 17, 1981

⁵⁸ JTA, August 18, 1981

⁵⁹ JTA, September 1, 1981. Israel held the PLO culpable for the attack.

⁶⁰ JTA, September 2 & September 3, 1981

have been aware that some in the leadership thought him abrasive.⁶¹ Their perceptual analysis of the conflict now differed markedly from the official Israel evaluation. Nevertheless, on his way to Washington for a mid-September meeting with the President, Begin stopped in New York to address the Presidents Conference. And, again on his way back to Israel, the Prime Minister made another stop-over in New York and used the opportunity to lash out against two influential Israeli newspapers, *The Jerusalem Post* and *Ha'artez*, complaining that their biased reporting was undermining support for his government.⁶²

At the White House, Begin and the President met for the first time and discussed closer U.S.-Israel military ties as well as the planned resumption, after an 18 month suspension, of the Autonomy talks. But it was the AWACS battle that continued to dominate the domestic side of US-Israel relations. Former President Nixon warned that elements of the U.S. Jewish community will, "have to take the consequences if Congress kills the AWACS sale." Furthermore, former State Department official George Ball remarked that the AWACS controversy was a test of strength between the President and the pro-Israel community. Innuendoes leaked by unnamed government officials questioned whether Jews were more loyal to Israel than to President Reagan.⁶³

⁶¹ Reports suggested that Begin presented Jewish leaders with "a painful dilemma ." They were deeply troubled, several told the press on background, by his "abrasive" approach. *Newsweek*, September 7, 1981. It is worth recalling that the Cabinet of the second Begin Government, elected in June 1981, was more "hardline" than the 1977 cabinet. Ariel Sharon became Defense Minister.

⁶² JTA, September 9 & 15, 1981. See too *The Economist*, September 19, 1981. The unrelenting opposition of the English language *Jerusalem Post* was particularly vexing since virtually everyone in the U.S. Jewish leadership subscribed to the paper's international edition. Years later, after the paper was sold to a new owner, it shifted editorial course.

⁶³ JTA, September 5, 7, & 8, 1981. Rita Hauser and a group of leading Republicans signed a letter opposing the AWACS sale. Meanwhile, the U.S. had formerly lifted the embargo of F-16's to Israel. See JTA, September 4, 1981. For Jewish reaction to charges of dual loyalty, see JTA, October 8, 1981

Sadat Assassinated

In early October 1981, Islamic extremists assassinated Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. The murder was a reminder that determined elements in the Arab world abhorred the very idea of peace with the Jews. The White House dispatched three former Presidents to attend the Sadat funeral.

Presidents Nixon, Ford and Carter used the opportunity to discuss the role of the PLO. Carter and Ford then issued a joint public call urging that the PLO be brought into the peace process. Haig's reaction was that U.S. policy would not change until the PLO recognized Israel's right to exist.⁶⁴ While the U.S. was not ready to publicly negotiate with the PLO, it was continuing to criticize the Israelis for taking steps that would make the creation of a Palestinian state all but impossible. Haig and NSC Advisor Allen reiterated that Jewish West Bank settlements were not conducive to successful Autonomy talks.⁶⁵

Reagan reaffirmed long-standing US policy of not talking to the PLO until it recognized Israel's right to exist: "There would be a condition, always has been. There never has been any refusal to talk with the PLO. There has been only one condition: until they would recognize the right of Israel to exist as a nation which they still have never done."⁶⁶ The U.S. was intent on not sitting idly waiting for the PLO to shift gears. Indeed, some days later, the State Department denied a *Newsweek* account which reported that Haig had asked former President Nixon to develop contacts with the PLO during his travels in the Arab world. *Newsweek* reported: "The Reagan Administration is working quietly to bring the PLO into the peace process...after discussions in

⁶⁴ JTA, October 13, 1981. Somewhat earlier, the Israeli Embassy asked for clarification from the State Department on the granting of a U.S. entry visa to PLO official Mahumud Labadi, FBIS, September 17, 1981. Also, a poll of Jewish Americans revealed that by a margin of 69 to 23 percent they favored Israel-PLO talks if the PLO recognizes Israel's right to exist. *Newsweek*, September 14, 1981

⁶⁵ JTA, October 13, 1981

⁶⁶ JTA, October 14, 1981, See too, *The New York Times*, October 12, 1981

Cairo with Secretary of State Haig, former President Nixon last week urged Saudi leaders to induce the PLO into accepting (Saudi) Prince Fahd's eight-point peace plan, if only in principle, as a springboard for expanded negotiations later."⁶⁷

The Israeli attitude toward the Fahd plan--not restricted to the Likud alone-- was harshly cynical. Insight into Israeli assessments of Arab intentions, during this period, can be garnered from the following indignant remarks by Former Foreign Minister Eban:

Every Israeli and every friend of Israel across the world should consider anybody who supports the plan as a dangerous adversary. The aim and consequence of Prince Faud's formula is to reduce Israel from a strong and self-reliant democracy to a stunted, impotent, humiliated ghetto, useless to itself, to the Jewish world and to the international community. The Arabs... should support the Camp David process. What Israel needs least of all is recognition of 'its right to exist.' The phrase is full of insult and contempt. Israel did not need recognition from Saudi plutocrats or an organization like the PLO which has no juridical or moral right to award or deny recognition of states.⁶⁸

Reports that Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's NSC Advisor, had met with Arafat merely underscored the growing political isolation of Israel and the American Jewish leadership.⁶⁹ All the while, support for the PLO came from a variety of sources, including Greek Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu, who invited Arafat to visit Athens.⁷⁰ PLO diplomatic and public relations gains were immaterial as far as the Israelis were concerned. Their assessment of PLO intentions remained constant. Speaking during a Knesset debate, Foreign Minister Shamir said the Jewish State would never negotiate with

⁶⁷ JTA, October 20 and Newsweek, October 20, 1981

⁶⁸ *Near East Report*, November 13, 1981. The Saudis subsequently disavowed an interpretation of their plan which held that it recognized Israel's right to exist. See *The New York Times*, November 17, 1981. Previous articles appeared on November 15 and November 16, 1981. Eban also published an Op-Ed essay on the Saudi plan in the *Times* on November 18th.

⁶⁹ JTA, October 26, 1981

⁷⁰ JTA, October 26, 1981

the PLO even if it recognized Israel.⁷¹ But they could hardly be sanguine about the direction of U.S. policy. The Administration's affinity for the Fahd peace plan unnerved the Israelis. Begin requested and received American assurances that the State Department did not seek to replace the Camp David Accords with the Fahd Plan. On that score the Administration seemed ready to accommodate. At a November appearance on Capitol Hill, Haig did not refer to the Fahd plan at all and instead affirmed that Camp David is the "best basis for progress."⁷² In a rather enigmatic twist, Haig later questioned Jewish criticism of Israel. He told a Washington, D.C. gathering of Jewish leaders that Jews were Israel's sharpest critics. Haig concluded that he would not join in such criticism.⁷³

Defeated on AWACS

After a politically merciless battle, which ended in an Administration victory, the vaunted power of the Jewish lobby (always more smoke and mirrors than reality) seemed at a low ebb.⁷⁴ Plainly, American policy was tilting toward a more even-handed Mideast policy and this would have repercussions for US-PLO relations. More portentous still, from Israel's vantage point, was the perception in some circles that the Jewish lobby had been enfeebled by accusations of disloyalty to the country. The use of political manipulation, particularly insinuation, had been fairly transparent. Somewhat disingenuously, Secretary Weinberger complained that criticism of Jewish lobbying efforts against the AWACS deal had taken on "an ugly

⁷¹ JTA, October 28, 1981

⁷² JTA, November 3 & 5, 1981. See also, *The Economist*, November 7, 1981. Begin went so far as to say that Israel rejected the Fahd plan even if the Saudis were truly prepared to recognize Israel.

⁷³ JTA, November 9, 1981

⁷⁴ The reasons for the success of the Administration's efforts on the AWACS sale are extremely complex and have been explored at length by others. See for example, Mitchell G. Bard, *The Water's Edge and Beyond: Defining the Limits to Domestic Influence on United States Middle East Policy* (New Brunswick, N.J., Transaction Publishers, 1991), especially Chapter 2.

tone.”⁷⁵ At the end of November 1981, Reagan met with a joint delegation of Presidents Conference leaders as well as prominent Jewish Republicans to assuage Jewish apprehensions in the aftermath of the AWACS deal. According to Goldin: “The leaders voiced their distress over the anti-Semitic rhetoric that emerged around the AWACS debate. The meeting, however, did little to mitigate the bitterness that lingered between Washington and Jerusalem.”⁷⁶ The White House did leak word that a staff member had been rebuked for suggesting that American Jews were being disloyal to the United States in opposing the sale of AWACS to Saudi Arabia.⁷⁷ Earlier, Reagan’s off the cuff, and reassuring, remark that he favored Israeli sovereignty over an undivided Jerusalem was “clarified” by the State Department which explained that the status of Jerusalem had to be decided through negotiations.⁷⁸

Relations between the Reagan Administration and the Begin Government had gotten off to a bad start. They quarreled over arms supplies and the AWACS sale. Moreover, after their meeting, Reagan thought Begin committed himself not to “lobby” against the sale and felt betrayed when Begin publicly opined that he was against it. The U.S. decision to withhold delivery of F-16’s as punishment for the Osirik air strike had yet to be resolved. Nevertheless, Sadat’s assassination and the planned resumption of the Autonomy talks left Begin “overconfident” that the shared ideology of the two leaders would prevail over transient events.⁷⁹ According to Lewis, Sharon proposed “a broad blueprint of potential areas of regional military cooperation of embarrassing pretension. Weinberger and others blanched, but

⁷⁵ JTA, November 18, 1981. In the wake of the AWACS battle, while debating prayer in the public schools, Senator Ernest F. Hollings (D-SC) referred jokingly to Ohio Senator Howard Metzenbaum, on the Senate floor, as the Senator from B’nai B’rith. For more on Weinberger’s comments see too, *The New York Times*, November 17, 1981

⁷⁶ Goldin, *op. cit.*, p. 433. “Two hours before the meeting, Fisher met with Haig. The secretary told him that Meese and Weinberger were again intruding on foreign policy.”

⁷⁷ JTA, November 18, 19. & 23, 1981

⁷⁸ *Washington Post*, November 21, 1981

⁷⁹ Lewis, in Quandt, *op. cit.*

the die was cast for much that unhappily followed.”⁸⁰ Weinberger grudgingly signed the US-Israel memorandum of understanding on strategic cooperation, which Lewis explains was replete with symbolism but devoid of substance. Certainly “it was a pale version of Israel’s original proposal.”⁸¹ Both the State and Defense Departments downplayed the agreement, suggesting that all that was involved was the storage of medical supplies and joint planning.⁸² The principal source of U.S.-Israel tension, resolution of the Palestinian-Arab issue, was transparently papered over with an agreement that fit neatly within the parameters of the disassociation strategy. Communication had replaced understanding. The U.S. remained staunchly committed to an Israeli withdrawal from the areas captured in the 1967 war. Begin’s hobbled claim to Jewish rights in Eretz Israel (tempered by a commitment to adhere to Camp David and relevant Security Council Resolutions), combined with the complete disinterest, on the part of the American Jewish leadership, for Likud’s territorial line, set the stage for trouble ahead. Meanwhile, the PLO continued to make significant diplomatic strides, obtaining invitations from various South American countries and Canada for high level delegations to visit.

So, when the Knesset voted to extend Israeli law to the Golan Heights, a major fissure in U.S.-Israel relations was exposed. The vote was undertaken precisely because certain Knesset members were not lulled by the appearance of goodwill between Israel and its patron. These members wanted to formally solidify control over the Golan. Begin supported but did not orchestrate the bill’s passage, which jolted the Administration. The United States retaliated by suspending the recently signed cooperation accord and joined in a UN vote condemning Israel.

Begin vowed that the Golan Heights law, passed by 2/3 of the Knesset,

⁸⁰ Lewis, p. 234

⁸¹ Lewis, *ibid.*

⁸² *New York Times*, December 1, 1981

would not be revoked. The U.S. reaction to the Golan law was, for Begin, the final straw in a series of perceived slights. He implied that the Administration was waging a campaign of psychological warfare:

On June 7 we destroyed the Iraqi nuclear reactor Osirak near Baghdad...an act of national self-defense. Nonetheless you announced that you were punishing us--and you revoked a signed and sealed contract that included specific dates for the supply of planes...Not long after, in a defensive act--after a slaughter was committed against our people leaving three dead and 29 injured--we bombed the PLO headquarters in Beirut... You have no moral right to preach to us about civilian casualties...A week ago, at the instance of the government, the Knesset passed on all three readings by an overwhelming majority of two-thirds the Golan Heights law. Now you are once again boasting that you are punishing Israel..You have imposed upon us financial punishments--and have (thereby) violated the word of the President. When Secretary Haig was here he read from a written document the words of President Reagan that you would purchase for \$200 million Israeli arms and other equipment. You canceled an additional \$100 million. What did you want to do--to hit us in our pocket?...

Now I understand why the whole great effort in the Senate to obtain a majority for the arms deal with Saudi Arabia was accompanied by an ugly campaign of anti-semitism. What kind of expression in this--punishing Israel? Are we a vassal-state of yours? Are we a banana republic?⁸³

Squadron endorsed Begin's criticism. The Presidents Conference was critical of the tone set by the Administration's handling of the Golan Heights annexation issue. Referring to Begin's gibe that, "No one will frighten the great and free Jewish community of the U.S. No one will succeed in cowing them with anti-Semitic propaganda. They will stand by our side," Squadron cabled the Prime Minister: "*Yasher koach* (right on!)." ⁸⁴ Actually, the Jewish leadership had never stood with Begin on the most fundamental principle at issue: the future of the captured territories. It was the spirit of the Administration's reaction (not to mention Begin's own emotional rejoinder)

⁸³ *The New York Times*, December 21, 1981

⁸⁴ JTA, December 23, 1981

more than the substance of its critique that irritated the Jewish leadership. The substance of the matter was not lost on two leftist groups, Americans for a Progressive Israel (affiliated with the Israeli Mapam party) and the New Jewish Agenda. They protested the Golan law on the grounds that it would make a land-for-peace exchange more difficult.⁸⁵

Privately, the Administration had been indirectly negotiating with the PLO and its plans were to continue to do so.⁸⁶ Overt perceptual shifts, meantime, had been reinforced by a number of disparate events: The Soviet Union called upon the PLO to embrace a nonzero sum approach (the two state solution). The Peoples Republic of China made a similar call.⁸⁷ King Hassan of Morocco had already opined that the Arabs would live in peace with Israel once the Territories captured in the Six Day War were abandoned. King Hussein made no secret of his efforts to convince Arafat that Israel had a right to exist.⁸⁸ The PLO leader authorized his officials to work out a joint PLO-Jordanian arrangement to pursue the peace process and suggested that Jordanian-Palestinian confederation might be possible once a Palestinian state was created.⁸⁹ Iraq's Saddam Hussein told Congressman Stephen Solarz: "No single Arab official includes in his policy now the so-called destruction of Israel or wiping it out of existence but there is not one Arab who believes in coexistence with an aggressive and expansionist enemy."⁹⁰ Prince Saud al-Faisal suggested that in return for Israeli acceptance of Palestinian rights and withdrawal from the Administered Territories, Saudi Arabia was prepared to "accept" Israel. The Saudi Foreign Minister said: "Arab countries did not accept Israel before, in 1948.

⁸⁵ JTA, December 21, & 23, 1981

⁸⁶ *New York Jewish Week*, November 29, 1981 citing a report in *Business Week*.

⁸⁷ Hu Yaobang told an Arab League delegation that Israel's had a right to live in peace just as Palestinian rights had to be restored. See *Washington Post*, December 7, 1981.

⁸⁸ BBC World Service November 8, 1981

⁸⁹ *Washington Post*, December 1, and December 19, 1981

⁹⁰ Reported in *Near East Report*, January 3, 1983

The change has taken some doing. There has been a tremendous shift on the part of Arab countries to accept this situation."⁹¹ Two days later, the Saudis disavowed the conciliatory remarks. "What His Highness Prince Saud said with regard to recognition was in essence a reference to the requirement that Israel recognize the rights of Palestinian people to return to their land, to self-determination and to the establishment of their independent state with Jerusalem as its capital."⁹² Nevertheless, even the revised remarks were not bellicose and left the impression that an accommodation was possible. As Zartman has pointed out, a nonzero sum encounter does not require the parties to like each other: "Each party wants the other to be satisfied too, not because they care about each other per se, but so that the other will make and keep the agreement that gives the first party its share."⁹³ This was the direction the Arabs and their sponsors seemed to be taking.

Most significantly, in terms of the overall perceptual transformation, the PLO also intensified its efforts to develop contacts with "pro-peace" forces in both Israel and the American Jewish community. This campaign was masterfully waged by Arafat operative Issam Sartawi.⁹⁴ Elsewhere, Hassan Ali, the Egyptian Foreign Minister, called for direct contact between Israel and the PLO. He called on Israel and the PLO to mutually recognize one another. Bethlehem Mayor Elias Freij also called on the PLO to recognize Israel. On the Israeli side, Yossi Sarid, a left-wing member of the Knesset, said he was willing to meet with Arafat.⁹⁵

Parenthetically, the second year of the Reagan Administration began with the resignation of Jacob Stein, the White House liaison to the Jewish Community. The 65 year old former Chairman of the Presidents Conference

⁹¹ *New York Times*, January 3, 1982

⁹² *New York Times*, January 5, 1982

⁹³ I. William Zartman, *The 50% Solution*, (Garden City, N.Y., Anchor Press, 1976), p10

⁹⁴ JTA, January 22, 1982

⁹⁵ JTA, January 25, 1982.

gave no reason for his decision.⁹⁶

II

Jewish Perceptual Framework

While the precise instant is impossible to pinpoint, 1982 was a perceptual turning point. By the close of the year no doubt would remain about the categorization of the conflict: it would be non-zero sum and comprehended almost exclusively as an Israeli v. Palestinian Arab dispute. It is worth reiterating that once a non-zero sum struggle was seen as prevailing the American Jewish leadership had no fall back position with regard to Israeli claims to the West Bank. The Jewish leadership had not been bolstering Begin's claim to Judea and Samaria. Its primary contention rested on security grounds related to Arab capabilities and intentions.⁹⁷ During 1982, there were no significant public contacts between the American Jewish community and the PLO, largely due to the Lebanon War. The image of the PLO as a savvy public relations foe likely to strike a deal in return for the best possible outcome, was reinforced in the course of the year. The self image of the Jewish leadership was that of a community hard-pressed to defend Begin's hardline and discouraged because the Reagan Administration seemed to be demanding additional Israeli concessions in the peace process, placing the onus for progress on Israel. The leaders found themselves more willing to defend Israel in the face of what they considered unfair media treatment of Israel in connection with the Lebanon war. In the short term, the war led to a hardening of the leadership's attitude toward the PLO. Their consistent goal was to get the Administration to ameliorate its multifarious criticisms of Israel. They continued to oppose a change in the 1975 U.S. policy toward the

⁹⁶ JTA, Januray 6, 1982

⁹⁷ Similarly, at the end of 1988, when the PLO ostensibly met U.S. conditions for a diplomatic dialogue the Jewish leadership had no fall back bargaining position which could compete with PLO claims for the West Bank. The U.S. had set the agenda and neither the PLO, Israel or the U.S. Jewish community had the political leeway to manipulate dimensions in a different direction.

PLO. The Presidents Conference protested U.S. efforts to restrain Israel from dealing a crushing blow to the PLO in Lebanon. Privately, some in the leadership were seeking ways to distance themselves from Likud policies and publicly embrace the policies of the Labor Opposition. Other key environmental issues have already been noted, namely, the conciliatory statements made by various Arab actors and their patrons which reinforced the idea that the conflict was in transition. The continuous media coverage of the Palestinian cause throughout 1982 was the year's most important environmental factor and had long-term perceptual consequences. Moreover, the vigorous protests orchestrated by the domestic Israeli opposition against their Government's policies in Lebanon gave impetus and legitimacy to American Jewish criticism. Even as the Israeli Government sought to crush the Palestinian-Arab cause militarily, the Israeli opposition was telling the American Jewish leadership that the Palestinian issue was here to stay. The unveiling of the Reagan plan and its acceptance by Labor and elements of the U.S. Jewish leadership ended with finality the idea that U.S. Jewish lobbyist would take their cue from the Israeli Government. On a personal level, Jewish leaders sought to cultivate a relationship with George Shultz, the new Secretary of State (in part, to counteract the role of Weinberger who was almost uniformly detested by the leaders). Some of the key players influencing, and influenced by, the 1982 perceptual environment were: Max Fisher, Squadron, Julius Berman, Schindler and Bronfman.

The Reagan Administration's proposed sale of advanced communications equipment, valued at \$79 million, to an Arab consortium which included the PLO and Libya, can be analyzed from the vantage point of political suasion because of what the deal insinuated.⁹⁸ The President gave a direct assessment of the chances of a US-PLO dialogue in an exclusive

⁹⁸ JTA, January 27, 1982.

interview to *Readers Digest*. Asked if he would recognize the PLO if it acknowledged Israel's right to exist, Reagan answered:

This is a decision to be made after they do it. I know the PLO has kind of held a position that their non-recognition of Israel is a bargaining chip that they could bring to a negotiating table... I think they're wrong. I don't see how you sit down to bargain with someone who has taken a position where they deny your right to exist and that you should be destroyed. That is not a bargaining chip. And, I am hopeful that, as we continue dealing with the more moderate Arab states, we will bring them to accept recognition that Israel is a nation that is going to continue existing.

99

The Administration's line remained consistent. Edwin Meese, a key Presidential aide, revealed that Reagan had again rejected a call by Mubarak for a U.S.-Palestinian dialogue.¹⁰⁰ The Administration, like previous Administrations, was pursuing a two-track approach; refusing to elevate the PLO diplomatically without significant concessions, while sanitizing the PLO's image for the future. During the first six months of the year, the Administration routinely played down the significance of PLO military activities in Lebanon.¹⁰¹

The media's coverage of, and emphasis on, the Palestinian-Arabs provides added context in which to understand the shift in American Jewish public opinion. Television images, especially, can easily sway public opinion under the proper conditions. The ABC TV program *20/20*, for instance, sought to sway public opinion when it televised a segment on the conditions of Arab life in the Administered Territories. Little pretense was made at providing context, balance or objectivity. Producer Stanhope Gould said "balance isn't always just a matter of what you do in one story." Moreover, it was easy to overlook "Israeli repression" unless people were made to feel it at

⁹⁹ JTA, February 5, 1982, See too, *Readers Digest*, February 1982

¹⁰⁰ JTA, February 8, 1982

¹⁰¹ JTA, February 9, 1982. We can safely assume US decision makers did not believe that Palestinian-Arab aspirations could be blocked militarily even if it were possible to crush the PLO.

the emotional level.¹⁰²

The first Reagan Administration *Human Rights Report* issued by the State Department, in February, criticized Israeli practices in the West Bank and Gaza.¹⁰³ Since the purpose of report is to document abuses and embarrass abusers, it served as another political suasion tool. Plainly, the Israelis and their Jewish supporters in the United States were pained by the continued inclusion of Israel in the *Report*. The agenda was now set so that discussions about the future of the West Bank would encompass charges of abuse by Palestinian-Arab human rights advocates. The PLO also pressed the human rights claim by financing visits of American clergymen to squalid refugee camps in Lebanon.¹⁰⁴

As the Arab-Israel conflict underwent conversion into the Israeli-Palestinian struggle and the Palestinian cause gained adherents worldwide, Israel's ineffectual response was to call attention to PLO-inspired violence. Invariably, Israeli threats of retaliation were met by American calls for self-restraint.¹⁰⁵ Except for the Israelis, and many in the U.S. Jewish leadership, everyone agreed that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict had become a solvable, ~~albeit not easy to unravel, political dispute. The Administration made plans~~ to sell ground-to-air missiles to Jordan while paying lip-service to the Camp David process in order to facilitate the final stages of Israel's withdrawal from Sinai.¹⁰⁶

Jewish concerns were not assuaged by the Administration's ostensibly

¹⁰² JTA, February 8, 1982. Media reports on the Arab-Israel conflict now concentrated heavily on coverage of calls for a Palestinian state. For example, former Sen. Charles Percy, speaking in Sudan, said there could be no peace unless, "the rights of Palestinians to live in peace in an independent state is guaranteed." Peace also required "peaceful and secure borders" for Israel as well." See *Washington Post*, January 10, 1982.

¹⁰³ JTA, Feb. 10, 1982

¹⁰⁴ JTA, March 3, 1982

¹⁰⁵ JTA, February 25, 1982

¹⁰⁶ *The Economist*, February 20, 1982

strict adherence to its well known conditions for talking to the PLO.¹⁰⁷ American officials, such as Admiral Bobby Inman of the Central Intelligence Agency, appeared to be making a conscious effort to portray the PLO in a positive light. Inman, for example, disparaged reports that the PLO was aiding the Marxist government of Nicaragua.¹⁰⁸ Still, Arafat's own pronouncement, that PLO pilots were in Nicaragua and El Salvador, was undisputed.¹⁰⁹ Squadron said openly that there was simply no one in the Administration who understood Israel or appreciated its fears.¹¹⁰

With Haig's discreet encouragement, meanwhile, confidential negotiations between the United States and the Palestine Liberation Organization were making painstaking progress. The talks were conducted by John Edwin Mroz (in conjunction with Cluverius, Veliotes, and CIA operative Robert Aims). The two sides bargained over a document intended to bridge PLO-US differences on the diplomatic prerequisites for a dialogue.¹¹¹ Arafat may have had these sub rosa talks in mind when he told the ABC News Program *Nightline* that he would forfeit the respect of the Palestinian masses if he accepted American conditions for a dialogue.¹¹² Arafat and Mroz met on May 5, 1981 and planned to sign an agreement at a session set for June. But that meeting never took place because of Israel's war against the PLO in

¹⁰⁷ JTA, March 16, 1982

¹⁰⁸ JTA, March 10, 1982

¹⁰⁹ See State Department Spokesman Dean Fischer's comments as reported in the *New York Times*, March 21, 1981.

¹¹⁰ JTA, March 17, 1982 Squadron exempted Secretary Haig and UN Ambassador Jean Kirkpatrick from this assessment. In fact, Ambassador Kirkpatrick refused to meet with the PLO representative at the UN in her capacity as president of the Security Council, see JTA, March 31, 1982.

¹¹¹ Wallach & Wallach, pp. 430-432

¹¹² JTA, March 18, 1982

Lebanon.¹¹³

Meanwhile, in the public arena, intensified lobbying on behalf of a US-PLO dialogue was being pursued by the American Friends Service Committee.¹¹⁴ The Presidents Conference, for its part, emphasized the “major sacrifices for peace” Israel had taken and took issue with the drift in U.S. policy.¹¹⁵ With the Presidents Conference unalterably opposed to both the tone and policy direction of the Administration, the White House opted to circumvent the official leadership and seek Jewish support elsewhere. In a session arranged by the Jewish affairs liaison for Republican National Committee, Richard Krieger, the White House invited Max Fisher and five other prominent Jewish Republicans: Albert Spiegel of Los Angeles; Gordon Zacks, Columbus, Ohio; Richard Fox, Philadelphia; George Klein, New York; and George Klein of Beverly Hills, California and President of AIPAC. This rather transparent effort to widen the circle of Jewish leaders in order to achieve a desired outcome was promptly denounced by the organized Jewish leadership. Squadron termed the session a “deeply disturbing break in Jewish unity.” The Presidents Conference chairman complained that the Reagan Administration was pursuing a divide and conquer approach precisely because of Jewish opposition toward Administration policies:

¹¹³ At around this time, Israeli Defense Minister Sharon traveled to Washington to meet with Haig. He told Haig that “no self-respecting country would put up with attacks of this kind from terrorists. A response is unavoidable. War could break out any minute, even as we sit here talking!” Haig told Sharon that Israel must not act unless the PLO indisputably violated the cease-fire. To follow-up, Haig wrote directly to Begin to “impress upon you that absolute restraint is necessary.” See Ze’ev Schiff & Ehud Ya’ari, *Israel’s Lebanon War*, pp. 72-77. It may well be that the Israelis interpreted these remarks as a “yellow light” in planning their campaign against the PLO. Alternatively, it is possible that they knew full well that the last thing the Americans wanted was an all-out war against the PLO. Ironically, American efforts to bring the PLO into the diplomatic mainstream may have impelled the Israelis to act. Mroz remarks: “That’s a pretty nasty thing for me to think about, that a secret negotiation with Arafat may have been one of the reasons for the timing of the Lebanese invasion.” See Wallach & Wallach, p. 434.

¹¹⁴ JTA, March 23, 1982. For background on the pro-Arab activities of the American Friends Service Committee see Arnold Forster and Benjamin R. Epstein, *The New Anti-Semitism*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974), pages 85-85. The group espoused a left-liberal political line on the US political spectrum. In their political activities involving the Middle East AFSC recognized the pivotal role of US Jewish support and implied that this backing might lead to an anti-Semitic backlash.

¹¹⁵ JTA, March 29, 1982

From the beginning of this Administration, an effort has been made to bypass the Presidents Conference so that the White House could designate its own "Jewish leaders." The effort was vigorously rejected by the organized Jewish community on the grounds that it is not up to the President to select the Jews who represent the Jewish community. It is up to the Jewish community itself...(The) most representative group in Jewish life today is the Conference of Presidents, the one body which by common consensus speaks for American Jews on issues affecting the security of our fellow-Jews in Israel and other lands abroad. ...Of course, no President likes to hear criticism. That is why some self-appointed Jewish spokesmen, political supporters of the President, have tried to create a new group to serve as a buffer between the President and the organized Jewish community. American Jews reject this concept. We have no intermediaries, no 'court Jews' to represent us in the halls of government. We speak for ourselves.¹¹⁶

The extent to which the Administration sought Jewish support for its policies was evidenced by the fact that it took Squadron's grievances to heart. Within two weeks, Vice President Bush hosted a delegation of 75 Presidents Conference guests in Washington.¹¹⁷ Later, Jacob Stein arranged a "secret" meeting in New York between a group of Jewish leaders and Weinberger.¹¹⁸ They discussed the full range of issues involving the U.S.-Israel relationship.

The Administration was well-informed about the thinking of the Jewish leadership and must have known of their discomfiture with Begin. In this context, Schindler's remarks, delivered at a Presidents Conference "leadership meeting" held in Washington in April, help to illuminate the conflicted thinking of many in the Jewish establishment.

There is an attempt being made to divide Begin from Israel, to distinguish somehow the Prime Minister from the people, to insinuate that the so-called "hard line" of Begin does not represent the true feelings of citizens of Israel. This is slander against one of the great statesmen of our time... This is not to say that I agree with his every decision. ...Against the scheming and maledictions of our enemies, we will extend our stake in Israel. We will not

¹¹⁶ JTA, April 14, 1982

¹¹⁷ JTA, April 22, 1982

¹¹⁸ JTA, June 4, 1982

yield. We will stay and we will build. ¹¹⁹

The leadership's internal divisions and inconsistencies did not directly translate into softness on the PLO issue. Nevertheless, the PLO made substantial political advances in the American political system. Congressman Lee Hamilton (D-IN), a key member on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, denied press reports that he had invited the PLO's Farouk Kaddoumi to visit Washington. ¹²⁰ However, former President Ford, in his capacity as a private citizen, offered to talk with Yasir Arafat as a prelude to PLO recognition of Israel. ¹²¹

The Lebanon War

The 1982 War in Lebanon was a milestone event on the road to a U.S. - PLO dialogue. The war and its aftermath monopolized the political activities of the organized Jewish leadership. It also unleashed a deluge of images which transfigured Jewish perceptions about the nature of the Arab-Israel conflict. Arguably, had Israel been allowed free reign, it could have militarily decimated the PLO, dealing it a serious, perhaps even fatal, blow.

The public relations difficulties of Western oriented democracies in waging war in the age of "real time" television is a subject beyond the scope of this study. It is enough to speculate that Israel's mission in Lebanon came unraveled in large measure because of American opposition to the brutalities

¹¹⁹ *Near East Report*, May 7, 1982. Schindler was already on record with episodic criticism of Begin.

¹²⁰ JTA, May 19, 1982

¹²¹ *Near East Report*, April 9, 1982. Ford made the offer while on a visit to Kuwait.

of war as hammered home by television.¹²² From the rubble of Beirut, America worked diligently to salvage the PLO as a diplomatic entity and to rescue its leadership including Yasir Arafat. Far from diminishing the Palestinian-Arab cause, in the final analysis, the war served to amplify the pivotal role of the Palestinians. How this occurred, in the context of the quadrilateral dynamic that is the focus of this case study, merits closer examination.

On June 3, 1982 Arab terrorists ambushed and shot Israel's Ambassador to England, Shlomo Argov in London. Israel immediately blamed the PLO, though it developed that the perpetrators were associated with the Abu Nidal gang, a PLO breakaway faction. Israel retaliated against PLO targets in Lebanon and the PLO reacted by shelling the Galilee. The shelling presented the Israelis with a pretext for a massive onslaught against the PLO in Lebanon. Defense Minister Ariel Sharon's debatable grand strategy--a plan he had been considering for some time-- was intended to rout and emasculate the PLO militarily and weaken it diplomatically, while formalizing an alliance with Lebanon's Christian-Arabs.¹²³

At the war's outbreak, on June 8, 1982, the Presidents Conference defended Israel's foray against the PLO in Lebanon as a campaign against terror. The Jewish leadership called upon the international community to

¹²² For a discussion of how the war was reported see *Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1983-85 Yearbook*, pp.45-53. See too, Ze'ev Chafets, *Double Vision: How the Press Distorts America's View of the Middle East*. The ineptitude of the Begin Government in failing to articulate its position combined with how the war was covered inside Israel (by Israel Television and the Hebrew press) are yet additional factors that influenced public perceptions.

¹²³ For a critical analysis of Israel's handling of the Lebanon War see: Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'Ari, *Israel's Lebanon War*. A more straightforward account of the war can be found in Richard Gabriel's *Operation Peace for Galilee*.

take measures "outlawing and quarantining the PLO" because of its assassination attempt against the Israeli ambassador to Great Britain.¹²⁴

Berman New Chairman

Shortly after the war began, Julius Berman, a leader of the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations of America, succeeded Squadron as chairman of the Presidents Conference. Raised in Hartford, Connecticut, Berman was both a rabbi and lawyer.¹²⁵ His term was dominated by the Lebanon war and by the inability of the Presidents Conference to harness the political influence of the U.S. Jewish community to support Israel's Lebanon mission. On June 29 he declared: "I believe generally that there is an overwhelming consensus of the American Jewish community" to support Israel's war aims.¹²⁶ Just several weeks later, Berman admitted: "I can't say that every Jew is behind the operation...There are ads (signed by Jews opposing the invasion) but the basic consensus of American Jewry is solidly in support."¹²⁷

Chafets offers this explanation about the war's unpopularity:

The devastatingly bad press Israel received during the war was the product not only of technology, but of a number of trends and attitudes that had been ripening for years. A decade of sympathy for Palestinian nationalism and declining Israeli popularity and credibility combined to make Israel the target of a melodramatic and sometimes vitriolic press campaign, which was aided and abetted by Israel's own conduct, both of the war and its press relations...

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¹²⁴ JTA, June 9, 1982

¹²⁵ JTA, June 10, 1982. He was born in Poland in 1936 and educated at Yeshiva University.

¹²⁶ quoted in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 1983-85 Year Book, p.57

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Chafets, op. cit., p. 297

Of course, no Israeli Government would have tolerated the use of Lebanon by the PLO as a staging area for attacks against Israel. Still, Israel's attack against the PLO in Lebanon was motivated, in part, by the Government's desire to strengthen control over Judea and Samaria. While the Administration's Middle East team was initially divided on how to handle the crisis (Haig tried to buy the IDF time), they nevertheless moved expeditiously to politically salvage the PLO.¹²⁹ The President's call for an immediate cease-fire and Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon can be understood under the rubric of political suasion as situational advantage seeking. His meeting with Begin at the White House on June 21, further contributed to the already present crisis atmosphere.¹³⁰

The connection between the Lebanon campaign and the future of the Administered Territories was widely understood. Senator Robert Packwood, perhaps the staunchest pro-Israel voice in the U.S. Senate, urged the dismantling of the PLO in Lebanon in order to demoralize pro-PLO forces in Judea, Samaria and Gaza.¹³¹ Israeli officials spoke openly about the need to achieve a decisive PLO defeat in Lebanon to make autonomy easier.¹³²

The war, however, did not proceed according to the plans developed

¹²⁹ Lewis says Haig tried to buy time for the IDF, op. cit.

¹³⁰ JTA, June 22, 1982. The President, reading from a prepared statement, told Begin "The best course today is diplomacy, not employing an army to excess." Then Reagan remarked: "What's done is done but now we must move forward."

¹³¹ JTA, June 11, 17, & 22, 1982

¹³² JTA, June 24, 1982 quoting Moshe Arens

by Sharon.¹³³ If the war was intended to finish off the PLO as a political force, the great irony is that it accomplished just the opposite. In fact, the domestic political climate within Israel swayed some in the American Jewish leadership to oppose Begin's stance on the essential nature of the conflict. Many Israelis vehemently opposed the war on the grounds that the conflict was not an absolute necessity. About two weeks into the war, on June 15, Peace Now issued its first protest statement. Three weeks after that, 100,000 Israelis demonstrated in Tel Aviv against the war. Meanwhile, Uri Avneri, an Israeli Leftist, appeared in Beirut to be photographed embracing PLO leader Yasir Arafat. Plainly, the perception was that, even at this early stage, the war inspired little popular support. Actually, a majority of Israelis supported the war.¹³⁴ In mid-July, 200,000 people rallied to back the Government's policies. Nevertheless, a national consensus on how to proceed eluded Begin. The Labor Party publicly withdrew its support from the war once it became clear that Israel would not adhere to the limited goals outlined by the Cabinet at the outset of the conflict.¹³⁵

The political environment, in which the U.S. Jewish leadership acted, was greatly influenced by a deluge of media coverage from Beirut which portrayed the fighting as unfair and one-sided. The Palestinian-Arabs were depicted as victims of Israeli military adventurism. Against a smoldering Beirut skyline, NBC network news anchor John Chancellor brazenly told

¹³³ For additional details about the mission of the war see Itmar Rabinowitz, *The War in Lebanon, 1970-1983*. In retrospect, it is striking that the Government utterly failed to develop public support for the mission. The pitfalls of pursuing a military campaign without mobilizing domestic support are dealt with succinctly by Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr., in *On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context*, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, (U.S. Government Printing Office), April 1981. Speaking of Vietnam, Summers says: "Having deliberately never been built, it could hardly be said that the national will 'collapsed.'" Much the same can be said in the Israeli setting. Tough, on balance, the momentum of Palestinian centrality and the position of the PLO could not have been overcome except by military means.

¹³⁴ *Yediot Aharonot*, July 11, 1982 cited in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 1983-85 Yearbook, p. 63

¹³⁵ JTA, June 29, 1982. "To instruct the IDF to place all the civilian population of the Galilee beyond the range of the terrorist fire from Lebanon, where they, their bases and their headquarters are concentrated." Cited in O'Brien, *op. cit.*, p. 623.

American TV viewers: "...Nothing like it has ever happened in this part of the world. I kept thinking yesterday of the bombing of Madrid during the Spanish Civil War. What in the world is going on? Israel's security problem on its border is fifty miles to the south. What's an Israeli army doing here in Beirut? The answer is that we are now dealing with an imperial Israel...world opinion be damned."¹³⁶ ABC's Mike McCourt "described (but had no pictures of) 'two square miles of West Beirut [that are] now dust and mortar. The rest of the city, nearly all of it, resembles some ancient ruin...The total in human terms has been appalling. Ten thousand dead, up to twenty-five thousand wounded, and more than half a million people, mainly Lebanese, left homeless.' The kindest thing that can be said about this description is that it was untrue in every detail."¹³⁷ Even without such purposeful falsifications, the brutality of modern war, delivered in real time to their television sets, proved traumatic to many American (and especially American Jewish) viewers.

Relentless U.S. pressure on Israel for a cease fire, withdrawal and for the safe passage of the PLO leadership—made a mockery of Sharon's plan to crush the PLO politically as well as militarily.¹³⁸ Haig's resignation as Secretary of State in late June, further debilitated Sharon's strategy. The ostensible catalyst for Haig's resignation was discord within the Administration over the management of American policy on the Lebanon crisis. His departure worried Israel and the American Jewish leadership. Haig had been perceived as the Administration figure—after Ronald Reagan—most empathetic to the Israeli cause. Though we now know that secret U.S. contacts with the PLO had been taking place during Haig's brief tenure, the Palestinian

¹³⁶ Quoted in *Media Coverage The War in Lebanon*, by Frank Gervasi, The Center For International Security, Washington, D.C. (booklet) December 1982. For a book length treatment of the media's coverage of recent events in the Arab-Israel conflict including the Lebanon war, see Ze'ev Chafets, *Double Vision: How The Press Distorts America's View of the Middle East*, (New York: William Morrow, 1985)

¹³⁷ Chafets, op. cit., p. 300

¹³⁸ JTA, July 2, 1982

issue was by no means the centerpiece of his Middle East policy. On the other hand, incoming Secretary of State-designate George Shultz was known to have close business ties in the Arab world through the Bechtel corporation.¹³⁹ Fisher, acting independently, sent Shultz a cable from Jerusalem stating: "I resent the implications that you might be biased in your judgement because of your present business association, I have always known you to be a fair, honorable man with a real sense of integrity. Be assured of my cooperation."¹⁴⁰

Berman, meanwhile, was keenly aware that American Jewish support for the war against the PLO in Lebanon was fluid. Publicly he continued to argue that most U.S. Jews supported Israel's actions.¹⁴¹ Nevertheless, the withering effect of the negative media coverage was draining Jewish resolve. Squadron candidly acknowledged that Israel had not handled the public relations aspect of the war satisfactorily.¹⁴² A further indication that the Lebanon War actually enhanced the PLO's political standing came from *Time* magazine, which reported that the Reagan Administration threatened to deal directly with the PLO unless Israel cooperated in ending the war on American terms.¹⁴³

Unquestionably, for Shultz the Palestinian conundrum was at the crux of the Arab-Israel conflict. An American policy which did not take this into account was untenable. During his Senate confirmation hearings, he remarked that the Lebanon situation only underscored the importance of the Palestinian issue.¹⁴⁴ Clearly, the United States would not allow Israel to use the Lebanon war to rule-out the PLO politically. Shultz implied that the PLO

¹³⁹ JTA, June 28, 1982 and *The Economist*, July 3, 1982. See too, Haig, op. cit., especially pp.341-347. Incidentally, Weinberger had been Bechtel's general counsel and members of the Jewish leadership thought the company cooperated in the Arab boycott of Israel.

¹⁴⁰ Golden, op. cit., p. 437. After Shultz's confirmation he and Fisher consulted frequently.

¹⁴¹ JTA, June 30, 1982

¹⁴² JTA, July 14, 1982

¹⁴³ JTA, July 14, 1982 see too, *Time*, July 14, 1982. Israel denied the veracity of the story.

¹⁴⁴ JTA, July 14, 1982

was capable of altering aspects of its character so that a diplomatic role would be possible. Like Haig, he refused to characterize the PLO as a terrorist organization suggesting that it could potentially serve as the “one voice” of the Palestinian-Arabs.¹⁴⁵ During his Senate committee testimony, Massachusetts Senator Paul Tsongas urged Shultz to get “tough” with Israel about Jewish settlements in the Territories.¹⁴⁶

Quest for the Magic Words

While the fundamental American position on the PLO had not deviated since 1975, Shultz’s arrival at Foggy Bottom in July 1982 reinvigorated the public, as well as private, diplomatic campaign aimed at getting the PLO to “say the magic words” – recognizing Israel and denouncing terror. When the PLO floated conciliatory-sounding statements about Israel, U.S. officials invariably calibrated their response with a mixture of encouragement and skepticism. Thus, in July, Shultz dismissed vague press reports that the PLO was ready to recognize Israel. Shultz listed the now familiar prerequisites for a US-PLO dialogue: the PLO must clearly say it recognizes Israel; and UN Security Resolutions 242 and 338; must lay down its arms and stop terrorism. “Then,” said Shultz, “we are dealing with a different organization.”¹⁴⁷

Coordinating the diplomatic flirtation on behalf of the PLO, early in Shultz’s stewardship, was Issam Sartawi. Sartawi kept the conciliatory messages flowing. The 44 year-old cardiologist, with close ties to Yasir Arafat, announced that the PLO accepted Security Council 242 and thus “implicitly” recognized Israel. Uri Avnery, an Israeli proponent of bringing the PLO into the peace process, pointed out that Sartawi’s pronouncement had not been

¹⁴⁵ *Near East Report*, July 23, 1982

¹⁴⁶ JTA, July 14, 1982

¹⁴⁷ JTA, July 15, 1982.

repudiated by the organization.¹⁴⁸ But the State Department remained firm in pressing for an official and explicit statement from the PLO.¹⁴⁹ "Inadvertent" meetings such as the one between Hatam Husseini and officials at the State Department took place. The Department was at a loss to explain the circumstances under which Khaled Hassan, another close Arafat colleague, entered the United States.¹⁵⁰ This diplomatic dalliance continued week to week, month to month and year to year until December 1988.

In late July 1982, as the Administration was seeking to facilitate the withdrawal of PLO forces from Beirut, several U.S. Congressmen, among them Nick Rahall, Mary Rose Oaker, David Bonior, Paul McClosky and Mervyn Dymally traveled to Beirut as a show of support for the Palestinian cause. McClosky later announced he possessed a signed statement from Arafat that recognized Israel by acknowledging all UN resolutions pertaining to Palestine. That such recognition was implied, however, was denied by PLO radio the next day. While the State Department dismissed the document as not being "clear and unequivocal" the rejection was balanced by spokesman Dean Fischer's reminder: "If our conditions are met...we will be willing to talk to the PLO."¹⁵¹ By facilitating the trip of the Congressman and engaging in public discussions about conditions for a dialogue, the Administration was controlling the political climate and setting the agenda.

Begin's Israeli critics had obliging access to the American media and

¹⁴⁸ JTA, July 21, 1982. See *The New York Times* Op-Ed essay by Avnery, in which he described his recent meeting with Arafat and implicitly called for the establishment of a Palestinian state, July 13, 1982

¹⁴⁹ JTA, July 22, 1982

¹⁵⁰ JTA, July 22, 1982

¹⁵¹ JTA, July 27, 1982. See to *The New York Times*, July 26, 1982 and *Near East Report*, July 29, 1982.

could address themselves virtually directly to the pro-Israel community.¹⁵² Paradoxically, the pace of events in Lebanon enhanced the PLO's diplomatic prospects even as they left many influential American Jews dispirited.¹⁵³ Despite intra-Arab recriminations over the refusal of any Arab state to come to the military aid of the Palestinian-Arabs, irrespective of the PLO's precarious military and logistical predicament on the ground, the prestige and political standing of the PLO in the United States had seldom been more buoyant. To undergird this positive development, a number of influential Palestinian-Arab leaders living in the West met in London:

The group, which included Dr. Walid Khalidi, Dr. Hisham Sharabai and Edward Said, all from the U.S., decided to hold a meeting in Europe next month in which some 300 wealthy Palestinians will be invited in order to raise \$100 million dollars for the project. The meeting was revealed in the London-based Arabic-language weekly *Al-Majallah* and reprinted by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service...

According to *Al-Majallah*, some of the participants felt that the Palestinian military effort had "collapsed" and that efforts should be focused on securing the rights of the Palestinian people, concentrating on the U.S. since it "holds most of the cards." The plan calls for creating a Palestinian lobby in the U.S. which would include contacting leading figures within or close to the Reagan Administration. The weekly listed Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger and former Treasury Secretary John Connally...

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"Are you losing patience with Israel?" a reporter pointedly asked the president. "I lost patience a long time ago," Reagan replied.¹⁵⁵ In the face of this debilitating political situation, Berman appealed to Reagan, in writing, to

¹⁵² see for example *The New York Times Magazine* cover story "Has Israel Altered Its Visions," by Amos Oz, July 11, 1982

¹⁵³ "Discord Among U.S. Jews Over Israel Seems to Grow," *New York Times*, July 15, 1982

¹⁵⁴ JTA, July 27, 1982

¹⁵⁵ Recounted in George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993), p. 53

explicitly call on the PLO to evacuate Beirut.¹⁵⁶ The Administration, however, was intent on sending an altogether different signal. As a further reproach, the United States halted delivery of cluster bombs to Israel.¹⁵⁷ To the PLO, the President repeated that there would be no US-PLO dialogue unless the previously enunciated conditions were met.¹⁵⁸

Political suasion was much in evidence when Foreign Minister Shamir met with Reagan at the White House on August 2. Shultz recalls: "I had discussed it carefully ahead of time with the president. We knew it would be a tough encounter. Reagan did not smile...Shamir was calm and tried to be friendly. President Reagan kept after him, stressing the disproportionality of Israel's response to relatively minor PLO cease fire violations."¹⁵⁹ Shamir sought to downplay the perception of asperity. But his efforts were in vain. A photograph published on the front-page of the *New York Times* the next day pictured a sullen President looking steadily across the table at Shamir. For an Administration famous for using media images, this glum caricature of the state of US-Israel relations is unlikely to have been etched accidentally.¹⁶⁰ Rumors that the United States was contemplating sanctions against Israel were now circulated in the press. At a stop-over in New York, Shamir told the Presidents Conference that he "cannot imagine" that the U.S. would impose sanctions against Israel. But Reagan reiterated publicly that Israel's actions in Lebanon were "disproportionate."¹⁶¹ Berman told Shamir the PLO should either leave Lebanon or face the consequences. The next day he and a delegation from the Presidents Conference went to Washington to meet with Shultz, Weinberger and Bush. They were assured that the Administration

¹⁵⁶ JTA, July 28, 1982 He and Yehuda Hellman had just returned from a brief visit to Israel.

¹⁵⁷ JTA, July 28, 1982

¹⁵⁸ JTA, July 30, 1982

¹⁵⁹ Shultz, p. 54

¹⁶⁰ JTA, August 3, 1982. Shultz writes: "*The New York Times* coverage of the Reagan-Shamir meeting was headlined: 'U.S. Displays a New Face to the Israelis.'" Shultz, p. 55

¹⁶¹ *Washington Post*, August 5, 1982

was not considering sanctions against Israel.¹⁶² Labor Party leader Shimon Peres, on a visit to New York, told a gathering at a UJA luncheon that he too opposed a PLO role in the peace process. He stressed, however, the importance of dealing with the Palestinian issue while not spelling out precisely how. At another New York appearance before the Presidents Conference, Peres defended Israel's incursion into Lebanon.¹⁶³

Salvaging Palestinian Prospects

The PLO may have been facing military defeat in Lebanon but it was also achieving a political victory in the United States. The President pronounced himself outraged by Israeli air-raids against Beirut.¹⁶⁴ Far from exploiting the trouncing of the PLO to undermine its future, United States policy makers sought to do the precisely the opposite.¹⁶⁵ Opposition leader Peres, on a visit to Washington, told the President and Shultz that the the PLO's troubles created new opportunities: "The PLO's record is hopeless. It is a Mafia whose structure is riven by blackmail, jealousy, terrorism; it leads the Palestinian people only to a dead end." Shultz retorted: "The war is not a blessing. The Arabs feel helpless...They are sure Israel will never leave Lebanon."¹⁶⁶ PLO and Syrian forces were finally evacuated from Beirut, in late August, with the aide of 800 U.S. marines. But the Administration appeared intent on helping the Palestinians save face. Shultz helped

¹⁶² JTA, August 5 & 6, 1982. In fact, sanctions were under active consideration. See Shultz, p.60.

¹⁶³ JTA, August 11, 1982. Earlier he had hinted at differences with Begin over the war against the PLO in Lebanon.

¹⁶⁴ *Washington Post*, August 13, 1982

¹⁶⁵ JTA, August 23, 1982

¹⁶⁶ Shultz, p. 67

resuscitate talk of a Palestinian state by hinting that the U.S. could accept a demilitarized entity on the West Bank.¹⁶⁷ The Presidents Conference sought and obtained a meeting with the Secretary of State. Afterwards Berman said: "We made it clear to him that the PLO had been destroyed not only militarily but politically as well...we stressed that it is important that the PLO will not be dealt with in any way."¹⁶⁸ Later, State Department spokesman John Hughes denied that the U.S. supported the creation of a demilitarized Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza.¹⁶⁹

Reagan Peace Plan

The removal of PLO and Syrian forces from Beirut did not alter U.S. emphasis of the Palestinian component in the peace process. To the contrary. And, if the Israelis thought the Lebanon campaign would solidify Jewish claims to the West Bank the Administration promptly disabused them of any such notion. The President sent Begin a letter calling for a freeze in Jewish settlement activity and suggested that Judea and Samaria should be linked to Jordan.¹⁷⁰ Then, on September 2, the President unveiled his own Arab-Israeli peace plan. Of the war against the PLO in Lebanon, the President said: "The military losses of the PLO have not diminished the yearning of the Palestinian people for a just solution of their claims. ..It is clear to me that peace cannot be achieved by the formation of an independent Palestinian state...So the United States will not support the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, and we will not

¹⁶⁷ JTA, August 30, 1982. Sharon met in Washington with Shultz and Weinberger seeking to make the case that Jordan was the Palestinian state. The White House rejected this view. See *The Washington Post*, August 30, & 31, 1982.

¹⁶⁸ JTA, August 30, 1982. According to Shultz, Robert Ames the CIA contact to the PLO told him that Arafat and the PLO were far from finished. Ames said Palestinian moderates now had a chance to be heard and that "contrary to the official Israeli line, Israeli intelligence analysts, Ames said, agreed with ours that Arafat had gained in strength and control." In the U.S. reading of the situation, Arafat now had flexibility he did not have in Beirut "under Syria's thumb." p. 92

¹⁶⁹ JTA, August 31, 1982

¹⁷⁰ JTA, September 2, 1982

support annexation or permanent control by Israel.”¹⁷¹

Essentially, the conflict resolution formula now espoused by the President (it had been in discussion for months), while emphasizing the Palestinian issue over the state-to-state aspect of the conflict, was largely a re-working of the Jordanian option favored by the Labor Party. It called for an exchange of land-for-peace and confederation of Judea and Samaria with Jordan. Shultz insisted that the U.S. still saw no role for the PLO.¹⁷² But the Israeli Government viewed matters differently. Begin decried what he saw as an effort to divide Eretz Israel {the Land of Israel}.¹⁷³ A Government statement said:

Were the American plan to be implemented, there would be nothing to prevent King Hussein from inviting his newfound friend, Yasir Arafat, to come to Nablus and hand the rule over to him. Thus would come into being a Palestinian state which would conclude a pact with Soviet Russia and arm itself with every kind of modern weaponry.

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Some in Likud suspected that the White House and the Labor Party had colluded to promote the Jordanian option just when the Palestinian-Arab position on the ground seemed weakest.¹⁷⁵ Begin declared: “Israel is not Chile and I am not Allende.”¹⁷⁶ But reaction from the American Jewish leadership, which Shultz carefully monitored, was more sanguine. AIPAC’s Tom Dine

¹⁷¹ *The Quest for Peace: Principal US Public Statements & Related Documents on the Arab-Israel Peace Process 1967-1983*, U.S. State Department publication, 1984.

¹⁷² JTA, September 3, 1982

¹⁷³ JTA, September 9, 1982

¹⁷⁴ “Text of Israel’s Communique on the Reagan Plan,” *The New York Times*, September 3, 1982. Arafat complained that the plan did not support a PLO state but had said earlier of the Reagan efforts: “We do not reject them nor do we criticism them.” *New York Times*, September 4, 1982

¹⁷⁵ *The Economist*, September 11, 1982

¹⁷⁶ FBIS, September 10, 1982.

initially lauded the Reagan Plan because of its opposition to a Palestinian State.¹⁷⁷ While acknowledging that the plan contained some positives, others in the Jewish leadership nonetheless viewed it as violating the spirit of Camp David. Presidents Conference head Berman complained that the effect of the Reagan plan was to preempt the outcome of Arab-Israel negotiations.¹⁷⁸ Shultz's reading of his meeting with the Jewish leadership emphasized their discomfiture with Begin: "They were disappointed, they said, that they had not been more fully consulted in advance. But they were clearly embarrassed by the vehemence of Begin's rejection. They worried about a settlement freeze but could not really oppose the principles the president had outlined."¹⁷⁹ Next, Shultz picked up the support of B'nai B'rith, which called the plan "worthy of consideration."¹⁸⁰ Shultz spoke before the UJA in New York where he received a polite reception. Haig later criticized the plan before the same audience. Haig said, having carefully studied the Camp David Accords, his conclusion was that: "Israel never committed itself to terminate permanent settlement on the West Bank..." He then alluded to, and cautioned against, American political interference in Israeli internal affairs.¹⁸¹

Within weeks of the PLO's expulsion from Beirut and the announcement of the Reagan plan, Saudi Arabia hosted the 12th Arab Summit Conference in Fez, Morocco. There the Arab leaders re-formulated the previously announced Fahd Plan. The proposal implied de facto recognition of a pre-1967 Israel and called for the establishment of a PLO-led

¹⁷⁷ *New York Times*, September 9, 1982

¹⁷⁸ *JTA*, September 10, 1982

¹⁷⁹ Shultz, *op. cit.*, p. 99

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *New York Times*, September 15, 1982. Labor's involvement with the Reagan plan (and its variations) is discussed by Abba Eban in his memoirs: "On his appointment after Haig's resignation, ...Overcoming an initial reluctance to give the Soviet Union a foothold in our region, Shultz worked closely with Peres and King Hussein to elaborate a plan for an international conference to be convened by the United Nations." *Personal Witness, Israel Through My Eyes*, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1992), p. 628.

state with El-Quds (Jerusalem) as its capital.¹⁸² This blueprint struck Abu Saleh, a member of the PLO and Fatah Executive Committee, as being dangerously conciliatory. He warned that it practically implied recognition "of the Zionist entity."¹⁸³

Military defeat in Lebanon continued to translate into a sort of surreal political victory elsewhere in the IR arena, for Arafat and the PLO. Both President Mitterand of France and the Pope met with Arafat.¹⁸⁴ But it was the assassination of Bashir Gemayel (it is widely assumed by Syrian agents) that further unraveled whatever political fruits Israel had hoped to derive from the Lebanon War. In retaliation, Christian-Arab militia members massacred mostly Moslem Palestinian-Arabs in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shitlia, an area of Beirut under IDF control. The tragedy elevated the Palestinian cause and further blemished Israel's standing in the United States and among American Jews. Shultz believed that by allowing the Christian-Arabs to enter the camps the Israelis had "facilitated—and perhaps even induced" a bloodbath.¹⁸⁵

Officially, both Israel and the American Jewish leadership rejected suggestions that the Jewish State was somehow culpable in the Beirut tragedy. Still, Schindler, Maynard Wishner and other Jewish leaders in the United States echoed a Labor party demand for an independent investigation of the

¹⁸² Twelfth Arab Summit Conference: Final Statement (September 9, 1982) reprinted in *The Israel-Arab Reader*, by Walter Laquer and Barry Rubin, Revised Edition, Penguin Books, N.Y. 1984. Faud, formerly Crown Prince, had become King. The original plan had been worked out with the help of PLO advisors, See *The Economist*, September 11, 1982. King Hassan of Morocco announced that the Arabs wanted a "state of non belligerency" with Israel. The remark was received favorably in Washington, see *Washington Post*, September 11, 1982.

¹⁸³ Near East Report, October 1, 1982

¹⁸⁴ JTA, September 13, 1982 At his meeting with Arafat, the Pontiff called for the internationalization of Jerusalem.

¹⁸⁵ Shultz, *op. cit.*, p. 105

calamity.¹⁸⁶

This growing wariness of American Jews, coupled with scenes of tens of thousands of Israelis demonstrating in the streets against Begin, brought a shadowy charge to the fore: was there a concerted psychological warfare campaign underfoot to debilitate Begin? Reagan disclaimed a United States campaign to “overthrow” or “undermine” the Israeli government: “We have never interfered in the internal government of a country, we have no intention of doing so, never had any thought of the kind...We expect to be doing business with the government of Israel and with Prime Minister Begin, if that is the decision of the Israeli people.”¹⁸⁷

Despite an atmosphere of palpable tension and growing disharmony within the ranks of the U.S. Jewish leadership, Berman set out to emphasize the positive.¹⁸⁸ The Presidents Conference leadership traveled to Israel, early in October, for meetings with Israeli officials. From Jerusalem, Berman denied outright that the Jewish community was split over Israel’s policies in Lebanon and the Territories. Arguing that a return to Israel’s pre-1967 borders would be ruinous, Berman disparaged the Reagan peace plan for demanding such a withdrawal. He then delineated areas of consensus within

¹⁸⁶ JTA, September 21 & 22, 1982. Some 350,000 Israelis demonstrated against the massacre in Tel Aviv, see too *The Washington Post*, September 26, 1982. In his memoirs, Shultz reports: “On February 8, 1983, the Kahan Commission issued its report...recommending the dismissal or censure of top Israeli officials, including Defense Minister Sharon. *The New York Times* on February 9, 1983, summarized: ‘The commission’s conclusions fell into two broad categories: first, that Israeli officials, knowing the Phalangists’ violent history ...should have realized the probability of a massacre...and second, that officials should have acted decisively on reports of killings, and should have stopped the Phalangists immediately.’” Shultz, pp. 112-113

¹⁸⁷ JTA, September 30, 1982 and *New York Times*, September 29, 1982. In an op-ed essay entitled “Destabilizing Israel,” *New York Times* columnist William Safire wrote: “No democracy has the right to conspire to overturn the electoral decision of a democratic ally. Yet that is what Mr. Reagan has done. He invited the twice-beaten leader of the opposition Labor Party, Shimon Peres, to Washington and made a tacit arrangement: support our Mideast plan and it will be clear to Israeli voters that you, and not the stiff-necked Begin, are the chosen instrument of future American largesse...US policy is likely to follow the line gleefully laid down today by the *Washington Post*: ‘The Next Steps in Isolating the Begin Government: What America Could Do to Continue Tightening the Screws.’” September 13, 1982.

¹⁸⁸ *The Economist*, September 25, 1982

the community: opposition to talks with the PLO; antagonism to the establishment of a PLO-led state; and support for maintaining Israel sovereignty over city of Jerusalem.¹⁸⁹

Given the strain in U.S.-Israel relations and Shultz's determination to focus on the plight of the Palestinian-Arabs, several Arab leaders reasoned that the time was propitious to contrive a public US-PLO meeting. They urged the President to receive the PLO's Farouk Kaddoumi as part of an Arab League delegation scheduled to visit the White House late in October. But in keeping with its publicly enunciated position regarding talks with the PLO, the Administration rejected their entreaties.¹⁹⁰

Delegitimizing Israel's West Bank Policy

The symbiotic relationship between Israeli opponents of Begin policies and their American supporters is typified by the work of the West Bank Data Project headed by Meron Benvenisti. The American funding sources for Benvenisti's work included private contributions, university sources and foundation grants.¹⁹¹ Benvenisti argued that, in all likelihood, opponents of Jewish control over Judea and Samaria had only about 36 months to reverse Begin policies.¹⁹² Benvenisti was concerned that the planning and development of relatively large urban centers in the West Bank would create

¹⁸⁹ JTA, October 7, 1982.

¹⁹⁰ JTA, October 18, 19, & 20, 1982. By now the damage to the Reagan-Begin relationship was irreparable. Lewis, *op. cit.*

¹⁹¹ The JTA, October 28, 1982, identified CUNY as a funding source. *Jerusalem Post*, September 10, 1982 identifies New York University as another. Robert I Friedman, in *Zealots For Zion* reports that Benvenisti's "study of the occupation...was financed by the Ford and Rockefeller foundations." p. 201 Benvenisti served as a deputy mayor of Jerusalem under Teddy Kollack. Friedman himself received financial support for his work from Merle Thorpe, Jr. and his Foundation for Middle East Peace (which in turn obtained financial support from Thorpe's own Tides Foundation). Thorpe, a lawyer with Hogan Hartson in Washington, D.C., began his political work in 1950. His fortune derives from the Cerbco copying machine company. (See *Washington Post*, January 13, 1992).

¹⁹² JTA, October 28, 1982

organic links to Israeli centers within the “green line.” He collected data about West Bank land ownership, economics, and water administration. His intention was to demonstrate how, if current Israeli building continued, Arab towns and villages, with little room for natural growth and expansion, would find themselves surrounded by thriving Jewish communities. Moreover, the crisis atmosphere Benvenisti was helping to foster is characteristic of political manipulation. Ostensibly, Benvenisti targeted his criticism at the United States for not acting decisively to stem Israel’s “imperial concept” of West Bank settlement.¹⁹³

The Shultz line dominated Administration thinking. Still, not everyone embraced it. Ambassador Jean Kirkpatrick, for instance, continued to view the Arab-Israel conflict in zero-sum terms, telling a dinner-meeting honoring former Presidents Conference Chairman Howard Squadron that the goal of Israel’s enemies at the U.N. remained the destruction of the Jewish State.¹⁹⁴ This assessment followed in the wake of remarks made by the former leader of Algeria, Ahmed Ben Bella, who said candidly that the Arabs would never accept the State of Israel.¹⁹⁵ Shultz, meantime, wanted Max Fisher to press Begin to accept, at least in part, the Reagan peace plan. Fisher also wrote Shultz to provide him with insight into the thinking of the Jewish leadership: “As a result of your meeting (with American Jewish leaders, they have) a very warm personal feeling about you. . . on a personal level you have their confidence, which is vital. George, please don’t get discouraged...”¹⁹⁶ At the same time, shadowy hints of a joint United States - Israel Labor Party psychological warfare campaign aimed at undermining support for the Begin Government continued to circulate.¹⁹⁷ One Shultz advisor had already gone public with complaints about Begin’s

¹⁹³ *Jerusalem Post*, September 10, 1982

¹⁹⁴ JTA, November 2, 1982

¹⁹⁵ JTA, October 12, 1982

¹⁹⁶ Peter Golden, *op. cit.*, p.440-441

¹⁹⁷ JTA, November 18, 1982, See also, *New York Times*, November 16 & 17, 1982

“intransigence” and insinuated that there was no alternative to a Palestinian state.¹⁹⁸ Simultaneously, efforts by Israel aimed at reducing the influence of the PLO in the West Bank were disparaged. Shultz derided Israeli demands that college instructors certify that they were not PLO functionaries as recalling 1950s-era loyalty oaths against communism.¹⁹⁹

Circumventing the PLO was the last thing on the minds of U.S. policy makers. Egyptian diplomats actively sought to broker a meeting between American and PLO representatives.²⁰⁰ Meanwhile, the United States was reportedly encouraging Egyptian-PLO relations.²⁰¹ Though unwilling to publicly engage the PLO in negotiations, Shultz was fully committed to bringing the Palestinian-Arabs into the peace process. He invited a mission of Palestinian-Arabs to meet with him at the State Department. Preceding their arrival in Washington, some members of the delegation flaunted their PLO connections by flying to Tunis for a session with Yasir Arafat. The delegation included two West Bank mayors who had been expelled by the Israelis precisely because of their leadership role in the PLO. Nevertheless, State Department spokesman John Hughes rejected the notion that the U.S. had now opened indirect talks with the PLO, explaining: “We are confident they are not members of the PLO.”²⁰² Plainly, the Administration was committed to bolstering the legitimacy of the PLO. When the PLO Central Council decided not to reject the Reagan peace initiative, the Administration interpreted the decision in the best possible light, praising the “process of consultation” within the Palestinian community.²⁰³

Talks were underway, in the interval, to bring about an end to the

¹⁹⁸ Shultz, *op. cit.*, p. 93. The advisor was Irving Shapiro.

¹⁹⁹ JTA, November 18, 1982

²⁰⁰ JTA, November 23, 1982

²⁰¹ *Near East Report*, December 24, 1982 quoting *Ha'Aretz*

²⁰² JTA, November 24, & 26, 1982

²⁰³ JTA, November 30, 1982

Lebanon debacle. But the Begin Government believed that the Administration was purposefully blocking Israeli efforts to achieve any semblance of diplomatic headway that would translate into a political defeat for the PLO.²⁰⁴ The Americans denied they were blocking an Israel-Lebanon peace agreement in order to pressure Israel into accepting the Reagan peace plan. But the United States did cajole Israel into dropping its demand that negotiations take place alternately in Beirut and Jerusalem.²⁰⁵

Impact on Internal Opposition

By year's end the Israelis were faced with a vigorously led internal opposition, comprised of establishment figures from within the American Jewish leadership, who were dedicated to combating Begin's policies. The 1982 Lebanon debacle, combined with fairly open encouragement from the Labor Opposition, gave the American Jewish internal opposition the legitimacy it needed to publicly challenge the Israeli government. Alexander Schindler emerged as one of the most articulate and vocal of Begin's critics. The former Chairman of the Presidents Conference warned against incorporating the West Bank into Israel proper. The break with Begin was justified on grounds that world Jewry had a right to dissent from an Israeli policy which posed a danger to Israel's survival. Schindler favored accommodation with the Palestinians but not with the PLO. Initially, the internal opposition sought to calibrate its criticism of Begin, stopping short, for instance, of sponsoring anti-Begin newspaper advertisements in the United States.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ The U.S. pressured Israel to drop its demand that talks with Lebanon be held alternatively in Beirut and Jerusalem and reportedly tied progress in the Lebanon talks with Israel's acquiescence of the Reagan Plan. See JTA, December 20 and December 22, 1982.

²⁰⁵ JTA, December 20 & 22, 1982. From Shultz's viewpoint, the Lebanese could not and would not make peace with Israel absent a solution to the Palestinian problem. "This the Israelis simply would not understand." Shultz, *op. cit.*, p. 197

²⁰⁶ JTA, December 6, 1982

Competing with Schindler for the leadership mantle of Diaspora opposition to Begin was Edgar Bronfman, president of the World Jewish Congress. Bronfman's role can best be understood as a continuation of the outside counter-elite criticism previously associated with Nahum Goldmann. In a *Jerusalem Post* Op-Ed article, Bronfman advocated the right of Diaspora leaders to dissent from the West Bank policies of the Israeli government.²⁰⁷ In addition to Schindler's Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the American Jewish Congress emerged as a vanguard force within the Presidents Conference, in opposition to Israeli policies. The AJCongress provided a platform for financier Felix G. Rohatyn and union leader Victor Gottbaum, personalities not previously known for an interest in Jewish affairs, to critique Begin West Bank policies and laud the Reagan plan.²⁰⁸ Not only were inhibitions on American Jewish criticism of Begin lifted by year's end, public dissent from Israel's policies became almost commonplace.

III

Jewish Perceptual Framework

An outside elite (including a trans-national component) critical of Israeli policies had existed, in one form or another, for decades. Fortified by ostensible dissidents from within the establishment, it would later play a central role in the U.S.-PLO dialogue drama. The Jewish peace camp, which steadfastly supported a PLO role in the peace process, had also already emerged in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War (and the American defeat in Vietnam). It too would play a supporting, albeit peripheral, role in the

²⁰⁷ JTA, December 28, 1982

²⁰⁸ *The New York Times*, December 6, 1982

U.S.-PLO dialogue decision. But only in 1982 did elements of the official (mainstream) pro-Israel establishment begin to operate in internal opposition to the policies of the Israeli government; and, only thereafter was the Presidents Conference unable to muster a consensus of support behind Israel's policies with regard to Gaza, Judea and Samaria.

By 1983, the Jewish leadership categorized the conflict, almost uniformly, in non-zero sum terms. The Lebanon war reconfigured the conflict--once and for all--in terms of Israelis versus Palestinians. No publicly known diplomatic contacts between American Jews and Palestinian Arabs took place in 1983. Now, however, gingerly handled criticism of the Likud government was considered perfectly acceptable. In terms of cognitive consistency, the Jewish leaders could argue, as Schindler did, that Israel's survival obligated them to criticize Likud policies. Moreover, now they could point to public criticism in the U.S. of the Israeli government by the Labor Opposition. However, 1983 was dominated-- not by the Palestinian Arab conundrum-- but by Israeli efforts to withdraw from Lebanon. The Jewish leadership sought to smooth over relations between the Administration and Israel (frayed now over precise conditions for the Lebanon withdrawal) while supporting maintenance of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty.

The mainstream leadership associated with the Presidents Conference continued to oppose bringing Arafat or the PLO into the peace process. They also worked to head off U.S. sanctions against Israel for its handling of the Lebanon withdrawal. Criticism by key groups associated with the Presidents Conference of West Bank settlements was no longer muted. Still, Berman (the last Orthodox chairman of the Presidents Conference for the period and the last politically sympathetic to the Likud line) stood solidly with Likud against a revival of the Reagan plan.

The political environment influenced and was influenced by a new assertiveness on the part of Begin's Jewish critics. Bronfman, of the WJC, became a pacesetter for the outside (and transnational) elite. Now, however, the establishment joined in the criticism. The UJA warned that Begin's policies made it difficult to raise funds and the AJCommittee, flagship of the establishment, explicitly renounced Jewish rights to Gaza, Judea and Samaria and embraced the Labor endorsed Jordanian option. Elsewhere in the American political system, former Presidents Ford and Carter termed Israeli settlements in the Administered Territories primary obstacles to peace. Meanwhile, Reagan urged the Israelis not to condemn themselves to life in a garrison state. He spoke of the need for a Palestinian-Arab national home. By 1983, then, the unofficial American Jewish stance was largely identical to the Administration's viewpoint except that the Jewish leaders were far more cynical about PLO intentions.

Begin's determination to resist Arab sovereignty over the West Bank was framed by history and the Hebrew Bible which wedded *Am Yisroel* (the Jewish people) to *Eretz Israel* (the Land of Israel). Ideology, however, was buttressed by Begin's reading of Arab intentions. Unlike the American Jewish establishment (and the U.S. Administration), Begin tenaciously clung to a zero sum assessment of Palestinian-Arab intentions. The raw data about PLO intentions, which circulated freely between Israel and the Diaspora leadership, was not in dispute. What was in contention was its evaluation.

At the 12th Palestine National Congress, held in June of 1974, the PLO enunciated a political program authorizing the establishment of "the independent combatant national authority for the people over every part of Palestinian territory that is liberated." In effect, the PLO pronounced itself willing to accept a mini-state solution on the West Bank alone. "Once it is established, the Palestinian national authority will strive to achieve a union

of the confrontation countries, with the aim of completing the liberation of all Palestinian territory..."²⁰⁹ By 1983 the Mini-State Solution had become acceptable even to such "radicals" within the Palestinian movement as George Habash's PFLP.²¹⁰ In Begin's view, PLO moderation was a tactic in its strategy aimed at the phased destruction of Israel. Documents captured by the IDF from PLO headquarters in Beirut during the Lebanon war only reinforced the Government's worst fears about PLO intentions as well as the veracity of the PLO "peace offensive."²¹¹ Begin refused to "talk" to the PLO or countenance a PLO role in the peace process not, as is often suggested, because the PLO was a "terrorist" organization. Israel had shown itself ready to negotiate with the PLO qua terrorist organization. For example, Israel was

²⁰⁹ Article 2 and Article 8 of the June 1974 PNC political program cited in *Contemporary Mideast Backgrounder, Media Analysis Center-{CMB} Jerusalem, February 27, 1983*

²¹⁰ In May 1981, Habash explained: "We haven't rejected the Phased Policy which will activate the process of the liberation of the whole of Palestine. There is a difference, however, between the balance of power which will enable the liberation of the land occupied in 1967, and that which will be required for the liberation of the whole of Palestine. The strategy of the war of liberation considers the land liberated during the former phase as a spring-board for the continued battle until the enemy is actually destroyed." *Ibid.*

²¹¹ One document, "Foundation of the Palestinian Political Action" was written by Hani Al-Hassan of the Fatah Executive Committee. Hassan and his brother Khaled had been with Arafat since the early days in Kuwait. Both were prominent in the PLO's peace offensive, had held secret meetings with U.S. officials and Khaled was present in Stockholm in December 1988 negotiating with the Rita Hauser group, see Wallach & Wallach, *op. cit.* Hani-Al-Hassan addressed the phased plan from a historical perspective: "History instructs us that there are two kinds of devoted forces attempting to introduce a change- the revolutionary and the utopian. Both share the same goal. However, the revolutionary identifies the small stages leading towards the goal, while the utopian ignores them...The art of the revolutionary leadership is based on the knowledge of how to proceed from stage to stage towards victory...The aim of an intermediate goal is to enable the achievement of maximum success under existing constraints, and to clear the road towards final victory...A one-time victory is a mission impossible during a long-range battle...Lenin understood that a revolution must roll through mandatory intermediate stops, and that the final goal may not be attained at once...Adhering to the goal of liberating Palestine through armed rejection of Israel's existence-constitutes the axis of Fatah and its *raison d'être*. Renouncing that goals means the immediate extinction of the revolution. The vitality of the Fatah way lies in its ability to formulate the strategy of struggle while consistently advancing through compulsory intermediate stages...The level of the people's preparedness depends on adhering to the goal...and on the adoption of a steadfast strategy and a flexible tactic." *CMB, op. cit.*

in official contact with the PLO in an effort to gain information on its POW's.²¹² It was precisely in its political constitution that Begin rejected, as futile, negotiations with the PLO. When Arafat told a Kuwaiti magazine: "We are moving politically with our finger on the trigger of the rifle..." Begin took him at his word.²¹³

The Diaspora leadership inched away from the idea of permanent Jewish control over the Administered Territories, though it rejected a role for the PLO. Initially, their critique was framed in terms of the right to dissent. The outside elite argued that, as Edgar Bronfman declared, Israel was strong enough to accept criticism.²¹⁴ They criticized Israel's West Bank policies but were divided over alternative approaches. The Israeli left was not so divided. The Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace, led by Matti Peled and Uri Avneri, sent a delegation to Tunis for meetings with Arafat. Afterwards, Peled asserted that the PLO's goal was coexistence. The Prime Minister's office termed them "a fringe element."²¹⁵

The prevailing perceptual tide within the American political system was that the Israelis were primarily responsible for lack of progress in the peace process. A concerted effort seemed to be afoot to present Jewish claims to the West Bank as "major obstacles" to peace.²¹⁶ Concurrent with these political suasion efforts, the Jewish leadership was exposed to repeated, albeit vague, messages of moderation

²¹² JTA, January 4, 1983.

²¹³ *An Nahdhah*, cited in *Near East Report*, January 21, 1983.

²¹⁴ JTA, February 2, 1983

²¹⁵ *Near East Report*, January 28, 1983. The group first met with the PLO in 1976 and advocated a two-state solution. See too, *New York Times*, January 21, 1983

²¹⁶ Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford jointly authored a *Readers Digest* essay, "A Time For Courage in the Middle East," February 1983, espousing this viewpoint. *Near East Reports* comments: "At a moment when there are reports of an imminent Administration push for a Middle East settlement, it is clearly no accident that two former Presidents have consolidated their efforts behind the incumbent President's policy. It indicates that something is in the air, something that may cause even old antagonists like Ford and Carter to join forces." *NER*, January 28, 1983

and conciliation from the PLO leadership.²¹⁷ For the most part the Jewish leaders (internal opposition and outside elite) opted for a middle-course: opposition to PLO inclusion in the peace process; protest against the mere hint of U.S. sanctions against Israel over Lebanon; and coupling these positions with a rejection of Jewish settlement activities of the West Bank. All in all, this approach was based on an agenda set by the Administration.

The President told a visiting delegation of 150 Jewish leaders in February that he would not use the threat of sanctions against Israel to obtain concessions in the Israel-Lebanon talks.²¹⁸ But the Administration would not brook a campaign to circumvent the PLO inside the West Bank. In an effort to maintain control of the political agenda, they denigrated Israeli efforts to promote the Village Leagues as an indigenous, rural, traditional, and essentially non-nationalist alternative to the PLO.²¹⁹

Jewish leaders were well informed about gradations of PLO policy. Since the Reagan plan was premised on the notion that the struggle had shifted to a non zero sum track, the PLO's attitude toward the plan is worth examining briefly. The Palestine National Council (PNC) met in Algiers in February. Attention focused on how it would respond to the Administration's overture. The PNC's message was equivocal. The idea that a self-governing entity on the West Bank linked to Jordan would be negotiated without a public role for the PLO was difficult for the PNC to embrace.²²⁰ There were those who wanted to reject the Reagan Plan outright as inadequate. Arafat

²¹⁷ The PLO, for example, no longer demanded that Egypt abrogate the Camp David Accords. *FBIS*, January 18, 1983; Meanwhile, in the U.S., a network of 30 groups vigorously pursued a public information campaign critical of Israel and promoting a PLO role in the peace process, *JTA* February 3, 1983; Further undermining Israel's image and stature were tangles between the IDF and U.S. Marines in Lebanon. These clashes (though only verbal) greatly distressed the U.S. Jewish leadership.

²¹⁸ *JTA*, February 3, 1983. Sharon had complained that the U.S. was preventing an Israel-Lebanon agreement, *Washington Post*, January 24, 1983.

²¹⁹ *JTA*, February 10 & 11, 1983

²²⁰ *New York Times*, February 17, 1983

considered that impolitic. He told the PNC:

The struggle will continue until the aims of our Arab nation are achieved...to continue our militant road and armed revolution until we achieve our firm national rights which are not open to disposal, including our right to return, self-determination, and the establishment of our independent Palestinian state on our national Palestinian soil and until our fluttering banners are raised over holy Jerusalem, capital of our independent Palestine... Our choice to establish a confederation with our people in fraternal Jordan is a genuine expression of our conviction in comprehensive Arab unity...²²¹

But a final PNC communique was blunt. The movement rejected: "Imperialist and Zionist plots and liquidation plans, in particular the Camp David Accords and the Reagan Plan...since it denies the right of return and self-determination and the setting up of the independent Palestinian state..."²²² Mindful, perhaps, of the need to sustain the peace offensive, Saleh Khalef (Abu Iyad, the PLO's second in command) told American reporters that if the Reagan Administration recognized "the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and the creation of a state," the PLO would consent to taking a back seat to the actual negotiations.²²³ Isam Sartawi, coordinator of the PLO "peace offensive," threatened to resign from the PNC because his request to address the session was denied.²²⁴ But Sartawi also told Radio Monte Carlo that he opposed recognition of Israel, favoring instead contacts with the Israeli peace movement in order to develop a "third force."²²⁵

The PNC's rejection of the Reagan Plan did not alter the basic thrust of U.S. policy. The centrality of the Palestinian cause, the need to deliver the

²²¹ "Yasir Arafat: Speech to PNC, February 14, 1983" in Laqueur & Rubin, *The Israel Arab Reader* (revised edition).

²²² Contemporary Mideast Backgrounder, April 10, 1983. The "right to return" refers to those areas of Israel within the "green line" pre-1967 borders.

²²³ *New York Times*, February 23, 1983. PNC Chairman Khalid al-Fahum said the PLO did "not want to destroy any state in the region" but merely wanted a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza. *Middle East Economic Digest*, February 18, 1983

²²⁴ *The New York Times*, February 21, 1982.

²²⁵ *Near East Report*, February 11, 1983

West Bank and Gaza, and the prospect of a PLO role were the pillars of that policy. The President remarked that the Palestinians required “something in the nature of a national home” and, at any rate, Israel could not forever live as a garrison state.²²⁶ That the Reagan Administration had largely adopted Carter’s judgment on the centrality of the Palestinian issue in promoting an Arab-Israel peace process was long evident.²²⁷ Reagan consulted with Carter prior to making public his September 1982 peace initiative.²²⁸ Touring the Middle East, Carter called the Israeli presence in Judea and Samaria “illegal” and “an obstacle to peace.”²²⁹ More importantly, the former president also met with PLO officials. The State Department response to Carter’s meeting can best be understood in the context of insinuation which is part and parcel of political suasion. Foggy Bottom refused to be drawn into criticism of the Carter-PLO meeting.²³⁰ The Jewish leadership’s response to the cacophony of criticism of Israel’s West Bank policy was equally muted, in large measure because they had come to embrace the Administration’s overall approach (though differing on nuance and tactics).

In contrast to the leadership’s subdued reaction on West Bank and PLO issues, the Presidents Conference reacted energetically as bilateral relations between Israel and the United States deteriorated over Lebanon. The Administration withheld delivery of 75 F-16 military aircraft as leverage

²²⁶ JTA, February 25, 1983. Reagan said, improving Israel’s security required “something in the way of a homeland” but something short of “creating a nation.” *New York Times*, February 24, 1983

²²⁷ This was a premise rejected by the Israeli Government. Benjamin Netanyahu, deputy chief of Mission at the Israeli Embassy in Washington wrote: “We are frequently told that the ‘Palestinian problem’ lies at the heart of the present unrest in the Mideast. Solve this problem and you have peace in the area. And the U.S., which is often the target of Arab hostility and criticism, will enjoy a stable and enduring alliance with the Arab world. However plausible this idea may appear, it does not correspond to Middle East realities.” “How Central Is the Palestinian Problem,” *The Wall Street Journal*, April 5, 1983

²²⁸ JTA, March 14, 1983

²²⁹ JTA, March 3, 1983

²³⁰ JTA, March 8, 1983

against Israel's Lebanon policy.²³¹ One well-placed Jewish community professional charged that Weinberger was conducting a "vendetta against Israel."²³²

Internal Opposition Manipulates

Even as the Jewish leadership defended Israel on how to extricate itself from Lebanon, these apparently endless confrontations resulted in even further hemorrhaging of support for the Begin Government. It had become de rigueur to couch criticism in terms of the "right" of American Jews to rebuke Israeli policies. Stuart Eizenstat, a domestic policy advisor in the Carter Administration, made that case again in the Labor Party newspaper, *Davar*.²³³ But by April 1983, something far more extraordinary was in motion. In a seminal announcement, the American Jewish Committee--flagship of Jewish establishment organizations-- issued a major policy statement opposing Jewish settlement in the West Bank. The AJCommittee openly embraced the Labor Opposition, saying it favored the "Jordanian option." Ironically, Jordan announced that it would not negotiate on behalf of the Palestinian-Arabs.²³⁴ Nevertheless, the import of the AJCommittee statement cannot be overemphasized.

The AJCommittee did not join the President's Conference until March 1991. But for over 23 years it held official observer status and arguably wielded more influence than many of the 46 organizations who are formal members.²³⁵ Never in the history of Israeli - American Jewish relations had

²³¹ JTA, March 21, 1983. US policy required that weapons it sold to allies be used for "self-defense." Meanwhile, Berman and other Jewish leaders rallied to defend Israel's handling of the Lebanon withdrawal.

²³² JTA, March 21, 1983. The official was AIPAC Director of Research and Information Steve Rosen. AIPAC disowned Rosen's remarks.

²³³ JTA, April 6, 1983

²³⁴ JTA, April 11, 1983 and *The New York Times*, April 8, 1983

²³⁵ JTA Community News Reporter, March 22, 1991

elements of the Jewish leadership so openly sided with the official Opposition Party against the elected Government of Israel. Plainly, the AJCommittee was intent on influencing the political climate within the Jewish community. This was by no means an isolated instance of political suasion. To protest Begin's line, a number of philanthropists threatened to stop supporting the United Jewish Appeal. Some UJA leaders wanted to exclude Begin from their fund raisers. The UJA relies heavily on a relatively few major contributors, so the boycott threat was taken seriously. "We are behaving as if Israel's existence was threatened as in 1967--which it isn't," a Begin critic complained.²³⁶ In this instance, the establishment came under the influence of the peace camp which charged that UJA money was going, albeit indirectly, to build settlements in the Territories. Brettschneider writes:

In 1979-1980 the New Israel Fund was formed as an alternative venue for philanthropic pro-Israel sentiment. American Jews were becoming more and more aware that their many United Jewish Appeal (UJA) donation dollars were also going to help build Jewish settlements in the Territories occupied by Israel. As settlement building in the Occupied Territories has long been viewed by the dovish Zionist and pro-Israel camps as illegal, immoral, a waste of Israel's resources, and a threat to the long term democratic character of the Jewish state, such activity has long been denounced as an act of Jewish suicide. These donors wanted their money going elsewhere in Israel to help build the country more in line with the politics of their Zionism...on behalf of battered women, Arab-Jewish co-existence projects, prisoner empowerment, abused children and Eastern Jews..²³⁷

²³⁶ Wall Street Journal, April 1, 1983. Some of the boycotters turned to the New Israel Fund which supports community centers in Arab villages, funds the Israeli Civil Rights Association and a rape crisis center in Tel Aviv.

²³⁷ Brettschneider, op. cit. p. 71-72 (Dissertation draft, March 1993). The fund shared an interlocking directorate with Peace Now. See, Joseph Puder, *The New Israel Fund: A New Fund for Israel's Enemies*, pamphlet published by Americans For A Safe Israel (no date). Other groups with similar foci include the Abraham Fund (formed in 1989) and the Shefa Fund (founded 1988). Ironically, the UJA and the Jewish National Fund (JNF) have also been criticized from the American Jewish right for not supporting Jewish settlement of the land of Israel. Michael Teplow, Hadassah Marcus and others loosely associated with Techiya USA (now Tsomet-Techiya) have challenged the refusal of the JNF to channel money for settlement building.

The steady loss of support from the philanthropic infrastructure (of the UJA and the various federations) had wide ranging repercussions for the Government of Israel. For one, many of the weekly newspapers serving the Jewish community are subsidized by their local federations. Invariably, these papers became more editorially audacious in their criticism of Begin.²³⁸ There were fewer and fewer voices available to defend Likud policies and virtually none to advocate them.²³⁹ Criticism of Israel's retention of the West Bank among American Jews was commonplace and, paradoxically, news worthy. A group of Jewish law students from Harvard, Yale and New York University had no trouble obtaining coverage in *The New York Times* for a protest letter they had sent Begin.²⁴⁰

It was Henry Kissinger who in 1975 had formally pledged the United States not to negotiate with the PLO unless it adhered to certain conditions. But as a private citizen in April 1983, Kissinger met with PLO official Ahmed Dajani in Morocco. The former Secretary of State acknowledged that he had discussed the trip with Shultz. He emphasized, however, that in private talks with the PLO he merely re-stated the public position of the U.S. The State Department maintained that Kissinger was not serving as a "back channel" to

²³⁸ In New York, for instance, the subsidized *Jewish Week* adhered closely to the establishment line. The primary Jewish wire service, JTA, is governed by a board comprised largely of influential UJA figures. The Jerusalem Post Press Service (another source of English language Jewish news) was (for the period under study) controlled by pro-Labor forces. Even the Jewish Student Press Service, which provides material for college papers, was in labor-left managerial hands.

²³⁹ To my knowledge, there have been no systematic surveys of the editorial policies of the 500 or so Jewish weekly newspapers in the country. The only major papers that steadfastly advocated the Likud line were those aimed at the Orthodox community including the Brooklyn based *Jewish Press* and the Yiddish language *Algemeiner Journal*. See, *American Jewish Media Directory, 1989* (Rego Park, N.Y., R.K. Associates, 1989).

²⁴⁰ New York Times, May 8, 1983.

the PLO.²⁴¹ Meanwhile, the United States assured Jordan it was attempting to pressure Israel into freezing Jewish settlement activity in Judea and Samaria.²⁴²

In April, Dr. Issam Sartowi, Arafat's liaison to the Jewish peace camp, was assassinated in Portugal. Reports conflicted as to who was actually responsible.²⁴³ Arafat appointed an Israeli-born Jew who was also a French citizen, Ilan Halevi, to temporarily replace Sartowi as the PLO representative to the Socialist International.²⁴⁴

Kissinger's session with the PLO did not induce the group to accept US conditions for its inclusion in the peace process. Shultz now professed to increasing impatience with the sluggish pace of the PLO's drift toward moderation. An October 1974 declaration by Arab leaders meeting in Rabat Morocco had designated the PLO to replace Jordan as "the sole and legitimate representative" of the Palestinians. Shultz opined that the Rabat Mandate gave the PLO too much power and should be revoked.²⁴⁵ The U.S. was obliquely suggesting that the Jordanian option could still be salvaged. Later, on a Middle East visit, Shultz suggested that the PLO was fast becoming irrelevant. Reagan took up the same line, saying that "the negotiations don't

²⁴¹ JTA, April 8, 1983. See also, *Washington Post*, April 7, 1983. During Shultz's early tenure at State he and Kissinger maintained a cordial relationship. See Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger, A Biography*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1992, p.720 In late May, Kissinger addressed an Israel Bonds Dinner in Montreal honoring Charles Bronfman (brother of WJC head Edgar Bronfman). Here he said that Israel should never agree to return to the pre-1967 borders nor should it annex the West Bank. See, JTA, May 26, 1983.

²⁴² JTA, April 11, 1983

²⁴³ JTA, April 11, 1983 and *Washington Post*, April 11, 1983. Israeli observers suspected that the Abu Nidal group carried out this and other assassinations of PLO moderates at the behest of Syria, see *Jerusalem Post*, April 15, 1983. *New York Times* columnist Flora Lewis, a Satawi admirer, reported on a more bizarre charge: "Mr. Arafat's renegade ex-spokesman who went over to the P.L.O. rebels, later said that Mr. Arafat gave the green light for the murder. More important, Dr. Sartawi's friend, the former Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky, suspected the same." *New York Times*, February, 23, 1984

²⁴⁴ *New York Times*, April 13, 1974. A Trotskyite, he described himself as "militantly anti-Zionist."

²⁴⁵ JTA, April 14, 1983

have to hinge on the PLO...There has to be a solution to the problem of the Palestinians. No one ever elected the PLO among the Palestinians.”²⁴⁶ It remains unclear whether this was an effort to cajole the PLO into accepting U.S. conditions for a dialogue or reflected genuine frustration with Arafat’s intransigence. Others in the domestic political arena, however, were unwilling to write off the PLO. Presidential candidate John Glenn, for example, declared that: “No permanent solution to the conflict will be possible without the participation of the PLO.”²⁴⁷

The PLO’s political standing among United States policy makers was, temporarily, at a nadir. For its part, the Presidents Conference, whose decisions are rooted in consensus, mostly avoided the Palestinian issue. Instead, Berman called on Reagan to reinstate the US-Israel Memorandum of Understanding.²⁴⁸ After Arab terrorists bombed the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, the Jewish leadership asked Reagan to re-think America’s estrangement from Israel.²⁴⁹

With the Presidents Conference largely neutralized by the internal opposition, the critics were ascendant. At Brandeis University, for example, several professors mobilized the campus against Israel’s West Bank policies.²⁵⁰ On any number of campuses with a Jewish student population, groups like the Progressive Zionist Caucus, Progressive Jewish Students Union, New Jewish Agenda, Socialist Zionist Union, Habonim-Dror, and Hashomer-

²⁴⁶ JTA, April 25, 1983

²⁴⁷ JTA, April 25, 1983,

See too, JTA, August 1, 1983 , Months later, Glenn denied advocating direct US-PLO talks. Indeed, by September 1983, Glenn was publicly opposing negotiations with the PLO and supported a united Jerusalem; see JTA, September 14, 1983

²⁴⁸ JTA, April 14, 1983

²⁴⁹ JTA, April 22, 1983

²⁵⁰ JTA, April 25, 1983. A driving force in campus protest activities was *Moment* magazine editor Leonard Fein. Brandeis was founded in 1946 and has been characterized as a nonsectarian Jewish-sponsored university. See, Howard M. Sachar, *A History of the Jews in America*, pp. 692 and 710-711

Hatzair, spearheaded peace camp activities. Brettschneider calls them “counter-hegemonic,” and explains that their goal was to redefine pro-Israel politics.²⁵¹ Meron Benvenisti, of the West Bank Data Project, contributed another warning that ongoing Jewish settlement of the West Bank was creating problems diplomacy would not be able to solve.²⁵²

The White House, looking for support in the 1984 elections, actively began mending fences with the Jewish community. Chief of Staff James Baker asked a number of Jewish Republicans to reconstitute the National Jewish Coalition, a Republican outreach effort to the Jewish community. Shultz returned from the Middle East with preliminary agreement on a withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon. The Administration’s most strident Israel critic, Defense Secretary Weinberger, told an American Jewish Committee audience that he too was a strong supporter of Israel. Criticism of Israel’s West Bank security policies need not be equated with anti-Israel sentiment, Weinberger strongly implied. This was a position the AJCommittee, which only months earlier had expounded an anti-settlement stance of its own, would hardly challenge.²⁵³ Weinberger also praised Israel as a bulwark against Soviet expansionism.

Outside (transnational) elite actors, such as WJC President Edgar Bronfman, asserted that Israeli illusions about the Territories could be shed if the Diaspora pursued Jewish values.²⁵⁴ Ironically, with U.S.-Israel relations on a somewhat better footing, Jewish critics could take a more forbearing view of Begin. Schindler, for instance, went so far as to attribute the improvement in

²⁵¹ Brettschneider, Dissertation draft (March 1993) p. 234 and appendix. My own view is that the “establishment” had by now already been turned away from what the Jewish left considered “blind support” for Israel.

²⁵² JTA, May 4, 1983

²⁵³ JTA, May 16, 1983; see too “Shultz Mission Seen Aiding Reagan Among Jews,” *New York Times*, May 13, 1983

²⁵⁴ JTA, May 31, 1983. By which I understand Bronfman to mean liberalism.

relations between the two countries to Begin.²⁵⁵ At the Presidents Conference, Berman concurred that relations had improved and asserted that the Reagan Plan was moribund. He also suggested that the future of the peace process rested with Jordan.²⁵⁶

Opposition on the part of the mainstream Jewish community (internal opposition and outside elite included) to Jewish sovereignty on the West Bank did not translate into support for PLO control of the area. At any rate, the PLO's standing was undermined by a serious mutiny which broke out within Fatah ranks²⁵⁷ However, the peace camp remained steadfast in its support for a two- state solution. Outside the campus, perhaps the best organized peace camp group was the New Jewish Agenda (NJA). In mid-1983 the NJA applied for official membership in the Jewish Community Council of Greater Washington.²⁵⁸ Another growing movement, Peace Now, began to establish chapters in Canada and the United States intent on using American Jews to manipulate political events inside Israel.²⁵⁹

With PLO fortunes in decline, the State Department no longer seemed concerned about sanitizing the movement's image. Foggy Bottom now back-

²⁵⁵ JTA, June 14, 1983

²⁵⁶ *The Economist*, August 13, 1983 and JTA, June 23, 1983. State Department maps suggested that hope rested anywhere but Jordan. The West Bank and Gaza were now shown on State Department maps as separate from both Jordan and Israel. The U.S. had never recognized Jordanian control over the area which it held from 1948 to 1967. Similarly, the United States decided as early as 1953 that it would not recognize Jerusalem (then a divided City with east Jerusalem in Jordanian hands and West Jerusalem under Israeli control) as the capitol of Israel. The U.S. Embassy remained in Tel Aviv. Egyptian Foreign Minister Kamal Hassan Ali also surveyed the prospects for peace in June 1983. He found that a new momentum had developed largely due to the upheaval within the PLO. With the PLO fragmented, Ali ruminated about whether the Arabs in the West Bank could develop their own indigenous leadership. See JTA, June 29, 1983

²⁵⁷ *Near East Report*, June 3, 1983

²⁵⁸ JTA, June 27, 1983. For a critical analysis of the New Jewish Agenda see *The New (Anti) Jewish Agenda* by Rael Jean Isaac, pamphlet published by Americans for a Safe Israel (1987). Isaac had been a leading critic of the precursor organization to the New Jewish Agenda, Breira. Breira eventually disbanded under heavy criticism and internal dissension.

²⁵⁹ JTA, July 8, 1983

tracked on its earlier depiction of the PLO as being uninvolved in anti-US activities in Latin America.²⁶⁰ Thus, a recalcitrant PLO was being mildly, but publicly, ostracized. Nevertheless, the Palestinian-Arabs remained at the core of U.S. peace-making efforts.²⁶¹ As for the Jewish residents of the West Bank and Gaza, Shultz articulated a fairly nuanced position: the U.S. opposed Israeli settlements in the area, but Jews who already lived there should have the "right" to remain.²⁶² Lest anyone misconstrue Shultz's remarks as a softening of U.S. policy regarding the lands captured in the Six Day War, a State Department spokesman termed east Jerusalem "occupied territory."²⁶³

Begin Resigns

At the end of August 1983, Begin astounded Israelis by announcing his immediate retirement. He did not explain the decision, though observers said he was emotionally distraught over the death, several months earlier, of his wife Aliza and the rising casualty figures for IDF soldiers in Lebanon. Whatever the reasons, Begin retreated to his home and became highly reclusive for the remainder of his life. He died in 1992.²⁶⁴ After the resignation *Near East Report* editorialized:

Last January, then President Yitzhak Navon visited Washington and spoke of

²⁶⁰ JTA, August 2, 1983. At around this time a number of important personnel changes within the State Department's Middle East policy making staff took place. Richard Murphy replaced Nicholas Veliotis as Assistant Secretary. Veliotis became Ambassador to Egypt. Habib and Morris Draper retired.

²⁶¹ Arafat's fortunes appeared downcast. In late June, Arafat was expelled from Syria where he had been visiting after accusing Assad of fomenting a revolt within the PLO. This left Arafat forces essentially cut off from access to Israel. *New York Times*, June 25, 1983

²⁶² JTA, August 8, 1983

²⁶³ JTA, August 19, 1983

²⁶⁴ JTA, August 29, 1983. Yitchak Shamir, Begin's Foreign Minister, became the new Prime Minister. PLO Radio broadcasting from Baghdad said: "The Zionist terrorist Menachem Begin, the enemy prime minister, informed the Zionist enemy government today that he plans to resign his post as prime minister. The Zionist enemy radio said that Begin told members of his government about his decision at the start of the Zionist government's weekly session today, and that he has not yet told the president of the Zionist entity." Quoted in *Near East Report*, September 2, 1993.

those areas on which there is consensus within the Israeli body politic. These included refusal to return to the unstable and indefensible borders of the pre-1967 period; opposition to the existence of a third state between Jordan and Israel; opposition to negotiations with any group dedicated to Israel's destruction; and a commitment to a united Jerusalem under Israeli authority. On these fundamentals, Israel's people stand as one. No future government--neither Likud nor Labor--will abandon any of them. Those who are banking on that kind of change in Israel will be sorely disappointed.²⁶⁵

For the internal opposition, poll taking served a political suasion purpose by helping to manipulate dimensions. James Q. Wilson observes that, "How we word the question can dramatically affect the answer we get...just altering the *order* in which people are presented with options affects which option they choose and thus what is 'public opinion'..."²⁶⁶ Invariably, AJCommittee polling (usually done by Likud critic Professor Steven Cohen of CUNY/Queens), discovered a lack of support among American Jews for Israeli policies. If the PLO recognized Israel and renounced terror, one AJCommitte poll found, most would then "favor" an Israel-PLO dialogue.²⁶⁷ Cohen conducted his survey by using "distinctive Jewish names" gleaned

²⁶⁵ NER, September 2, 1993 (Editorial)

²⁶⁶ James Q. Wilson, *American Government*, Fifth Edition, (Lexington, Mass.,: D.C. Heath and Company, 1992), p. 97. He also says, "The questions must be asked fairly--in clear language, without the use of 'loaded' or 'emotional' words. They must give no indication of what the 'right' answer is..." p. 105. Critics of AJCommittee polling argue that their polls are biased. See for example, "What Do U.S. Jews Really Believe?" *Outpost* (Americans For A Safe Israel), November 1993. For a further discussion of Jewish public opinion polling see the appendix.

²⁶⁷ *New York Jewish Week*, September 23, 1983 and *Jerusalem Post*, September 16, 1983. A plurality simultaneously favored Israel offering territorial compromise in the West Bank as well as maintaining permanent control. Most leaders polled, however, favored territorial compromise. Cohen's poll also discovered that 51% of Jews agreed that "Israeli leaders have sometimes been unnecessarily tactless in their dealings with American officials. Fifty per cent believed that Begin had hurt Israel's image in the United States. Significantly, 60% of the leaders polled classified themselves as "doves" in contrast to 45% for non-leaders.

from the telephone book.²⁶⁸

Lebanon dominated the agenda of the Presidents Conference throughout the fall of 1983. But the Jewish leaders were also concerned about the "cold peace" existent between Egypt and Israel. Berman and a delegation from the Presidents Conference met with Mubarak to discuss Egypt's stance toward Israel and came away reassured.²⁶⁹

Rejecting Support

Given the difficulties facing the pro-Israel community, it is remarkable that the Presidents Conference spurned offers of support from potential allies inside the American political system. Evangelical and fundamentalist Christians, including Jerry Fallwell's *Moral Majority*, were a natural source of political support for Likud policies. Socially as well as politically conservative, they interpreted the rebirth of modern Israel in messianic terms; favored Jewish sovereignty over Judea and Samaria; perceived the Arab-Israel conflict in zero-sum terms and strongly opposed the PLO-cause. Moreover, they represented an important Reagan constituency. But the Presidents Conference membership was politically and, for the most part, socially, liberal. The traditional liberal base of pro-Israel support had atrophied, but the Presidents Conference, suspicious of the objectives of the Christian right, found it impossible to broaden their political coalition. In remarks delivered in London, Berman explicitly warned Israel to be leery of the

²⁶⁸ *Near East Report*, October 28, 1983. Cohen should not be confused with another academic critic of Likud, Stephen Cohen of the Montreal-based Center for Middle East Peace. This latter Cohen is frequently called upon as an "outside expert" by Thomas L. Friedman of the *New York Times*.

²⁶⁹ JTA, September 14, and October 4, 1983

ambitions and motives of the Christian right.²⁷⁰ Fallwell supported Reagan politically but opposed the President's policies on the Arab-Israel conflict.²⁷¹

Rhythm of Violence

When the Arab uprising or *Intifada* began in December 1987 it was promptly forgotten that the West Bank and Gaza had been experiencing steady, albeit episodic, violent unrest ever since 1967. After one such episode occurred during the winter of 1983, the State Department asserted that the troubles accentuated the need to move forward with the Reagan Peace Initiative of 1982.²⁷² It also maintained its criticism of construction of Jewish towns and villages in the West Bank.²⁷³

A number of events set the stage for an American pull-out from Lebanon. They are mentioned here because the onus of U.S. entanglement in Lebanon was, in the mind's eye of the public, traceable to Israel. And this further complicated the position of the Jewish leadership. In April, sixty three people were killed, including seventeen Americans, when Arab terrorists bombed the U.S. embassy in Beirut. In October, a devastating suicide car bombing killed 135 Marines in Beirut. Then, in December, one pilot was killed and one captured when an A-6E Intruder flying from a U.S. carrier was shot down by Syrian forces in Lebanon.²⁷⁴

²⁷⁰ JTA, October 19, 1983. Smaller groups such as Americans For A Safe Israel (AFSI) sought to foster the fundamentalist card. AFSI has co-sponsored many joint activities with Richard Hellman of CIPAC and other pro-Israel Christian activists. Indeed, AFSI has accepted program funding from some Christian groups. Christian supporters of Israel also work through the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem led by Jan Willem van der Hoeven. See too, *Near East Report*, December 16, 1983

²⁷¹ JTA, November 21, 1983

²⁷² JTA, November 15, 1983. The scale of the violence was always much less than the Intifada.

²⁷³ JTA, November 16, 1983

²⁷⁴ JTA, October 24 and December 5, 1983. The Israelis blamed Syria for being behind the bombing.

A quagmire of violence seemed to pervade the region. But Israeli efforts to contain Arab rage on the West Bank continued to draw considerable negative U.S. media coverage.

As noted earlier, Israel's preoccupation about not dealing with the PLO did not extend to prisoner exchanges. One large exchange at year's end returned hundreds of PLO activists to the West Bank in a swap for several IDF soldiers. (Five years later, many of the returnees played an instrumental role in sustaining the *Intifada*). Despite the heavy cost of the Lebanon war, the resiliency of Arab terror was underlined by the bombing of a Jerusalem city bus early in December.²⁷⁵

The phoenix-like survivability of Yasir Arafat kept the Palestinian cause in the forefront. He had been ousted by the IDF from the PLO's Beirut stronghold. "Civil war" and violent disintegration within Fatah and among other PLO factions threatened the survival of his movement. The PLO "state within a state" in Lebanon had collapsed. Syria further humiliated Arafat by expelling him along with 4,000 loyalists from Tripoli, Lebanon.²⁷⁶ With Arafat and the PLO out of the way the pacification of the West Bank (perhaps under the Village Leagues) could have proceeded apace.²⁷⁷

Just as Arafat's fortunes seemed to be at a nadir, Egyptian President

²⁷⁵ JTA, December 7, 1983

²⁷⁶ JTA, December 23, 1983. According to Shultz: "The U.S reluctantly prevailed on Israel to allow passage of Arafat and his supporters on Greek ships under French escort. This was the second time the United States had saved Arafat's skin. Three strikes and you're out, I felt. Where Arafat would come to rest this time and what his political fortunes would be, we could not imagine." Shultz, op. cit., p. 436

²⁷⁷ Jordan and Kuwait had begun to funnel money to the Village Leagues. *Near East Report*, September 23, 1983. Not all of the leagues were sanguine about living under Jewish rule. Later, critics would charge that by choking off "secular" PLO leadership in the Territories and bolstering the traditionalists, the Israelis paved the way for *Hammam* and Islamic *Jihad* religious extremists. This ignores the fact that, contrary to its propaganda, the PLO is not a secular movement and is deeply rooted in religious traditionalism. See for example, an advertisement by the PLO published in *Al Kuds*, November 2, 1993 which begins: "In the name of Allah the Merciful..."

Mubarak came to his literal and figurative rescue. Mubarak received Arafat in Cairo just two days after his flight from Lebanon.²⁷⁸ It was the first meeting between Arafat and an Egyptian leader since Sadat's 1977 trip to Jerusalem. The pro-Israel community reacted to Arafat's Cairo reception with chagrin. Berman telegraphed the White House arguing that "betting on Arafat is a grim mistake."²⁷⁹ But State Department spokesman John Hughes saw the meeting as anything but a grim mistake: "We are hopeful that such talks will serve to persuade Mr. Arafat that peace negotiations within the framework of the President's Initiative are the best means of achieving Palestinians goals." Hughes added that: "We are not meeting with Mr. Arafat or the PLO." U.S. policy, said the State Department spokesman, was "absolutely unchanged."²⁸⁰ The President saw the Mubarak-Arafat meeting in similar terms: "I think that what President Mubarak is doing is talking to him (Arafat) about returning to where he was earlier, making contact with King Hussein and getting those peace negotiations, our peace proposal under way again...(Mubarak) is simply trying to persuade others to change their thinking." But *Near East Report*, an AIPAC aligned newsletter, editorialized: "The Mubarak move (and the Administration's response to it) defy common sense. Yasir Arafat is finished...The Arafat option is a fraud...It prevents Palestinians committed to coexistence with Israel from coming forward while it suggests that the path of terror will eventually pay off."²⁸¹ Shamir, now the Israeli Prime Minister, agreed: "The American government is mistaken if it thinks the Arafat-Mubarak meeting increases the chances of advancing the Reagan

²⁷⁸ JTA, December 21, 1983 . Mubarak's meeting with Arafat re-established the Egyptian's bona fides in the Arab camp as a champion of the Palestinian cause.

²⁷⁹ JTA, December 27, 1983. Israeli leaders termed it a "severe blow" to Middle East peace, *Washington Post*, December 23, 1983

²⁸⁰ JTA, December 23, 1983. The Administration viewed the PLO's forced departure from Lebanon as having hurt US Middle East intelligence operations. "The CIA had secretly established a large and highly productive network of sources among PLO leaders...(providing) a stream of information about political and military developments in the Middle East..." *New York Times*, December 6, 1983.

²⁸¹ *Near East Report*, December 30, 1983

initiative.”²⁸² Arafat, for his part, suggested that he would work for the establishment of a Palestinian government in exile.²⁸³

IV

Perceptual Framework

Although the mainstream American Jewish leadership believed that Arafat was still engaged in a total contest with Israel, they no longer viewed the overall conflict in zero sum terms. And events of the previous year demonstrated that the Palestinian problem could not be circumvented. For some, the prospect of a Labor victory in the upcoming Israeli elections offered hope that a compromise with non-PLO Palestinian-Arabs could be achieved.

But United States policy was to reform and sanitize the PLO. Once the Palestinian issue was perceptually acknowledged as being at the core of the conflict and once the Administration demonstrated its tenacity to make Arafat and the PLO at the core of the solution, the leadership could only react by holding the parameter. They would oppose bringing the PLO into the process until it met the conditions outlined in 1975 by the United States. That was as far as they could possibly go given the political environment. There was a certain inconsistency in not challenging the Administration's underlying premises. Thus through a process of cognitive dissonance, the leadership had to question its own assessment of Arafat and the PLO.

The political environment for the coming year was shaped by Egypt's efforts to bring the PLO into the peace process. Presumably, despite its "cold

²⁸² *New York Times*, December 27, 1983. Shamir formed a Likud-led Government in October.

²⁸³ *Washington Post*, December 25, 1983. Actually, one reason why Arafat was reluctant to establish a government-in-exile was that it would require him to define its frontiers and "reveal the PLO's grander claim to the West Bank, Gaza, all of Israel" and possibly Jordan. See, *Near East Report*, January 27, 1984

peace" with Israel, Jewish leaders looked at Egypt's championing of the PLO as a sign that the PLO's mission was undergoing change. This was a message now common in the political system. The Council on Foreign Relations described the PLO as a multi-facted IR actor. Moreover, Israel's political defeat in Lebanon underscored that there could be no military solution to the Palestinian-Arab aspect of the conflict. But the coming year's most influential environmental factor, as far as the American Jewish leadership was concerned, was electoral. Jewish leaders waited to see how the American and Israel elections would play themselves out. Inconclusive Israeli elections led to a government of national "disunity" comprised of both Labor and Likud. In the U.S., President Reagan was reelected to a second term. The cast of influential actors now came to include Shimon Peres, the new Israeli Prime Minister, and Kenneth Bialkin, the new Chairman of the Presidents Conference.

The political environment also continued to be greatly influenced by how the prestige press covered the Arab-Israel conflict. The *New York Times*, for instance, had run a series of four articles which argued that Israeli society was riddled with anti-Arab racism and prejudice traceable, the implication was, to the Likud's hardline stance.²⁸⁴ The importance and influence of the *Times* on the Jewish leadership cannot be overstated. The paper's coverage was a pivotal factor in shaping and reinforcing a shift in Jewish attitudes

²⁸⁴ *Near East Report*, January 6, 1984

toward the conflict.²⁸⁵

Following up on its diplomatic rescue of the PLO, Egypt launched a vigorous campaign to bring the movement into the U.S.-led peace process. Meanwhile, Israel's efforts to extricate itself from Lebanon were greatly complicated by that country's transformation into a suzerainty of Syria. The Presidents Conference found its agenda dominated by these two realities.

The establishment's attitude toward the PLO can be gauged by its reaction to calls by PLO supporters, such as the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), for a U.S.-PLO dialogue and for an unconditional Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon.²⁸⁶ The American Jewish Committee, which agreed that the Palestinian issue was crucial, nevertheless castigated the AFSC for espousing a PLO role.²⁸⁷ Political advocacy on behalf of the PLO cut across the American political and foreign policy spectrum. Supporters of the PLO were welcomed at various prestigious foreign policy forums. In February 1984, for

²⁸⁵ In recent years, *Times* correspondents based in Israel have achieved a religious like influence within the pro-Israel community. Their articles are dissected for nuggets of insight. Shipler covered Israel from 1979 to 1984. Some of his reporting made the case for moral relativism between Jewish and Arab claims for the country. He later published a Pulitzer Prize winning book in which he also criticized the UJA for its refusal to fund programs aimed at combating, what he viewed as, the right-wing shift in Israeli public opinion, See *Arab and Jew Wounded Spirits in a Promised Land*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 522.. Perhaps the most influential reporter the *Times* sent to the Middle East was Thomas L. Friedman who covered Lebanon (1980-84) and Israel (1984-1988). Friedman's brilliant reporting was permeated by his dovish orientation. Friedman was also the first Jew to cover Israel for the *Times*. He portrayed himself as a young man whose idealistic Zionism was shattered only by the harsh realities he discovered as a reporter. Actually, as early as 1974, while a student at Brandeis University, Friedman had already aligned himself with the Breira-affiliated Middle East Peace Group. See Puder, op. cit. p. 28.

²⁸⁶ JTA, January 6, 1984.

²⁸⁷ The AJCommittee wrote: "One would have expected the representatives of the Quakers, a movement noted for its devotion to peace and the pacific settlement of disputes, would have encouraged the step forward toward a more comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace represented by the Lebanese-Israeli agreement." *New York Jewish Week*, January 20, 1984

instance, Dr. Christopher Giannou, a Canadian-born activist associated with the Palestine Red Crescent Society, was featured at a round table discussion sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations. Giannou had earlier publicly declared that for him, "the Palestinian cause was sacred" and its enemy was Israel.²⁸⁸

Prospects for a Lebanese regime that was not hostile to the Jewish State crumbled under Syrian pressure in March of 1984 when Lebanon abrogated the May 17, 1983 Israel-Lebanon Agreement. Shultz acknowledged that Syrian-sponsored violence had been largely responsible for its collapse.²⁸⁹ Concurrently, he reiterated the U.S. position on talking to the PLO:

Conditions for any dialogue between the PLO and the United States have been very clearly stated many times. The PLO should recognize Resolution 242 and should state its recognition of the right of the State of Israel to exist and under those circumstances the US will conduct discussions with the PLO.²⁹⁰

The establishment's continuing antipathy toward bringing the PLO into the peace process, despite pressures permeating the political environment, can be traced to the consensus on the issue within the Israeli polity. The Presidents Conference convenes annually in Jerusalem for meetings and consultations with Israeli leaders. In his address to their session Labor leader Shimon Peres criticized Mubarak for "putting his weight in

²⁸⁸ JTA, February 8, 1984. Naturally, inviting a speaker does not necessarily connote endorsement of his views.

²⁸⁹ JTA, February 16, 1984

²⁹⁰ JTA, February 16, 1984

favor of the PLO--a helpless organization and an obstacle in the way of peace." ²⁹¹ He ridiculed the idea that Arafat had become a moderate as "nonsense." Before Berman and Hellman embarked for a visit with Mubarak in Cairo, the Presidents Conference formerly denounced the Egyptian initiative.²⁹²

Still, the internal opposition criticized Berman for overstating the level of consensus within the establishment regarding the PLO. In a political suasion tactic of splitting the majority, Steven M. Cohen charged Berman with misrepresenting and distorting the views of the constituent agencies of the Presidents Conference. Under Berman, he charged, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations has:

Fashioned a position on Israeli security matters which articulates the more hawkish features of American Jewish consensual thinking on the conflict. The conference gives little or no voice to American Jews' willingness to support many Israelis' efforts to articulate policies based on flexibility and compromise. As such, the conference's expressed views stand at the hawkish end of the spectrum of American Jewish diverse opinions and, as a result, they verge on misrepresentation of American Jewry both to Israel and to

²⁹¹ *Jerusalem Post*, February 16, 1984. Cooperating with the Egyptian approach was Jordan which was also negotiating with Arafat seeking to develop a "practical framework" for negotiations with Israel. Arafat visited Amman for the first time in a year for talks with Hussein, *New York Times*, February 27, 1984

²⁹² *Jerusalem Post*, February 19, 1984. The arrangements had been made through the Egyptian Ambassador to the United States.

important American policy makers.²⁹³

Cohen's thinking, as noted earlier, closely reflected the views of the American Jewish Committee for whom he conducted survey polling intended to discover "the depth of dissent."

Mroz Mission

America's clandestine "procedural" negotiations with the Palestine Liberation Organization became public in late February 1984 when *The New York Times* reported that private citizen and Middle East specialist, John Mroz, had been secretly negotiating with the PLO on behalf of the State Department. The talks, conducted with the knowledge of Haig and Veliotes, were undertaken at Arafat's request and lasted 9 months ending in June 1982. *The Times* reported that Mroz held more than 50 meetings with Arafat and other PLO officials and furnished accounts of the sessions to Veliotes. Mroz was identified by the paper as a 35 year old president of the East-West Security Foundation. Previously, Mroz had been director of Middle East Studies at the International Academy of Peace in New York. Veliotes had persuaded Haig that the PLO could be split away from the Soviet Union, thus making it easier to accelerate the Arab-Israel peace process. After receiving the President's approval in California, the Mroz mission was authorized by Haig in August

²⁹³ He agreed with Berman's assertion that American Jews opposed the establishment of a PLO-led state alongside Israel. "But the conference position takes no cognizance of the plurality of American Jews (48 per cent to 26 per cent with 27 per cent undecided) who believe 'Palestinians have a right to a homeland on the West Bank and Gaza so long as it does not threaten Israel.'" *Jerusalem Post*, February 16, 1984. Begin loyalist Shmuel Katz wrote in response that Cohen's poll excluded leaders of 32 out of the 37 member organizations in the Presidents Conference. Cohen drew his sample from the AJCongress, AJCommittee and ADL on the grounds that they "shape Jewish 'foreign policy' in the U.S." Other individuals were included because they asked to be. "he now has the hutzpa to declare that it is his poll that represents 'the plurality' of American Jews--when what he is in fact talking about is the plurality of 640 Jews whose names were plucked out of telephone books and who were then subjected to a series of tendentious questions by clever Mr. Cohen." *Jerusalem Post*, February 17, 1984

1981. In the wake of the PLO's expulsion from Lebanon, Shultz authorized Mroz to meet with Arafat in Tunis. However, Arafat refused to see him.²⁹⁴ Who leaked the story and what their motives were are unknown. But insinuation had political suasion value. The news inoculated against the "no talk" taboo (or, given the number of "accidental" or "unauthorized" publicly known contacts one could view this latest report as a booster shot). The reaction of the various players is slightly curious. Officially, the State Department downplayed the report and reiterated the U.S. refusal to recognize or talk to the PLO until its previously stated conditions were met. Spokesman Alan Romberg refused to be drawn into a discussion of the *Times* report other than to say: "We have contact with a variety of people who claim to have contact with the PLO...When asked what they should tell the PLO, they are told to repeat the U.S. conditions."²⁹⁵ Israel's Ambassador to the U.S., Meir Rosenne deprecated the report, telling a Zionist Organization of America audience: "I refuse to believe this is true." Officially, he conveyed an Israeli Foreign Ministry protest to the State Department some days later.²⁹⁶ There is no record that the Presidents Conference protested the Mroz report.

The official Israeli attitude toward the PLO was unchanged. Responding to an Op-Ed essay by Harold Saunders, Rosenne made the zero sum case in a letter to the editor: "The P.L.O. is not a national liberation movement but a terrorist gang whose intention to destroy Israel is stated with chilling clarity in its covenant and in countless declarations by all its leaders over many years. Contrary to Mr. Saunders, there is no division inside the P.L.O. on ultimate objectives. Internal differences revolve around tactics, not

²⁹⁴ JTA, February 22, 1984. A published article by Mroz in *Foreign Affairs (America and the World 1992/93)* identified him as the "founding President of the Institute for EastWest Studies."

²⁹⁵ JTA, February 22, 1984

²⁹⁶ JTA, February 27, 1984. This may lend credence to the notion that the Israelis knew of the Mroz-Arafat talks all along.

strategy."²⁹⁷

The strategy of the United States was to facilitate the entry of the Palestinians (perhaps the PLO under the right circumstances) into the peace process. Shultz told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the Reagan Administration did not have indirect contacts with the PLO. But then he insinuated that it did, saying:

As I have looked at the record of those meetings, what was talked about in private was identical with what was talked about in public...if it proved anything, it was that the constant refrain we hear--that if only we would sit down with the PLO and talk with them everything would start falling into place--is simply not the case.

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Continuing American adherence to the disassociation model was evident from the President's remarks to a UJA group in February. He said, "Friendship between Israel and the United States is closer and stronger than ever before. *And I am intent to keep it that way.*"²⁹⁹ But he also reiterated American opposition to Jewish settlements in the Administered Territories.³⁰⁰ And, at around the same time, Shultz wrote to Sen. Charles Percy opposing legislation that would move the U.S. embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. He said such a move would, "prejudge one of the key issues which must be freely negotiated between the parties..."³⁰¹ It is interesting to note that some political candidates still thought there was strong support within the Jewish community for retention of Judea and Samaria. Campaigning for the

²⁹⁷ *New York Times*, March 21, 1984. The IDF released a report which said that 730 Israelis and visitors had been killed by the PLO since its founding and 3,909 people had been wounded. The figures did not include casualties resulting from the Lebanon war. See JTA, April 6, 1984

²⁹⁸ JTA, February 24, 1984 Efforts by Representative Mel Levine (D-Calif.) to pass legislation aimed at formalizing the 1975 U.S.-Israel agreement on the PLO were unsuccessful. See, JTA, February 24, 1984

²⁹⁹ *Near East Report*, March 16, 1984

³⁰⁰ JTA, February 24, 1984

³⁰¹ *NER*, March 16, 1983

1984 Democratic presidential nomination, Gary Hart declared that the settlements were not obstacles to peace.³⁰²

Peres Flexibility

The PLO remained anathema to the mainstream pro-Israel community largely because it continued to signal a message of total conflict. Abu Jihad, for example, declared that armed struggle would strike “against the forces of the occupation army in Gaza, Nablus, Jerusalem, or deep in the Israeli heart, in Tel Aviv and in the other occupied towns.”³⁰³ Simultaneously, Arafat continued to dance around the idea of recognizing Israel.³⁰⁴ Regardless of the PLO’s stance, the Israeli body politic was divided over prospects for Arab moderation. Labor was ready to talk with a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation if one would come forth. Other than PLO intentions, the party viewed the conflict largely in non-zero-sum terms. In early May, Peres declared that Camp David need not be the sole peace process channel. The signal was unmistakable: a Labor Government would be far more flexible on staking claims to Judea and Samaria.³⁰⁵

³⁰² JTA, March 23, 1984. Jesse Jackson also sought the Democratic nomination. Jackson became the first serious Presidential candidate to openly champion the view that the PLO had become a moderate group with which both Israel and the United States should negotiate. PLO officials in the U.S. were elated at having Jackson’s support. See for example, JTA, April 27, 1984. Jackson’s remark that New York was “Hymietown” because of its large Jewish population and the fact that his Operation PUSH received \$200,000 from the Arab League (NER, March 23, 1984) did not endear him to Jewish voters. Jackson forces efforts notwithstanding, the Democratic party platform for 1984 was generally pro-Israel. Of important symbolic if not substantive significance, the platform urged that the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv be moved to Jerusalem. While calling for a “resolution of the Palestinian” problem, the Democrats ruled out the PLO as a partner to the peace process unless it “abandons terrorism, recognizes the State of Israel and adheres to UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.” The Republican platform adopted a similar line on the PLO.

³⁰³ *Near East Report*, April 27, 1984

³⁰⁴ *Near East Report*, May 18, 1984

³⁰⁵ JTA, May 4, 1984. It is unlikely that Peres had changed his mind about Arafat and the PLO. Rather, he believed that it was possible to cultivate an alternative Palestinian-Arab leadership, which in cooperation with Jordan would make peace with Israel and settle for an endgame short of a sovereign Arab state east of the Jordan. Eban met with Egyptian Foreign Minister Ghali in Cairo to maintain a Labor channel in the peace process, FBIS, April 5, 1984.

The fabric of American Jewish pro-Israelism was being torn asunder. The contributory factors varied: Official U.S. criticism of Israel's policies was unceasing. Negative media coverage persisted unabated. The *Times* continued to play a vanguard role in fostering American Jewish criticism of Israeli policies. Arthur Hertzberg, WJC vice-president, and an important voice of the internal opposition, was granted a platform by the *Times* to call on the Administration to pressure Israel into pulling out of the West Bank. "Washington can press Israeli leaders to pay the political price of dealing with this [the Palestinian] question..The fundamental truth about the Palestinian question and the continuing war between Jews and Arabs is that it can be settled only by American leadership. America cannot impose a settlement, but it can cajole the parties..."³⁰⁶ The United Jewish Appeal found it necessary to remind wealthy contributors that disagreement with Israel's policies should not be an excuse for withholding their support.³⁰⁷ Such challenges from within the American Jewish community needed and received legitimization from the Israeli Opposition which challenged the Camp David process of limited Palestinian-Arab autonomy.

Kenneth Bialkin

Julius Berman's tenure as chairman of the Presidents Conference drew to a close. Berman was the only head of the Presidents Conference (in the post 1977 era) whose natural affinity was for the Likud line. Berman's valedictory speech in June articulated what little consensus still prevailed within the Jewish establishment, namely, opposition to U.S.- PLO negotiations unless the well-known conditions were met. ³⁰⁸ Summarizing Berman's tenure, the *Presidents Conference Annual Report* seeks to put the best possible "spin" on the level of establishment consensus toward Israel:

³⁰⁶ cited in *Near East Report*, June 1, 1984

³⁰⁷ JTA, May 21, 1984.

³⁰⁸ JTA, June 12, 1984

The ability to achieve and express... consensus was emphasized by the outgoing Chairman as representing the underlying strength of the Presidents Conference. He acknowledged that it was "no secret" that members of the Presidents Conference held differing views on some issues, including those of the West Bank and Gaza. But these differences were far less important than the overriding commitment of the Conference members to Israel's security..."The Presidents Conference cannot take positions where there is no unity," Mr. Berman observed.

...In a separate article (he wrote) ... "Indeed, it is a well-known secret that the fastest way to get your op-ed article published in a daily newspaper or weekly news magazine is to criticize Israel or call for American pressure aimed at changing Israeli policies...

Although there are differences of opinion among us with respect to settlement policies in the West Bank, the overwhelming majority of American Jews reject the idea that Israeli communities in Judea and Samaria are illegal...any possibility of establishing a Palestinian state must be foreclosed...

I believe these sentiments represent the views of the organized Jewish community in America..."³⁰⁹

The newly elected Chairman, Kenneth Bialkin, was by no means "soft" on the PLO "talk" issue. But his election did herald an important change. In all likelihood, Bialkin was selected precisely because, on the Labor - Likud divide, the 54 year old Harvard law school graduate, whose ties were with the centrist Anti-Defamation League, was a neutral figure.³¹⁰

Arafat studiously portrayed himself, in the non-Arabic press, as someone seeking a diplomatic outcome. With the sponsorship of Egypt and tacit encouragement from the Reagan Administration, Arafat had been resurrected. He succeeded in reuniting many, though not all, PLO factions

³⁰⁹ *Report of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations For the Year Ending March 31, 1985*

³¹⁰ JTA, June 21, 1984 Bialkin was associated with the law firm of Wilkie, Farr and Gallagher.

which had broken away in the aftermath of the Lebanon war.³¹¹ Under pressure from the Soviet Union, Algeria and South Yemen, the hardline Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine rejoined the PLO. Only the Syrian sponsored forces of Abu Musa were now identified as "rejectionist."³¹² By summer's end, it appeared as if the PLO had agreed to allow Jordan to represent its interests in the peace process.³¹³

The U.S. commitment not to negotiate with the PLO drew fresh attention with the publication of a *Foreign Affairs* article by Alfred L. Atherton, Jr., the former Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs. Atherton wrote:

A further factor complicating the U.S. role in the peace process has been a 1975 Memorandum of Understanding with Israel, committing the United States not to recognize or negotiate with the PLO unless it accepted Resolution 242 and recognized Israel's right to exist. This commitment was subsequently interpreted by successive American administrations as barring even exploratory discussions with the PLO. This was not the original intent. As a result, the United States has effectively been prevented from opening a dialogue with Palestinians who, however much one deplors the advocacy of terrorism and the hard-line position toward recognition of Israel by elements of the PLO, are widely recognized as a necessary element in any solution to the conflict...

It has long been my personal view that such a dialogue would have been an opportunity to exploit the latent divisions within the PLO, between those who advocate terrorism and reject the very idea of peace with Israel, and those who are prepared to take a more pragmatic and less extreme approach.³¹⁴

³¹¹ *Christian Science Monitor*, June 29, 1984 & *New York Times*, August 21, 1984

³¹² *Near East Report*, July 13, 1984

³¹³ Fatah later formalized a deal for a West Bank-Gaza confederation with Jordan. *Near East Report*, November 12, 1984.

³¹⁴ "Arabs, Israelis-And Americans: A Reconsideration," *Foreign Affairs*, (Summer 1984)

Atherton's underlying assessment that "elements" of the PLO were prepared to pursue a pragmatic non-zero sum mission (as distinguished from a tactical bluff) was representative of current thinking in the U.S. foreign policy community. However, the American Jewish leadership—including those who opposed the Likud Government's policies—continued to lobby against dialogue until the PLO explicitly accepted the long-standing American conditions.³¹⁵

Inconclusive elections in Israel led to the establishment, in September, of a government of national unity (more in name than in spirit). Labor leader Shimon Peres and Yitchak Shamir of Likud agreed to a rotating premiership. Peres would serve first for two years as Prime Minister with Shamir as Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. Labor's Yitzhak Rabin would serve the full four years as Defense Minister. Henceforth, as Lewis recalls, Washington would be dealing with "two Israeli governments."³¹⁶ Peres favored accommodating Jordan's need for an international peace conference, but only as a ceremonial fig-leaf for bilateral talks.

³¹⁵ The Israelis were largely unsuccessful in arguing that moderate-sounding PLO statements were tactical concessions, that the PLO's strategy remained the same. For example, they pointed to Abu Iyyad's remarks to the November 1984 PNC session in Amman. Arafat's deputy declared: "We want a secular democratic state over the whole of Palestine. We are being condemned for going along with the idea of a Geneva Conference. However, during some stages one must respond in the affirmative. Every stage should be approached as is required by the existing conditions. There is a tactic (for every stage). I have the right to undertake different steps, but there is always the general goal. I know that each of us is attached to Jaffa, as it is essential that we will regain every piece of Palestine...We believe that Palestine from the river to the sea is ours. The Zionists took it step by step and it is incumbent upon us to retrieve it step by step within a context of a consistent program..." Quoted in *Contemporary Mideast Backgrounder*, (Jerusalem) December 16, 1984. Nor could the Zionists convince anyone that the struggle against Israel was, as its core, pan-Arab not Palestinian. For example, Arafat told the London Arabic weekly *Al Tadamun* (October 25) that he bears no grudge against Syria. He remarked that Syria was "the northern part of Palestine and Palestine is the southern part of Syria." *Near East Report*, November 5, 1984

³¹⁶ Lewis, op. cit.

It was also election season in the United States as former Vice President Walter Mondale sought to capture the White House from President Reagan. Mondale challenged the President for conducting, "400 hours of so-called unofficial talks with Yasir Arafat and the PLO."³¹⁷ Both men campaigned on anti-PLO and pro-Israel positions. During a debate of the Vice Presidential candidates, George Bush stated that a "solution to the Palestine question" was important because it could contribute to a reduction in international terrorism.³¹⁸ In a preelection appearance at Manhattan's Park Avenue Synagogue, Shultz declared: "When Libya and the PLO provide arms and training to the Communists in Central America, they are aiding Soviet-supported Cuban efforts to undermine our security...The terrorists who assault Israel...are ideological enemies of the United States."³¹⁹ As it turned out, 70% of the Jewish vote went to Mondale. Still, Reagan did fairly well in politically and socially conservative Jewish districts.³²⁰

Mixed Messages

Peres paid his first visit to the U.S. as prime minister in October seeking additional aid. As was customary, he also met with the Jewish leadership. But the "national unity Government" played havoc with the Jewish leadership's efforts to discern a consistent Israeli line on the peace process. American Jewish leaders who looked to Jerusalem for an understanding of Israeli concerns discovered that the Government was of two minds on most important issues, including: the substance of the Arab-Israel conflict; the question of Arab moderation; the disposition of the Administered Territories, and whether the PLO was capable of going through

³¹⁷ *Near East Report*, September 24, 1984

³¹⁸ JTA, October 15, 1984

³¹⁹ *Near East Report*, November 5, 1984. *The New Republic* commented wryly: "Jews live like WASPS and vote like Puerto Ricans." (December 3, 1984)

³²⁰ JTA, November 8, 1984

a political metamorphosis.³²¹ Peres was quoted in the Labor Party newspaper *Davar* as saying he was “prepared to enter negotiations with King Hussein without any preconditions.” Regarding Likud opposition he said: “If Herut [the main faction of Likud] joins in, that is all right; and if it does not, that is tough luck.”³²² He added that since his taking office no new settlements had been established.

After his re-election, Reagan expressed optimism that moderate Arab states would soon move to negotiate with Israel. The President pointed to a meeting between Representative Stephen Solarz, a staunchly pro-Israel Congressman, and Iraq’s Saddam Hussein as indicative of the trend toward Arab moderation. The PLO itself, the President told an interviewer, was “now taking on the radical factions in their own midst that were pro-Syrian.”³²³ His liaison to the Jewish community, Marshall Breger, said the President’s second term would include no “surprises,” reminding an interviewer that Reagan had an “instinctive pro-Israel feeling.”³²⁴

But Reagan’s optimism about PLO moderation seemed misplaced. At the PNC meeting held in Amman during November, the Palestinian-Arabs again rejected UN Resolution 242 as a basis for peace. Moreover, they peppered their final statement with zero-sum rhetoric. The PNC called on, “our countrymen in the occupied territory...from Galilee to Gaza...from Nablus to Jerusalem, from the Negev to al-Yarmuk,” to confront the US-Zionist alliance.³²⁵ Disregarding the rhetoric, Jordan and Egypt issued a joint

³²¹ Peres and Shamir would travel to Washington separately for meetings with U.S. officials. At these sessions they often took contrary positions in response to American suggestions.

³²² *Near East Report*, December 3, 1984

³²³ JTA, November 29, 1984

³²⁴ *Near East Report*, November 12, 1984

³²⁵ *Washington Post*, November 30, 1984. Arafat was also re-elected Chairman of the Executive Committee. See too, *Near East Report*, December 10, 1984

communiqué endorsing a role for the PLO in the peace process.³²⁶ A *Wall Street Journal* Op-Ed piece by editor Robert L. Bartley argued it was now clear that “the Arab world is suddenly undergoing an outburst of moderation” with Arafat, “striking an alliance with Jordan and the moderates.”³²⁷ Indeed, Egypt reportedly conveyed to the U.S. Arafat’s conditions for recognizing Israel.³²⁸ Regardless of anything that was said in the hall, the perception of PLO moderation was bolstered because several of its constituent groups (Habash’s PFLP for instance) boycotted the Amman session.

Out of the limelight, the U.S. continued its discreet contacts with the PLO. An aide to Assistant Secretary of State Richard Murphy met with PLO Executive Committee member Fhad Kawasmeh (head of the occupied territories department). Earlier, Arafat authorized Palestinian-Arab Americans to negotiate with the Administration on his behalf.³²⁹

Perceptually, the coming to power of Peres legitimized a chasm already present in the American Jewish - Israeli relationship. Peres brought good news and new possibilities. He confidently affirmed that there was a road which would lead to an accommodation with the Arabs-- including the Palestinian-Arabs. It would require abandoning Judea and Samaria if the right mix of conditions could be achieved. Thomas L. Friedman, the *Times* correspondent, reported that after 100 days in office, “Peres has come to represent...the so-called old liberal Israel.” Abba Eban remarked that “Peres’ tone is pragmatic and down to earth. He doesn’t brandish the Holocaust or

³²⁶ JTA, December 5, 1984

³²⁷ *Near East Report*, December 17, 1984. In fact, since January 1, 1984 there had been a significant increase in terrorist attacks against Jews in Israel 349 attacks took place resulting in the wounding of 108 and the murder of 5 Jews. Cited in E. Mickolous, T. Sandler and J. Murdock, editors, *International Terrorism in the 1980s A Chronology of Events, Volume II 1984-1987*, (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1989), p. 147

³²⁸ *Near East Report*, December 17, 1984

³²⁹ *Near East Report*, December 31, 1984. The State Department said the report was “simply not true.” NER, January 7, 1985

appeal to biblical roots when making a point. The national style has changed."³³⁰

V

Perceptual Framework

At Camp David, Begin displayed a readiness to offer the Arab residents of Gaza, Judea and Samaria local autonomy. His policy was not contingent upon a change in Palestinian-Arab intentions. It did not require Israelis or their American Jewish supporters to alter their calculations about long term Arab objectives. Peres' willingness to work toward a deal with Palestinian-Arabs from both inside as well as outside the Territories (and indirectly with the PLO under the aegis of Jordan) was predicated on redefining the conflict in non-zero sum terms. Indeed, the Peres approach partially codified a re-categorization of the conflict. The struggle was no longer *total* nor was there any doubt that, at its core, the dispute was between Israel and the Palestinians not Israel and the Arab states. Ironically, the "Palestinization" of the conflict was further underscored after Israeli aircraft flew to Tunis to bomb the PLO headquarters.

Labor's hold on the Prime Minister's office in the "unity" Government made life considerably easier (though hardly carefree) for the Jewish leadership, since they were no longer at constant odds with the Administration over the peace process. But Labor in power did raise psychological issues of political consequence. Elements in the community had become skillful at arguing Israel's absolute military need to retain Gaza, Judea and Samaria. The America-Israel Public Affairs Committee often referred to a

³³⁰ *Near East Report*, December 31, 1984

“secret study” conducted by the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff which concluded: “From a strictly military point of view, Israel would require the retention of some captured territory in order to provide militarily defensible borders.”³³¹ And, while “land for peace” and the “Allon Plan” were part of an earlier *mantra*, the prospect of actually turning over even parts of the West Bank to an Arab authority was worrisome. Still, through a process of cognitive dissonance they could reassure themselves that Peres surely knew more about West Bank security issues than they did.

Meanwhile, the Jewish leadership’s self-image called on them to continue to oppose the sale of U.S. weapons to Arab countries including Jordan as well as any change in U.S. policy toward the PLO.

Key environmental factors

The issue that dominated the year 1985 was a proposed international peace conference. How would a Palestinian-Arab delegation be comprised? What safeguards would prevent the conference from becoming a substitute for direct talks between the parties? How could Israel be sure that the other participants would not “gang up” on her? And how could all these obstacles be overcome without incurring a PLO veto? All the while, differences within the Labor-Likud coalition over the desirability and nature of a conference were exploited by all parties. Likud viewed an international conference as the death knell of the Camp David process.

To the consternation of Foreign Minister Shamir, the internal opposition now had an ally in Shimon Peres. They disregarded Shamir’s wishes and, with the tacit approval of Prime Minister Peres, engaged in diplomacy with Mubarak regarding Israeli security issues. The political

³³¹ “The Importance of the ‘West Bank’ and Gaza to Israel’s Security,” *AIPAC Papers on U.S.-Israel Relations #11*, by Sara M. Averick and Steven J. Rosen, 1985

backdrop also contained new hints of moderation from Arafat, as well as a terrorist outrage that captured world attention. IDF forces, meanwhile, were beginning their phased pull-out from most of Lebanon.

Two events having nothing to do with the PLO issue debilitated the leadership's ability to influence the peace process. Jonathan Pollard, an American Jew who was an analyst with the Naval Investigative Service, was arrested and charged with spying for Israel. This re-opened the nightmarish issue of dual loyalty. Secondly, the community was traumatized over an internal rift on the "Who is a Jew?" issue.

Several actors gained prominence in the course of 1985. Peres replaced Shamir at center stage. Bialkin replaced Berman. In addition, Ted Mann and Henry Siegman presented the case for the internal opposition. This opposition was now directed at the Likud half of the government.

Israel gradually began to lose physical control over parts of the West Bank during this period. One of the unintended consequences of the Lebanon conflict was that it monopolized and drained Israel's intelligence and security apparatus. The resources available for monitoring the Territories were curtailed. Moreover, Israeli intelligence suffered grievous losses as a result of car bombings in Lebanon. To complicate matters even further, hundreds of convicted terrorists were returned to Judea and Samaria in a prisoner exchange with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command.³³² All this was in addition to the psychological signals the Arab residents of the areas were receiving regarding Labor's interest in a partial pull-out.

³³² See "The Palestinian-Israeli Fight: Arab Lands Now Spectators," *The New York Times*, October 3, 1985. Three Israelis held by the PFLP-GC were exchanged for 1,100 terrorists including Kozo Okamoto (who carried out the Lod airport massacre); 600 returned to homes in Judea and Samaria.

Administration criticism of Israel's West Bank policies was now largely aimed at hampering Likud and bolstering Labor. The rescue and re-settlement of Ethiopian Jews prompted the Administration to call on Israel not to settle the new arrivals on the West Bank.³³³ In Israel, meanwhile, the left accelerated its activities. Six left-wing activists met with Arafat in Tunis in February. Their return prompted a debate over whether they should be tried for endangering national security.³³⁴

The prospect of an international conference dominated the peace process agenda. Utilizing political suasion, the United States was able to confine discussion to the nature of Palestinian representation at an international conference. This strategic choice selection made any Likud objections to the very idea of an international conference a non sequitur.

Shamir was suspicious of Jordanian and PLO efforts to establish a joint delegation to the conference. Jordan and the PLO reached a breakthrough agreement on the make-up of a joint delegation in February.³³⁵ The King told Shultz that the PLO would be "out at the beginning and in at the end" if they accepted U.S. conditions for a dialogue.³³⁶ The Likud leader regarded these efforts as tactical machinations aimed at fostering contact between the PLO and the the United States. Shamir complained that the Arabs were proposing an international conference to avoid direct bilateral talks. To allay some of

³³³ *New York Times*, January 18, 1985

³³⁴ JTA, February 12, 1985. Until January 1993 it was illegal for Israelis to meet with PLO members.

³³⁵ *Jerusalem Post*, February 13, 1985. Both Egypt and the U.S. had expressed optimism since agreement implied acceptance of the "major principles of UN Resolution 242."
Washington Post, February 14, 1985. Syria denounced reports of an agreement as a plot by the U.S. and Israel. February 13, 1985, FBIS.

³³⁶ Shultz, op. cit., p. 448

Shamir's concerns, Shultz offered written assurances that the U.S. would only talk to the PLO if it recognized Israel's right to exist and accepted UN Security Council Resolution 242.³³⁷ The Israelis had also been told that the U.S. would insist on direct talks between Israel and the Arabs.³³⁸

Allusions of Arab willingness to accept Israel's existence continued to be part of the perceptual environment. Saudi King Fahd's very presence at the White House, to hear Reagan announce: "The security of Israel and other nations in the region and the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people can and should be addressed in direct negotiations," was deemed to be a conciliatory gesture.³³⁹ But Saudi radio said the visit "denies the Zionist lobby the opportunity of pressuring the American President for the benefit of the Israeli enemy."³⁴⁰

The Arab camp continued to lobby the U.S. for PLO inclusion in the peace process. Mubarak told a National Press Club gathering in Washington, D.C. that Arafat "is a very moderate man," that the PLO "has now chosen the peace option," and that the recent Jordanian-PLO pact was "unequivocal and unambiguous...The principles embodied in the agreement are derived from...242 and the Reagan initiative. What counts is substance not form. The said agreement leads inevitably to direct negotiations."³⁴¹ Still, Arafat continued to articulate a strident message to Arabic-speaking audiences. In March he declared: "My aim is to establish our political state on our Palestinian soil...Let everyone hear me. Our land is Palestine and Jerusalem is our capital."³⁴²

³³⁷ JTA, Feb. 26, & March 7, 1985

³³⁸ JTA, February 26, 1985

³³⁹ *New York Times*, February 14, 1985

³⁴⁰ *Near East Report*, February 18, 1985

³⁴¹ *Near East Report*, March 18, 1985

³⁴² *Near East Report*, March 25, 1985

Peres' support for an international conference was conditioned on the idea that a largely ceremonial session would pave the way to direct bilateral talks.³⁴³ Both Peres and Shamir opposed PLO inclusion at an international conference (though with different degrees of intensity). Shamir was convinced that the Jordanian-PLO pact was a Trojan Horse.³⁴⁴ But King Hussein reiterated that Jordan would not participate in peace talks without the PLO.³⁴⁵ Moreover, Egypt and Jordan jointly called upon the United States to meet with the PLO.³⁴⁶

Peres reacted to the Jordanian-PLO diplomatic maneuvers by offering to meet with a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation so long as it did not include Palestinian-Arabs who were PLO members.³⁴⁷ The Reagan Administration took a similar line: a joint delegation would be unacceptable if it included members of the PLO.³⁴⁸ Understandably, Arafat denounced the American stance as hypocritical. "They called for an agreement between Arafat and King Hussein. But when we signed it, they asked us for more."³⁴⁹ He insisted that the PLO would not accept "any conditions or limitations" on who could be sent to an international peace conference to represent the Palestinian-Arabs. Though Egypt and Jordan asserted that Arafat had accepted UN Security Council 242, Arafat refused to say so explicitly.³⁵⁰

³⁴³ *New York Times*, February 19, 1985

³⁴⁴ JTA, March 15, 1985

³⁴⁵ JTA, March 18, 1985

³⁴⁶ *Washington Post*, March 7, 1985

³⁴⁷ JTA, March 25, 1985

³⁴⁸ JTA, March 25, 1985. The U.S. was demonstrating its firmness in pressing the PLO to be more forthcoming in other ways as well. The State Department, for instance, rejected a request by Representative George W. Crockett to waive travel restrictions on the PLO's UN delegate Zeidi Terzi so that he could go to Washington to brief members of the House Foreign Affairs committee on the PLO's views. See *The New York Times*, March 5, 1985

³⁴⁹ *New York Times*, March 3, 1985

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Actually, the PLO Executive Committee in Tunis had rejected as "capitulatory" acceptance of 242. See FBIS, February 20, 1985 and the *New York Times*, March 11, 1985

Problems with finding the right modalities for Palestinian representation did not alter the fact that U.S. remained committed to a solution that involved an exchange of land for peace and bringing the Palestinian-Arabs into the peace process. At the core, Shultz viewed "autonomy talks" over "self-rule" as "transition talks" to "emphasize that further changes and negotiations were to come."³⁵¹ State Department spokesman Bernard Kalb said that despite the findings of Meron Benvenisti's West Bank Data Project regarding the large numbers of Jews already residing in Judea and Samaria, it was still not too late to turn the lands over to the Arabs as part of a peace agreement.³⁵² In an effort to overcome the hurdle of Palestinian representation, Richard Murphy presented Jordan with a list of potential non-PLO Palestinian negotiators who would be acceptable to both the PLO and Israel. The list was said to be under study by the PLO Executive Committee meeting in Baghdad. Murphy then went on to Israel where he met with Peres and Shamir as well as Arab leaders in the Administered Territories.³⁵³

The desire to bring the Palestinian-Arabs into the peace process was tempered by Shultz's genuine frustration with the PLO. At around the time when Murphy was in the Middle East, Shultz told the Annual AIPAC Policy Conference in Washington that: "Those who chased illusions of 'armed struggle,' those who engage in terrorism...have only brought death to innocents and prolonged the suffering of the Palestinian people. Such

³⁵¹ George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years As secretary of State*, (New York:Charles Scribner's Sons,1993), p.430.

³⁵² JTA, April 2, 1985. Benvenisti issued a report which criticized the use of the \$5 million worth of American aid to West Bank Arabs. He complained that Israel had too much control over how the money was actually spent so that individual prosperity was encouraged at the expense of communal development. See, *Jerusalem Post*, April 6, 1984.

³⁵³ JTA, April 17, 1985. Press reports were unclear as to whether Murphy actually met with the PLO officials. The State Department moved quickly to clarify. Kalb said: "There was no functionary, no official of the PLO invited to that gathering and no one attended in that sense...Our policy on meeting the PLO is firm and we are adhering to it strictly." JTA, April 18, 1985

methods have achieved nothing constructive, and never will.”³⁵⁴ But Arafat remained steadfast in rejecting Murphy’s idea of non-PLO Palestinian participation.³⁵⁵

A derivative of the attention the Palestinian cause achieved was its new found support within the American political system. This backing now came from outside the province of traditional supporters of the Arab cause. As the perceptual environment shifted, support for Arab rights was no longer equated with opposition to Israel’s existence. Groups of visiting Congressman now routinely included a session with Arafat as part of their Middle East itinerary.³⁵⁶ House Majority Leader Jim Wright (D.Texas) told the National Association of Arab Americans (NAAA) that Israel and the Palestinians should mutually recognize each other.³⁵⁷

Reflecting the perceptual environment, liberal Democrats, who had been staunch supporters of the Israeli line, now placed great emphasis on solving the Palestinian problem. By mid-1985 they took for granted that the Palestinian-Arab conundrum was at the core of the Arab-Israel conflict. It was now conservative Republicans who seemed more sensitive to Israeli concerns as articulated by the Likud. For instance, several conservative senators and congressmen signed on to a memorandum drafted by Americans For A Safe Israel (AFSI) and written on the stationery of Sen. Jessie Helms (R-N.C). Addressed to the President, the letter said:

We are disturbed by the apparent re-emergence of the doctrine of ‘exchanging territories for peace.’ We believe that there are two key elements of equal importance to the permanent security of Israel. The first is the maintenance

³⁵⁴ *New York Times*, April 22, 1985

³⁵⁵ FBIS, April 29, 1985

³⁵⁶ The latest group included Robert Mrazek (D-NY), and Steny Hoyer (D-Md), *Near East Report*, April 22, 1985

³⁵⁷ JTA, May 3, 1985

of defensible geo-strategic borders, and the second is the development of positive and trustworthy relations between Israeli and her Arab neighbors...We also suggest that Israel's historical and legal claims to Judea and Samaria be considered in any peace proposal. Eliminating Israel in stages is a widespread concept in the Arab world. The current diplomatic activity among Arab states may be a sincere attempt to abandon that concept; such a change ought to be welcomed. On the other hand, the demand that Israel leave Judea and Samaria to Arab rule may only be a prelude to the step-by-step dismantlement of Israel.³⁵⁸

In the face of overwhelming odds, the American Jewish right was in no position to redirect the peace process. AFSI remained a peripheral player on the margins of Jewish organizational life. It had decided not to apply for Presidents Conference membership, describing itself as a pro-Israel but not Jewish organization. With all its structural limitations, until the early 1990's, AFSI was virtually the only organized voice of the American Jewish right.³⁵⁹

The Israelis were united against bringing the PLO into the peace process. To bridge the chasm over PLO participation at an international conference, American policy makers turned to the Palestine National Council (PNC) as an alternative to the PLO. Theoretically, one could be a member of the PNC but not of the PLO. In practice, the relationship between the PNC

³⁵⁸ *New York Jewish Week*, March 22, 1985. Signatories in addition to Helms included: Sen. Alfonse D'amato, Rep. Gerald Solomon, Sen. Steven Symms. Neither Symms or Helms had previously exhibited pro-Israel sentiments. Moreover, Helms' views were anathema to the politically and socially liberal Jewish establishment. Undoubtedly, the feeling was mutual.

³⁵⁹ AFSI was the only group on the Jewish right capable of maintaining an office (donated by its chairman) and employing as many as three staffers on a full-time basis. AFSI briefly established a Washington presence under the direction of Peter Goldman. In contrast, Herut/Likud USA played no role of consequence, despite the potential strength it could have garnered from its association with Begin, Shamir and Sharon and its seat on the Presidents Conference. The failure of the American Jewish right to mobilize as a cohesive minority force remains a puzzling phenomenon.

and the PLO was symbiotic.³⁶⁰ It was the PNC Charter (revised in July 1968) which called for the destruction of Israel. But the approach was consistent with the Administration's strategy of facilitating entry and participation of the Palestinians into the peace process. Even if the PNC issue could be resolved, the Arafat-Hussein pact made no reference to direct bilateral negotiations.³⁶¹ Officially, the U.S. denied that playing the PNC card was away around its commitment not to negotiate with the PLO.³⁶²

Jewish Community Acquiescent

The response of the organized Jewish community to these events reveals both paralysis and acquiescence. Several of the more powerful groups associated with the Presidents Conference were irresolute about how to proceed. The AIPAC-aligned *Near East Report* editorialized: "Jerusalem has accepted a liberal interpretation of who is and who is not a PLO member and therefore unacceptable for negotiations. It does not oppose U.S. dealings with Palestinians (even Palestine National Council members) if they do not support the PLO charter's goal of eliminating Israel..."³⁶³ In fact, Jerusalem was skeptical of the PNC scheme. Shamir's position was that Palestinian-Arab negotiators "should not be members of the PLO, either officially, unofficially, or clandestinely, and they should not receive orders from the PLO."³⁶⁴ There were those in the Jewish community who believed allowing

³⁶⁰ JTA, May 9, 1985. See also, for example, *The Politics of Palestinian Nationalism*, by William B. Quandt, Faud Jabber and Ann Mosely Lesch, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), p. 69. Furthermore, Article 33 of the PNC National Charter demonstrates that the PLO and the PNC are essentially two sides of the same coin: "This charter shall not be amended save by (vote of) a majority of two-thirds of the total membership of the National Congree of the Palestine Liberation Organization [i.e. the PNC] at a special session convened for that purpose," from a text re-printed in Helena Connab, *The Palestinian Liberation Organization, People, Power and Politics*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), page 268.

³⁶¹ JTA, May 9, 1985

³⁶² JTA, May 16, 1985

³⁶³ *Near East Report*, May 20, 1985

³⁶⁴ *Near East Report*, May 20, 1985

the PNC scenario to play itself out might illuminate whether there were indeed moderate elements within the Palestinian movement prepared to negotiate with Israel. But it quickly became clear that despite their corrosive personal and party differences, Peres and Shamir both, at this stage at least, opposed the drift in U.S. policy regarding the PNC and an international conference.³⁶⁵ Like Shamir, Peres saw Jordan's call for an international conference as "nothing more than a device to evade direct negotiations with Israel."³⁶⁶

The Presidents Conference was apparently unable to formulate a consensus position on the PNC alternative. The Jewish right was incensed with the failure of the Jewish leadership to respond publicly and forcefully to the prospect of an international conference with PNC participation. In mid-May they organized a protest rally outside the New York offices of the PLO. Several hundred demonstrators mostly associated with Americans for A Safe Israel (AFSI) and the Jewish Defense Organization (a Jewish Defense League splinter group) participated.³⁶⁷

But now Peres began to waver in his objections to PNC participation. Consequently, Israel no longer had a unified foreign policy position. The U.S. reiterated its willingness to meet with non-PLO PNC members in early June. Peres responded that he too was willing to meet a non PLO Jordanian-Palestinian delegation and would not "search the mind" of each delegate regarding his sentiments toward the PLO.³⁶⁸ The State Department did stress that even if the PLO said the requisite 'magic words' it would not dictate with

³⁶⁵ JTA, May 31, 1985

³⁶⁶ *New York Times*, May 31, 1985

³⁶⁷ JTA, May 16, 1985. The driving force behind the rally was New York businessman Irving Katz long associated with the Zionist-right and a board member of AFSI. However, AFSI lacked the resources and organizational capability to undertake a systematic opposition to the Presidents Conference.

³⁶⁸ *Jerusalem Post*, June 4, 1985

whom the Israelis should negotiate.³⁶⁹

With the U.S. apparently backpedaling from its “no talk” with the PLO policy, Congress passed legislation codifying the 1975 Memorandum of Understanding. The legislation banned negotiations by American officials with the PLO, “so long as {it} does not recognize Israel’s right to exist, does not accept Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, and does not renounce the use of terrorism.”³⁷⁰

Peres and the U.S. Jewish leadership were concerned about the pressure Israel was coming under to bring the PLO into the peace process. But they were also fearful about the long term consequences of appearing intransigent.³⁷¹ With Reagan’s tacit encouragement, King Hussein used a visit to Washington, in early June, to press the case for PLO participation.³⁷² Bialkin’s response was to telegram the President--not about the Administration’s support for the Hussein-Arafat alliance-- but urging the U.S. not to sell advanced weapons to Jordan.³⁷³ Israeli Ambassador Meir Rosenne told a Jewish audience in New York that the PLO and the PNC were one and the same.³⁷⁴ Defense Minister Rabin cautioned a National Press Club gathering in Washington that: “The PLO represents a philosophy and policy

³⁶⁹ JTA, May 31, 1985

³⁷⁰ *Near East Report*, May 20, 1985

³⁷¹ JTA, June 3, 4 & 6, 1985

³⁷² JTA, June 4, 1985 Parenthetically, the enigma of Jordan’s role intrigued Israelis. Yosef Tekoah, a former Israeli diplomat, warned that a Palestinian entity in the Territories would create a “Lebanon situation” for Israel. Tekoah ruminated that he had “no explanation why King Hussein should feel that he who exiled Yasir Arafat and the PLO 15 years ago to insure his own personal future...should now become the spokesman for Yasir Arafat and the PLO, to try to build him up once again.” See JTA, June 6, 1985

³⁷³ JTA, June 11, 1985

³⁷⁴ JTA, June 7, 1985 The speech coincided with the end to Operation Peace for Galilee. Three years after it began. Israel completed its withdrawal from Lebanon retaining a security strip as a buffer against attacks to its northern border.

contradictory to the very existence of Israel.”³⁷⁵ Plainly, the Israelis believed that once a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation was stitched together, US-PLO talks would follow naturally in its wake.³⁷⁶

Reagan offhandedly tied American support for Israel to the hijacking of TWA Flight 847 by Lebanese Shitite Arabs: “We seem to be a target also, I’m quite sure, because of our friendship and support of Israel.”³⁷⁷ Insinuating that the cost of U.S. support for Israel, especially an intransigent Israel, was excessive can be interpreted as a form of political suasion intended to capitalize on a crisis so as to extract concessions. If the American people were confused as to where to direct their wrath, columnist Richard Cohen of the *Washington Post* made it explicit: “The hijacking of TWA Flight 847...can be traced to the establishment of the first Jewish settlements on the inhospitable dunes of what was later to become Tel Aviv.”³⁷⁸ The terrorists demanded the

³⁷⁵ *Near East Report*, June 10, 1985

³⁷⁶ JTA, June 14, 1985

³⁷⁷ JTA, June 20, 1985

³⁷⁸ *Near East Report*, June 24, 1985. Cohen and Anthony Lewis of the *New York Times*, who is, incidentally, also Jewish, are two of Israel’s most implacable liberal critics. This is very much in keeping with the traditions of their respective papers. Both papers were founded by families of Jewish extraction. The current publishers no longer consider themselves Jewish and indeed, in the case of the *Times*, are the children of converts to Christianity. Nevertheless, for many years both papers were extremely sensitive about being considered “Jewish.” The specter of being charged with dual-loyalty hung over their heads. For instance, before WWII, the Sulzberger family at the *Times* strongly opposed the Zionist movement. See, Gay Talese, *The Kingdom and the Power*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1970), p. 223. At the *Post*, Katherine Graham once said she did not realize she was the daughter of a Jew until her college days. Afterwards, she remained extremely sensitive about her ethnic background. See for example, Carol Felsenthal, *Power, Privilege and the Post: The Katherine Graham Story*, (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1993) and David Hamberstam, *The Powers That Be*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979). Though beyond the scope of this study, the role of the prestige press in largely supporting Administration pressure on Israel encouraged the Jewish elite to break with Israeli policies. In this particular case, popular TV news coverage was no less significant. Charles Glass of ABC News made little effort to hide his sympathies for the hijackers. Bryant Gumbel of the NBC Today show asked one guest: “Will Israel compromise on the TWA hostages or play fast and loose with American lives? Is Israeli international politics going to take precedence over the well-being of the hostages?” David Bar Ilan, “Israel, the Hostages and the Networks,” *Commentary*, (September 1985).

release of 700 prisoners being held in Israel in exchange for the safe release of the passengers. The incident generated reports, which the Presidents Conference denied, that the Administration had pressured the Jewish leaders to intervene with the Israelis.³⁷⁹

Despite reaffirmations by American policy-makers throughout the early summer that they were set to use the PNC, as distinguished from the PLO, as a vehicle for Palestinian participation at an international conference, the Presidents Conference took no public position.³⁸⁰ Peres' earlier hints about not delving too deeply into the past associations of potential delegates likely contributed to leadership's inertia. Confusing matters further, Peres joined Shamir in reiterating Israeli opposition to negotiating with PLO members.³⁸¹ In mid-July, Shultz received a list of names reportedly submitted indirectly by the PLO for U.S. (and presumably Israeli) consideration.³⁸² Peres initially rejected the list, then reversed himself and accepted two of the names. Obviously, this made any criticism of the Administration by the Presidents Conference impolitic.³⁸³

Peres and Shamir, separately, lobbied Shultz on the composition of the joint delegation and sent conflicting messages as to how far Israel was willing to go to accommodate Jordan (which in turn was trying to oblige the PLO). Shultz dispatched Murphy to meet with members of the proposed Jordanian

³⁷⁹ JTA, July 1, 1985. Shultz later disassociated himself with White House efforts to place the onus on Israel. Shultz, *op. cit.*, p.658. After the hostages were released the State Department expressed appreciation to Syria for the use of its good offices. This was surprising because, while their funding and training comes from Iran, Hizbollah, Islamic Jihad and Amal could not function unhampered against the wishes of Syria.

³⁸⁰ JTA, July 16, 1985

³⁸¹ JTA, July 18, 1985

³⁸² *Christian Science Monitor*, July 15, 1985

³⁸³ *New York Times*, July 18, 1985 and JTA, July 24, 1985. It is unclear if the list was changed. But Peres was reassured by the U.S. charge d'affaires that the U.S. would not negotiate with the PLO. See, *New York Times*, July 22, 1985.

Palestinian-Arab delegation. But the August meeting never came off because King Hussein was adamant that an international conference, not direct bilateral talks, should follow any such meeting. At the same time most of the seven Palestinians on the list were openly identified with the PLO and Reagan insisted that the U.S. adhere to its "no talk" policy.³⁸⁴

On the surface Labor and Likud were in agreement about excluding the PLO. They even cooperated on a Knesset bill explicitly barring contacts between Israeli citizens and the PLO.³⁸⁵ In practice, the parties were deeply divided. Though Labor was skeptical of PLO assertions of moderation, Peres stood ready to meet with pro-PLO Palestinian-Arabs who were not publicly tied to the PLO. He might criticize Arafat for "a double policy. Talk peace in Jordan, kill people in Israel." But Peres hoped Arafat would not make the same mistake of Haj Amin-al-Husseini (the Mufti of Jerusalem in the 1940's) who led the Palestinian-Arabs away from co-existence.³⁸⁶ Likud's stance was of a different order entirely. Shamir's assessment was that the PLO was merely engaging in tactical maneuvers and that its incontrovertible *raison d'être* remained "to wipe Israel from the map."³⁸⁷ This cleavage obviously made consensus within the American Jewish leadership unachievable.

Israeli-PLO Contacts

The distinction between Israel's willingness to deal with the PLO on such issues as the release of POW's while rejecting diplomatic contacts was sketched out earlier. In September 1985, a story circulated that Israel may

³⁸⁴ JTA, August 20, 1985. See too Shultz, *op. cit.*, p. 454

³⁸⁵ JTA, September 10, 1985. Earlier, they had also cooperated on deferring consideration of the bill. This ban was lifted by a law passed in the Knesset in January 1993. Peres said he had evidence that Arafat was personally directing terrorist attacks in the Administered Territories, MEJ, (1985) p.114

³⁸⁶ *Near East Report*, September 16, 1985

³⁸⁷ *Near East Report*, July 22, 1985

have been on the verge of contacts with the PLO which straddled the functional-diplomatic divide. The account alleged that several years earlier Arie Marinski, a senior aide to Defense Minister Moshe Arens, planned to invite Isam Sartawi to Jerusalem for face-to-face talks on a prisoner exchange. The symbolic importance of having Sartawi visit Jerusalem for the talks, which could more easily have been conducted elsewhere, is readily apparent.³⁸⁸

Shultz continued to signal the PLO that it could be part of the peace process if only it moved away from violence and met U.S. conditions.³⁸⁹ He repeatedly met with Hussein to see if some arrangement could be worked out, with or without the PLO, for Palestinian representation. On September 30th, he took the King to see the President:

The session was bizarre. The king again urged that the process go forward and said that if the PLO would not meet the U.S. conditions and thus could not participate, he would go forward without the PLO. Instantly, Jordanian Prime Minister Zaid Rifai raised a host of objections. I could see that there was no coherent Jordanian position and that there would not be one. We got nowhere.³⁹⁰

Publicly, Reagan praised the King for "moving steadily and courageously forward in the search for peace."³⁹¹ During 1985, lack of coherence was not limited to the Arab side. Conflicting signals from Jerusalem and policy variations within the Jewish leadership contributed to

³⁸⁸ JTA, September 4, 1985 The source of this news leak was an aide to Austrian Ambassador to Greece Ferdinand Hennerbicler. Apparently, Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky and Israeli leftist Arie Eliav were both involved in trying to arrange the visit. When Sartawi was assassinated the plan came to naught. If true the report must have further undermined any interest on the part of the Presidents Conference to raise the US-PLO issue without a clear signal of Jerusalem's intentions. If false it was an ingenuous leak beneficial to proponents of a US-PLO dialogue.

³⁸⁹ JTA, September 9, 1985

³⁹⁰ Shultz, *op. cit.*, p. 457

³⁹¹ *Washington Post*, October 1, 1985

ennui at the Presidents Conference. Opposition to the State Department's focus on the Palestinian-Arabs and the "land for peace" formula coalesced outside the Presidents Conference, mostly around Americans For A Safe Israel (AFSI).³⁹²

Internal Opposition

With the Presidents Conference split on how to deal with the peace process, Likud critics took the political suasion initiative. NJCRAC's Ted Mann and Henry Siegman of the AJCongress traveled to Cairo for talks with Mubarak.³⁹³ Shamir viewed the meeting as an effort by some Jewish groups to manipulate the direction of the peace process. Mann and Siegman were well known, at the Presidents Conference, for their criticism of the Likud line. Shamir's wariness of the Jewish leaders was matched by his mistrust of Egypt. Mubarak had long been lobbying for PLO partnership in the peace process and his wooing of American Jewish leaders exasperated Shamir. But Peres, who likely gave tacit endorsement for the Cairo meeting, said nothing. The Presidents Conference had little choice but to ignore events in Cairo altogether. The only consensus it could muster was opposition to a newly proposed sale of arms to Jordan.³⁹⁴ Several days later, Mubarak assured Reagan that the PLO had already implicitly met American conditions for a dialogue and would go even further once negotiations started.³⁹⁵

³⁹² JTA, September 11, 1985. As noted earlier, AFSI was unable to sustain a campaign on behalf of the Zionist right in the United States owing to personality differences, lack of financial resources and the fragmentation of the "national camp" into numerous ineffectual splinter groups. AFSI was soon forced to close its short-lived Washington, D.C. office. Meanwhile, centrist groups within the Presidents Conference could not press for support since there was no general consensus among the membership.

³⁹³ JTA, September 19, 1985. Shamir mistakenly singled out Squadron, who did not go to Cairo, for participating in the Cairo meeting.

³⁹⁴ JTA, September 20, 1985

³⁹⁵ *New York Times*, September 24, 1985

Tunis Raid

Peres was engaged in a political suasion game of his own as circumstances presented themselves. Earlier, he said he would not “search the minds” of prospective PLO-aligned peace conference delegates. He tacitly went along with Egypt’s efforts to coopt the PLO into the peace process.³⁹⁶ But he could demonstrate toughness as well. In retaliation for the murder of three Israelis on a yacht in Cyprus and a steep increase in attacks in the Administered Territories, IAF jets raided the Tunis operations headquarters of the PLO, killing 30 to 50 terrorists and staff. Peres declared that the PLO would not be allowed to carry out terrorist attacks while talking about peace. The U.S. termed the raid “legitimate” and called for an end to the cycle of violence.³⁹⁷ A day later it called the attack “understandable.”³⁹⁸ The U.S. had encouraged Tunisia to accept some PLO personnel evacuated from Beirut in 1982. But it was not anticipated that the PLO would set up a headquarters for “terrorist operations.”³⁹⁹ Shultz recalls: “I wanted in some way to reach out to Tunisian President Habib Bourguiba and his government. When the inevitable resolution came up in the Security Council denouncing Israel, though having no practical effect, I was among those who recommended ...that the United States abstain rather than veto the resolution.”⁴⁰⁰ Predictably, the Presidents Conference protested the United States abstention.⁴⁰¹ Later, as a sign of even-handedness, the U.S., together with several Western allies, lobbied successfully to prevent Arafat from visiting

³⁹⁶ Peres repeatedly goaded Arafat on moderation. He called him “the symbol of the Palestinian tragedy, not of the Palestinian solution.” Asked if he saw signs of change, Peres replied caustically: “We already know who Arafat is...Signs of change are still not a change, just as signs of oil are merely signs. Can you pump signs?” *Near East Report*, September 23, 1985

³⁹⁷ *New York Times*, October 2, 1985

³⁹⁸ *New York Times*, October 3, 1985

³⁹⁹ *New York Times*, October 4, 1985

⁴⁰⁰ Shultz, op. cit., p. 458

⁴⁰¹ JTA, October 7, 1985

the UN.⁴⁰² But American signals toward the PLO continued to be muddled. That same month, the Palestine Liberation Front, a PLO faction led by Abul Abbas, hijacked the Italian cruise ship *Achiello Lauro*. Reagan expressed the hope that that the PLO itself would bring the hijackers to justice.⁴⁰³ Arafat, meantime, disassociated himself from the hijacking though his staff was able to help resolve it.⁴⁰⁴

Peres continued to explore ways of accommodating a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation while opposing PLO participation.⁴⁰⁵ At a UN speech, he recommended that direct talks "be initiated with the support of an international forum."⁴⁰⁶ Even as Likud ministers back in Jerusalem were denouncing Peres for making the speech without consulting the Cabinet, the Reagan Administration called Peres' proposals "statesmanlike, thoughtful and forward-looking."⁴⁰⁷ Hussein rejected the Peres overtures. But the King did call on the PLO to abandon its terrorist activities, saying terrorist attacks had been "terrible setbacks" in his efforts to include the PLO in the peace process.⁴⁰⁸ And, he reiterated that Arafat had to be part of any Middle East peace talks.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰² JTA, October 15, 1985

⁴⁰³ JTA, October 11, 1985

⁴⁰⁴ *New York Times*, October 8, 1985. After the murder of Leon Klinghoffer, a wheelchair bound passenger, the terrorists accepted a safe passage offer. When U.S. planes intercepted the Egyptian aircraft carrying Abbas, Mubarak demanded its release and an apology from the U.S.

⁴⁰⁵ JTA October 15, 1985

⁴⁰⁶ FBIS, October 22, 1985. Under Likud pressure he quickly backed away from the idea of an international forum, see *Washington Post*, October 28, 1985

⁴⁰⁷ *New York Times*, October 23, 1985

⁴⁰⁸ *Washington Post*, November 4, 1985. He implied that Arafat would now have to prove his sincerity.

⁴⁰⁹ JTA, November 4, 1985. The PLO also rejected the Peres proposals, see *Christian Science Monitor* October 24, 1985

Labor-PLO Moving Closer

Without explicitly giving the Americans what they wanted, Arafat plainly tried to accommodate U.S. demands that he publicly renounce terrorism and accept Israel's right to exist. In November 1985, with Mubarak at his side, Arafat condemned "All outside operations and all forms of terrorism." But he said the PLO retained the right "to fight against Israeli occupation in all possible ways." The State Department, understandably, found this commitment "inadequate" in meeting U.S. policy requirements for direct talks with the PLO.⁴¹⁰

By year's end, it had become fairly well established that the Labor - Likud "marriage" was dysfunctional. Labor was now embracing an almost identical stance toward the PLO as the Americans. Peres was ready to settle for a temporary state of nonbelligerency with Jordan as an interim step; peace talks under international auspices; a Soviet role in the process; and the participation of PLO-aligned representatives whose ties to the movement would not be scrutinized. But Peres may have gone even further. Israel Radio reported that Peres had consented to allowing the United States to drop the criterion that the PLO accept Israel's right to exist. He said Israel did not need the PLO's approval for its existence. Observers pointed to the State Department's most recent statement on the PLO, which listed three requirements: (1) acceptance of UN Security Resolutions 242 and 338; (2) abandonment of terrorism; and (3) readiness to negotiate with Israel. This apparent change in U.S. policy seemed to presage direct US-PLO contacts.⁴¹¹

⁴¹⁰ JTA, November 15, 1985. Arafat condemned attacks against civilians anywhere and pledged to limit his attacks against Israel to Israel-held lands. See *New York Times*, November 8, 1985. Farouk Kaddoumi said that armed struggle would take place "in all Palestinian territory from the river [Jordan] to the [Mediterranean] sea." *Near East Report*, November 25, 1985

⁴¹¹ JTA, November 20, 1985. It is possible that the reputed shift was little more than a trial balloon.

The United States responded to these hints, in its usual way, by denying a shift in policy.⁴¹² But clearly, something was afoot. Some days later, Peres expressed appreciation of Egyptian efforts to pressure the PLO into renouncing terrorism.⁴¹³ Mubarak's message to the Americans remained constant: "Like it or not" the PLO represents the Palestinians and should, therefore, be invited to participate in the peace process.⁴¹⁴ Somewhat paradoxically, it was Shultz who criticized European countries for legitimizing the PLO before it formally changed its policies.⁴¹⁵

This was the political backdrop when a 75 member delegation from the Presidents Conference visited Israel early in December. But their focus was not on hints of a shift in U.S. or Labor policy. Much of their attention was directed at internal communal discord over the "Who is a Jew?" issue.⁴¹⁶ Assistant Secretary of State Murphy was also in Israel, this time successfully meeting with nine Arabs from the West Bank and Gaza in fruitless pursuit of Palestinian-Arab participation in the peace process. The State Department downplayed Murphy's meeting. There was no apparent reaction from the visiting Presidents Conference delegation regarding possible PLO connections of the nine.⁴¹⁷ Upon his return to New York, at the end of the year, Bialkin simply made a broad plea for an end to the scourge of terrorism.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹² JTA, November 20, 1985 And, in fact, Vice President Bush listed explicit recognition of Israel by the PLO as one of the conditions for dialogue in a speech at Yeshiva University in New York, *Near East Report*, December 30, 1985

⁴¹³ JTA, November 29, 1985

⁴¹⁴ JTA, December 10, 1985 & *Washington Post*, December 9, 1985

⁴¹⁵ JTA, December 11, 1985

⁴¹⁶ Under Israel's "Law of Return" Israeli citizenship is virtually automatic to any Jew who requests it. Efforts to change the definition of precisely what constitutes being Jewish is a point of tension between the largely assimilated and sometimes inter-married Diaspora leadership and the Israeli religious establishment. While largely symbolic, since only a few thousand American Jews move to Israel annually, the issue can be highly charged.

⁴¹⁷ JTA, December 5, 1985

⁴¹⁸ JTA, December 30, 1985

Dual-Loyalty and Jewish Insecurity

The arrest (and subsequent conviction) of Jonathan Jay Pollard, a Jewish navy counterintelligence analyst, and his wife Ann Henderson Pollard, on November 21, 1985 on charges of spying for Israel had profound consequences for Diaspora-Israel relations. Details of the case are provided by Emanuel A. Winston:

Pollard...had obtained and transferred to Israel such information as Arab troop movements; data on Libyan air defenses enabling Israel to bomb the PLO headquarters in Tunis; information and performance analysis of Soviet deliveries of military equipment to Arab client states; status of nuclear weapons being developed by Pakistan with funding from Arab states; location of Syrian and Iraqi poison gas facilities and sources of that equipment in West Germany, etc. (Pollard was motivated by ideological reasons, but later agreed to accept payment from the Israelis.)...⁴¹⁹

The affair opened a virtual Pandora's box. The possibility that as many as 40 Americans were suspected of spying for Israel over the years was re-hashed in the media.⁴²⁰ Rumors of a wider conspiracy also continued to receive press attention.⁴²¹ For many in the Jewish establishment, the Pollard case was, in the words of the AJCommittee's Hyman Bookbinder, a

⁴¹⁹Emanuel A. Winston, "The Agony of the Pollards," *Midstream*, June/July 1988. The complex details and evolution of the Pollard case are beyond the ken of this study. For the first five years of his imprisonment virtually no mainstream Jewish leader wanted to be associated with efforts to have Pollard's sentence commuted. However, by 1993 the humanitarian aspects of the Pollard case had become a cause celebre and prominent members of the community lent their names to efforts at gaining his release. The best book length treatment of the complicated affair is by Wolf Blitzer, *Territory of Lies, The Exclusive Story of Jonathan Jay Pollard, The American Who Spied on His Country for Israel and How He Was Betrayed*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1989). For the most recent efforts aimed at getting Pollard pardoned see, "Pollack, Hoenlein Summoned to Pollard's Prison," *Forward*, July 29, 1994

⁴²⁰ *Time*, December 16, 1985

⁴²¹ "U.S. Hunts American 'Mr. X' In Pollard Espionage for Israel," *Washington Post*, February 19, 1988

“watershed event.” Jill Amy Higer, who studied the dual loyalty issue, writes:

Bookbinder feels the Pollard case raised some of the most critical questions first posed when Zionism was born regarding the relationship between a Diaspora Jew and an Israeli Jew, “Up until Pollard we haven’t been compelled much to address this question,” writes Bookbinder. “We had some differences between us and Israel, but never before a situation where we required to make a decision between loyalty to Israel and to America.” According to Bookbinder, the most disturbing aspect was Pollard’s insistence that he did it because he was a Jew and a friend of Israel and therefore it was somehow incumbent upon him to steal documents. In essence, he says, what Pollard’s defense suggests is that “if you are a Jew and a Zionist and a friend of Israel, it is incumbent upon you to do these anti-American kinds of things.” Moreover, Bookbinder feels this “logic” has caused many American Jewish leaders, who previously refrained from publicly dissenting on issues pertaining to Israel, to join in criticism... With some hindsight, it appears that the Pollard affair may have had more of an effect on the relationship between the Diaspora and Israel than on the relationship between the Israeli and United States governments. Indeed, perhaps more than any incident in the past decade, the Pollard case served as a disturbing reminder of the endemic potential for tension between the American Jewish community and the state of Israel. Most seriously, the Pollard case once again raised the dual-loyalty specter.⁴²²

In a poll taken in 1987, 54% of Jews and 34% of non Jews said the Pollard spy case and Israeli involvement in the Iran-Contra scandal would cause anti-Semitism to increase in the United States.⁴²³ Commenting on these feelings of insecurity, Shlomo Avineri, former director general of the Israeli Foreign Ministry and a Laborite, wrote:

In the Pollard case...a degree of nervousness, insecurity and even cringing on the part of the American Jewish community which runs counter to the conventional wisdom of American Jewry feeling free, secure and unmolested in an open and pluralistic society...we see some senior American Jewish

⁴²² Jill Amy Higer, *Dual-loyalty and Public Dissent; The American Jewish Community and Israel*, unpublished Master’s Thesis, American University, Washington, D.C. 1988

⁴²³ “Poll Shows Jews and Non-Jews Differ on Pollard,” *New York Times*, April 12, 1987

leaders falling over each other in condemning Pollard and distancing themselves--and the Jewish community--from him...⁴²⁴

They would also have liked to distance themselves from being guardians of the 1975 "no talk" commitment. They were psychologically drained from the AWACS battle, Andrew Young Affair, Lebanon War and now the Pollard scandal. Jewish leaders sought to avoid confrontation with the Administration as best as they could. With a divided Israeli government sending equivocal often conflicting signals about PLO intentions and the future of the West Bank, the Presidents Conference was relegated to a static defense of the 1975 pledge.

VI

The Year of the non-PLO Palestinians

Perceptual Framework

Disraeli's adage that "The secret of success is constancy of purpose" could hardly be attributed to the American Jewish leadership. But it very much describes PLO objectives during 1986. Their singular purpose was to block efforts aimed at circumventing the organization. Still, the PLO was not able to parlay worldwide support for the Palestinians into a place at the negotiating table.

For the Jewish leadership, the categorization of the conflict was now well established as non-zero sum and rooted solidly in the struggle between the Palestinians and Israelis. The community remained indirectly influenced

⁴²⁴ Shlomo Avineri, "Exile in the Promised Land," *Jerusalem Post International Edition*, March 21, 1987

by the activities of the Israeli left which continued their periodic contacts with the PLO.

Self-Image

The Jewish leadership viewed its role as providing earnest support for Labor's goals. Not since mid-1977 did they feel this comfortable championing the pro-Israel cause. With Peres' ascendancy as prime minister they had renewed hope for improving Israel's image and their own standing in the political system. The perception that most of the mainstream leadership held of the PLO was unchanged. Since it seemed that PLO intransigence was blocking progress toward conflict resolution, they embraced Peres' maxim: "The PLO without a solution or a solution without the PLO."

The political environment was dominated by persistent American efforts to demonstrate empathy toward the Palestinian-Arab cause, while maintaining a carrot and stick approach toward the PLO. "The Palestinian problem is more than a refugee problem," the State Department typically declared, "there should be no confusion between Resolution 242 and the legitimate rights of the Palestinians." In this context the leadership's consistent goal was now to endorse, in broad strokes, the emphasis on the Palestinian angle. With a wink and nod from Labor they now positively supported the American approach. Peres endorsed a scheme for unilateral autonomy; Eban warned that the Administered Territories would become another Lebanon; and "secret" diplomacy between Labor and Jordan continued. None of this went far enough as far as the peace camp was concerned. Outside the Presidents Conference, left wing activists engaged in an influential drive on behalf of PLO inclusion in the peace process regardless of whether it met U.S. conditions for a dialogue. From the opposite end of the Jewish political spectrum other considerably less influential activists lobbied

against the American Jewish leadership's shift toward Labor.

For the most part the central cast of characters remained the same. The most noteworthy change was that Morris Abram, whose philosophical ties were with the AJCommittee, became Presidents Conference chair. Also, Yehuda Hellman, the influential Presidents Conference executive director died. A magazine, *Tikkun*, established itself as a well-spring for peace camp and outside elite criticism of the leadership's cautious embrace of the Palestinian cause. *Tikkun* advocated a direct PLO role in the peace process.

Following the line established by Peres, the Presidents Conference pursued meetings with U.S. based foreign ambassadors to protest their countries' embrace of the PLO.⁴²⁵ Overall, there was an essential harmony between the Presidents Conference stance and the position of the Administration. Early in the year, Reagan reiterated that the United States wanted a solution to the Palestinian problem but would not negotiate with the PLO.⁴²⁶ With no evident complaint from the Jewish leadership, the Administration, however, sought to refashion the PLO; to entice it into making the necessary concessions so that direct US-PLO negotiations could commence.⁴²⁷

It was precisely this willingness to embrace the non-zero sum analysis that angered the American Jewish right. Opposition to Palestinian-Arab

⁴²⁵ JTA, January 6, 1986. For instance the Presidents Conference met with officials of the Peruvian government to protest Peruvian-PLO contacts.

⁴²⁶ JTA, January 9, 1986

⁴²⁷ JTA, January 31, 1986

claims to Judea and Samaria, the idea of Palestinian centrality and the Administration's disassociation policy, prompted Americans for A Safe Israel into launching a petition drive demanding that PLO officials be ousted from the United States.⁴²⁸

Jordan's announcement that Arafat had frustrated King Hussein's efforts to bring the PLO into the peace process was received in Israel with relief.⁴²⁹ Despite his ostensible flexibility Prime Minister Peres articulated, in stark terms, the choice Israel was offering the Palestinians: "The PLO without a solution or a solution without the PLO."⁴³⁰ Peres also chided the Americans for their efforts to coax the PLO toward the peace process as a "total failure."⁴³¹ He suggested that Israel might now go ahead with a "unilateral autonomy" scheme, but this was opposed by both Defense Minister Rabin and Foreign Minister Shamir of Likud.⁴³²

American efforts to cajole the PLO into changing its position had largely been the work of Special Envoy Wat Cluverius, who held meetings in Jerusalem with Hanna Seniora and Faez Abu Rahma. They, in turn, reported to Arafat. The United States had conditionally invited the PLO to participate in the peace process if it accepted UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. The PLO was also expected to forswear terrorism and agree to negotiate with Israel.⁴³³ This invitation was later clarified to include the proviso that

⁴²⁸ JTA, January 3, 1986. AFSI opposed an exchange of land for peace, supporting instead an exchange of peace for peace.

⁴²⁹ Especially on the right which believed Arafat was using Jordan as a Trojan Horse.

⁴³⁰ JTA, February 4, 1986. According to Farouk Kaddoumi, the PLO rejected Jordan's approach to negotiations because: "we would have been recognizing Israel's right to exist without getting anything in return. It would mean accepting the 1967 boundaries as Israel's boundaries, which we don't..." He noted that most Palestinian-Arabs could not accept Israel even within the pre-1967 borders. The armed struggle would continue throughout all of Palestine, not only the West Bank. The PLO could settle for no less than: "Whole rights, the independent state of Palestine and return to Palestine." *Near East Report* March 31, 1986

⁴³¹ JTA, February 10, 1986

⁴³² FBIS, February 10, 1986

⁴³³ JTA, February 24, 1986

Israel's agreement would be needed before the PLO could participate in an international conference.⁴³⁴

Even as the Administration proceeded with its efforts to bring Arafat to the peace table, some in the organized Jewish leadership were fruitlessly lobbying the Justice Department to indict the PLO leader on murder charges.⁴³⁵ Notwithstanding Jordan's frustration with Arafat or the desire of Labor and the American Jewish leadership to find alternatives to the PLO, the U.S. courted PLO participation. The State Department declared that, "The Palestinian problem is more than a refugee problem...there should be no confusion between Resolution 242 and the legitimate rights of the Palestinians."⁴³⁶ Some Arabs saw the remark as linking the Palestinian-Arab cause with 242. The phrase "legitimate rights" is often interpreted by the Arab side as synonymous with the establishment of a Palestinian state though both the U.S. and Israel reject that inference. Other unofficial messages reinforced the perception that the PLO was a potentially suitable partner in the peace process.

Sanitizing the PLO's image sometimes involved besmirching Israel's. In March, one State Department official asserted that both the PLO and Israel were guilty of terrorism. Earlier, scholarly journals associated with the Palestinian-Arab cause had developed the idea of "state terrorism" to counter criticism of terror group violence.⁴³⁷ Still, American frustration with the PLO, publicly articulated, was now a regular feature of Administration policy. State

⁴³⁴ JTA, February 26, 1986

⁴³⁵ JTA, February 19, 1986. Eventually, the Administration rejected Congressional efforts to formally indict Yasir Arafat for his role in the murder of U.S. diplomats in the Sudan years earlier. Assistant Attorney General John Bolton informed Congress that laws involving the killing of Americans abroad could not be applied retroactively. See also JTA, April 23, 1986

⁴³⁶ Near East Report, February 24, 1986

⁴³⁷ JTA, March 5, 1986. For articles on "state terrorism" see the *Journal of Palestine Studies*. For a discussion of the issues raised by this sort of moral relativism, see Paul Johnson, *Modern Times: The World from the Twenties to the Eighties*, (New York: Harper and Row Perennial, 1985), especially chapter 1, "A Relativistic World."

Department spokesman Charles Redman complained that the PLO was responsible for the breakdown in the peace process even as, in Jerusalem, Murphy was holding meetings with PLO-aligned Arabs.⁴³⁸ There was a sense of frustration that, with Shamir set to take over the "unity" government for two years, time was running out on bringing the PLO into the peace process. According to Shultz, this frustration was shared by at least some in the pro-Israel community.

One of Israel's most powerful and most articulate friends in Congress telephoned me. His words revealed the agonies that this moment brought forward. 'it's a critical moment,' he said. 'The door will slam soon, and when it does, Israel is doomed. There are two years of the Likud ahead, and there's no turning back. Israel either stops being a Jewish state or stops being a democracy--and either is a catastrophe.' The congressman said he hated the PLO but that we should tell King Hussein that if the PLO accepted the conditions, we would be ready to see them at the international conference. 'The king can't move without them,' he said. He urged that I give the PLO something on the self-determination issue by agreeing to the words within the framework of the PLO-Jordanian February 11, 1985, accord. 'If I said this publicly, I'd have to resign,' he said.⁴³⁹

U.S. policy remained remarkably consistent insofar as the West Bank was concerned: Israel was expected to give up the land. What would happen afterwards was less clear. The popular wisdom in 1986 was that, if some variation of a Jordanian-Palestinian solution could not be found, the area could come under Palestinian "functional autonomy."⁴⁴⁰ This was the Peres-

⁴³⁸ JTA, March 25, 1986

⁴³⁹ Shultz, op. cit., p. 460. Fear of Likud's return dominated both Labor and U.S. policy. Shultz writes: "Ambassador Sam Lewis had a private dinner with Peres on February 6 at which Peres said he was pondering whether to ask me to throw myself into the situation by a shuttle effort in the few weeks remaining before the Likud would come into power...With the coming of Yitzhak Shamir as prime minister would also come, I knew, a different and more difficult set of attitudes." p. 462.

⁴⁴⁰ See Thomas Friedman, "No Illusions: Israel Reassess Its Chances For Peace," *New York Times Magazine*, January 26, 1986

avored approach.⁴⁴¹

Disassociation, it will be recalled, required a strong U.S. commitment to Israel on non-West Bank security issues. Reagan's assurances to Jewish leaders that the United States would not sell weapons to Arab countries that could threaten Israel's security, should be seen as part of the disassociation framework.⁴⁴² At the White House in March he told the Presidents Conference that Israel was "that lonely outpost of democracy in the Middle East."⁴⁴³

Notwithstanding his public stance, rumors circulated that Peres was exploring the possibility of contacts with the PLO. Some tied a Peres visit to Germany with Uri Avnery's use of a German passport to enter Jordan for talks with PLO elements.⁴⁴⁴ Regardless of its veracity, the report must have left the US Jewish leadership hesitant and uncertain. The non zero sum message permeated the political environment. Elsewhere, for example, a group of Palestinian Arabs said they would begin resisting the Israeli presence in the West Bank with a Ghandi-like campaign of non-violence.⁴⁴⁵ Then there was the suggestion by Morocco's King Hassan that the Arabs select "someone"

⁴⁴¹ Peres wanted to reduce Israeli involvement in Arab life and "devolve" responsibility to the Arab inhabitants of the Territories. Thus residents of Gaza, Judea and Samaria would be given authority over health, education, welfare and municipal services. Peres hoped that Jordan would abandon Arafat and help organize such a regime. *Near East Report*, February 17, 1986

⁴⁴² JTA, March 6, 1986

⁴⁴³ *Near East Report*, March 17, 1986. He also made reference to Sandinistas being trained in PLO camps.

⁴⁴⁴ Supposedly, Peres gave Avnery a discreet green light to meet with PLO officials in Jordan. This is a somewhat mysterious episode. Peres had been in Germany for a four-day visit. Avnery traveled to Jordan via Germany for talks with Palestinian and Jordanian contacts (despite the illegality, under Israeli law, of such a visit). Jordanian authorities were then said to have expelled Avnery to Egypt. But Avnery denied that he had been deported at all. See, *Jerusalem Post*, March 5, and 7, 1986; and *Arab News*, January 27, 1986 and FBIS, March 7, 1986.

⁴⁴⁵ This faltering effort was associated with Mubarak Awad of the Palestine Center for the Study of Nonviolence, See *Washington Post* March 17, 1986

to meet with Israel (an overture Peres accepted).⁴⁴⁶

There is a symbiotic relationship between Israeli and American Jewish public opinion on Arab-Israel security issues. But in the final analysis, only Israeli opinion can make a particular course of action *kosher*. If Israelis opposed retention of the Territories it made it that much easier and legitimate for American Jews to do so. Thus another influential signal was sent to American Jewry when Peace Now activists and West Bank Arabs rallied together in Hebron against retention of the Territories.⁴⁴⁷ That Peace Now and Labor now shared a close relationship was equally significant.⁴⁴⁸

Eban's Transformation

Within Labor there was, as has been noted, much negative talk about the PLO, out of frustration with its refusal to join the peace process more than anything else. "Peace without the PLO or the PLO without peace," Peres had warned the Palestinian Arabs. But having determined that Israel would one day cede control over the land (in a form to be decided), the Arabs shrewdly took a wait-and-see approach.

The message that Israel would be best served by abandoning Gaza, Judea and Samaria was one that still had to be marketed to American Jewish audiences. They had been inculcated with the belief that secure and defensible borders were synonymous with retention of the Territories. Still, if Abba Eban, one of Israel's leading statesmen and a popular figure with American Jewry, could change his mind so could most American Jews. Eban made the case that, given the large Arab population in the Territories, Israel could not

⁴⁴⁶ FBIS, March 26, 1986. Indeed, in July Peres traveled to Morocco for a meeting with Hassan, JTA, July 23, 1986.

⁴⁴⁷ *New York Times*, April 15, 1986

⁴⁴⁸ David Hall-Cathala, *The Peace Movement in Israel, 1967-87*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990)

p. 144

afford to retain them. He stopped short of advocating talks with the PLO because the group had yet to publicly abandon its stand opposing Israel's existence. Still, Eban told a gathering of major UJA contributors that the Areas could become another Lebanon.⁴⁴⁹ For many American Jews, Eban was the "voice of Israel." His embrace of the non-zero sum analysis, as well as his championing of the Palestinian cause, lent stature and legitimacy to the message. Eban's shifting views are a microcosm of how changing perceptions can effect fundamental positions. This is illustrated by Robert St. John's description of Eban's meeting with LBJ on the eve of the Six Day War:

Eban opened by saying that Israel had never before had a moment like this. The country was in a state of anxious expectancy. He had come to discuss the question of the blockade, but meanwhile an even graver situation had arisen--the reports from Jerusalem --"a total assault on Israel's existence."⁴⁵⁰

Gradually, but especially in the post Lebanon era, Eban's appraisal of the nature of the struggle altered dramatically. He wrote: "To be or not to be is not Israel's question. How and what to be is the question. The existence of statehood was never the whole of the Zionist ambition."⁴⁵¹ In 1982 Eban, the affluent Stanley Sheinbaum of Los Angeles, and others established the

⁴⁴⁹ JTA, May 9, 1986.

⁴⁵⁰ In 1957 Eban published a book entitled "Voice of Israel." (Horizon Press). It is certainly beyond the scope of this paper to attempt to explore Eban's motivations in shifting to the left of his own Labor party. But even his highly sympathetic biographer notes that: "Close associates have used various expressions to describe his supreme egoism: overly self-confident, exceedingly selfish, somewhat narcissistic, given to pomposity, often guilty of intellectual snobbism. They point to his sensitivity about criticism, his desire for an audience, his love of applause, his occasional reference to himself in the third person, his habit of listening to his own voice on a tape recorder, his obsession with personal publicity, his conceit about his own bon mots, his refusal to share credit with others. (Most ambitious public figures have some if not all of these characteristics." (From *Eban*, By Robert St. John, (New York: Delta Book-Dell Publishing, 1972), page 507.

⁴⁵¹ Abba Eban, *Personal Witness: Israel Through My Eyes*, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1992), p.650.

International Center for Peace in the Middle East (ICPME).⁴⁵² Embittered by the loss of his Knesset seat in 1988, Eban moved to a New York hotel and spends his time writing and lecturing in the United States.⁴⁵³ In *Personal Witness* published in 1992, after the opening of the Israel-Arab talks in Madrid, Eban wrote:

Sovereignty must be both respected and transcended. I suggest a community arrangement on the European or Benelux model under which Israelis, Jordanians and Palestinians could each enjoy independence in agreed territorial spheres...A Palestine state that could do exactly as it liked would arouse serious reservations in all sectors of Israeli opinion. But a Palestine self-governing entity, perhaps confederated with Jordan, that would accept community constraints and a coordinated security policy would pose a lesser threat than Israel faces in the present volcanic situation. The idea that national freedom is indispensable for Bosnia Herzegovina while military rule is reasonable for the Palestinian people defies all logic. Since 1967 the issue has always been how to reconcile Israeli security with Palestinian freedom. This cannot be achieved without an integrative process in the relations between the peoples that inhabit the Land of Israel.⁴⁵⁴

Peres worked feverishly, using "quiet diplomacy" with Hussein in an attempt to achieve a territorial accommodation for the West Bank.⁴⁵⁵ He dispatched Minister Without Portfolio Ezer Weitzman, known for his "dovish" views, to meet with U.S. officials. These sessions were conducted without the presence of the Likud-appointed Israeli ambassador.⁴⁵⁶ All this in

⁴⁵² Wallach and Wallach, p. 454. ICPME was the organizational framework used by Rita Hauser in her 1988 talks with Arafat in Stockholm.

⁴⁵³ Eban's disillusionment with Peres and the Labor party was largely personal. See for example: *Jerusalem Post International Edition*, November 28, 1992 and *The Jerusalem Report*, November 4, 1993. The 79 year old Eban tells reporters that he expects to return to Israel in 1994.

⁴⁵⁴ Eban, *Personal Witness*, p. 649-650

⁴⁵⁵ *Washington Post*, April 22, 1986. Indeed, Arafat expressed concern about these contacts; FBIS April 29, 1986

⁴⁵⁶ FBIS, May 12, 1986

anticipation of October when the rotation deal called for Shamir to become prime minister and Peres foreign minister.

Yehuda Hellman

On May 18 the Presidents Conference suffered a major loss with the death of its top professional, Yehuda Hellman, at 66 years of age. Hellman had been with the Presidents Conference for 25 years serving as the group's executive vice president.⁴⁵⁷

In June 1986, Morris Abram was elected to head the Presidents Conference, replacing Bialkin.⁴⁵⁸ A former President of the AJCommittee and chairman of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, the 68 year old Abram had held a number of prestigious communal positions. Concurrently, the Presidents Conference replaced Hellman with Malcolm Hoenlein, the founding Executive Director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York (the main umbrella group for local New York Jewish organizations).⁴⁵⁹ Some weeks later Abram and Hoenlein flew to Israel for

⁴⁵⁷ JTA, May 19, 1986 He died of a heart attack while on Presidents Conference business in St. Louis. Born in Riga, Hellman graduated from the American University of Beirut and became a journalist. In addition to his position at the Presidents Conference, Hellman was a former official with the World Congress of Jewish Organizations.

⁴⁵⁸ Bialkin, of necessity, kept the Presidents Conference profile low on those issues which divided Israel's "unity" government. Earlier in the year he had his hands full with the controversial Bitberg visit. Later the Administration sought his support for the sale of weapons to Saudi Arabia.

⁴⁵⁹ JTA, June 4, 1986. When he came to the Presidents Conference Abram was head of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry. He was a senior partner in the law firm of Paul Weiss Rifkind and Garrison in New York. He had been president of Brandeis University and served on the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and chairman of the United Negro College Fund. Born in Georgia, Abram attended the University of Chicago Law School and Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar. Before heading the NY JCRC Hoenlein had been the first director of the Coalition to Free Soviet Jewry. See *New York Jewish Week*, June 5, 1986. See too, Morris B. Abram, *The Day Is Short: An Autobiography*, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982) which begins with a moving account of the author learning that he had an incurable disease.

meetings with top government officials.⁴⁶⁰

The Administration maintained its carrot and stick approach toward the PLO. Shultz made it clear that Arafat "should not come to the United States" to try to attend the UN Security Council debate set for late June.⁴⁶¹

Between Bad and Worse

The publication in Israel of Yehoshafat Harkabi's influential *Israel's Fateful Hour* presented supporters of territorial withdrawal, in both Israel and the United States where an English edition was brought out in 1988, with a cogent line of argument. A former chief of military intelligence, Harkabi began calling for the abandonment of Judea, Samaria and Gaza, in his words "the Zionism of acreage" in 1982. In *Israel's Fateful Hour*, Harkabi made an all-encompassing argument that crystallized the dangers of retaining Gaza and the West Bank. The subsequent English edition invited American Jewish criticism of Likud policies:

Israel must withdraw from the occupied territories with their growing Arab population...The settlement of the conflict cannot be by symmetrical compromises, with both parties offering commensurate concessions, because the situation is asymmetrical: Israel dominates areas thickly inhabited by Palestinians...Israel will inevitably have to negotiate with the PLO. There is no hope of a local Arab leadership distancing itself from the PLO...By describing the PLO as a basically terrorist organization we criminalize it and thus, unwittingly, criminalize the whole Palestinian community...

Jews in the West, particularly in the United States, should participate in this debate. They should not be squeamish and discouraged by the fear that the arguments they air may help their enemies or those of Israel. The choice facing them, as well as Israel, is not between good and bad, but between bad

⁴⁶⁰ JTA, July 11, 1986

⁴⁶¹ *Near East Report*, June 16, 1986

and worse. Criticizing Israeli policies may be helping the enemies of Israel and Jews in general, but refraining from criticism and allowing Israel to maintain its wrong policy is incomparably worse...

I am frequently asked how and why my position has changed. My answer is that mostly it came as a result of changes in the situations and positions of the Arab states and of the Palestinian people and their leaders, rather than of any changes in my outlook...

Jews, especially in the United States, are disposed to liberalism. When liberal public opinion is critical of Israel they experience a cognitive dissonance, and this gnaws at their Jewish identity. The future of the reputation of the Jewish people throughout the world now depends on Israel's good name and international stature. More than any other state, Israel is a hostage to world public opinion. Israelis must remember this. We Israelis must be careful lest we become not a source of pride for Jews but a distressing burden...

Israel faces a moment of truth, a fateful hour. My main message is this: let us think about our situation seriously. In Israel and in the Diaspora we need debate on the issues I have raised. I do not come to impose a line but only to propose one for consideration.⁴⁶²

Tikkun

Tikkun magazine, founded in June 1986, answered Harkabi's challenge. While virtually every Jewish periodical was of a liberal bent, *Tikkun's* mission was unique. It was funded to challenge Jewish neoconservatives because, coincidentally, they served as the intellectual base for Likud policies in the United States. Journalist and political historian E.J. Dionne explains: "Neoconservatism represented the defection of an important and highly articulate group of liberals to the other side. Precisely because they knew liberalism from the inside, the neoconservatives were often more effective than the old conservatives at explaining what was wrong

⁴⁶² Yehoshafat Harkabi, *Israel's Fateful Hour*, (New York: Harper & Row Perennial 1989). This rather lengthy quote was taken from the preface and conclusion. The influence of this self-styled "hawk" cannot be overestimated. Drora Kass of ICPME urged me to "go read Harkabi, a very important book" if I wanted to understand how the zero sum argument had evolved. Schindler provides a publisher's blurb for the softcover edition.

with the liberal creed."⁴⁶³ *The Public Interest* was one of the most important neoconservative publications in the US. However, *Tikkun's* grievance against the "neo-cons" was not rooted in the public policy arena but in the hills of Samaria and Judea. Toward that end, *Tikkun* set its sights on the other "neo-con" flagship publication and made its raison d'être to be "an alternative to *Commentary* because *Commentary* was the spokesperson for the view that liberal politics were out of step and disloyal to the Jewish world."⁴⁶⁴ *Tikkun* challenged *Commentary's* realpolitik with unreconstructed liberal utopianism. Promotional material for the magazine explained: "*Tikkun* is a Hebrew word meaning: to heal, repair and transform the world."

The glossy bimonthly magazine spanned divisions connecting a number of Jewish political camps: peace activists, elements of the internal opposition and some elements of the outside elite.⁴⁶⁵ Many of the people involved with the New Jewish Agenda and other groups favoring PLO participation in the peace process began to coalesce around *Tikkun*.⁴⁶⁶ The *Tikkun* coalition even included former opponents of the peace camp, people like Arthur Hertzberg, Albert Vorspan and Leonard Fein, who in earlier years had been critical of Breira (a precursor to the New Jewish Agenda and

⁴⁶³ E.J. Dionne, *Why Americans Hate Politics*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), p.56. Parenthetically, it should be noted that *Commentary* evolved from a liberal periodical. While published under the auspices of the AJCommittee, the group no longer channels money to the magazine.

⁴⁶⁴ *New York Times*, October 21, 1986

⁴⁶⁵ This nomenclature is defined elsewhere. Editorial Board members included: Gar Alperovitz, long associated with "hard" Left politics; Alexander Schindler, a former Presidents Conference Chairman and Stanley Sheinbaum later to be associated with the International Center for Peace in the Middle East. The publisher of *Tikkun* is Nan Fink but its driving force is Michael Lerner described alternately as: a clinical psychologist with an interest in "working class powerlessness" (*Jerusalem Post International Edition*, August 30, 1986); a psychologist formerly with the Institute for Labor and Mental Health in Oakland, (*The New York Times*, October 21, 1986); a former philosophy professor; and, a labor activist (*The Washington Post*, February 4, 1989).

⁴⁶⁶ JTA, June 20, 1986. The word "Tikkun" means to repair. *Tikkun* sought, in the words of an ancient Jewish concept, to repair the world.

Tikkun ideology).⁴⁶⁷ Now, these players constituted the outside elite or (in Vorspan's case) internal opposition and found common cause with other Jewish critics of Israeli policies. *Tikkun* challenged the Presidents Conference to openly criticize Israel's policies. Its editor charged that Presidents Conference organizations "don't even understand how out of touch they are because they surround themselves with people just like themselves. They have made their religion the religion of blind support for Israel." *Tikkun* wrote: "Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza (is) immoral and stupid."⁴⁶⁸ Most importantly, the coalition built around *Tikkun* gave the peace camp a desperately sought after sense of legitimacy. The "silencing" of Breira and the New Jewish Agenda because of their radical views was gradually ending.

Political Clout

In the wake of the Pollard affair, U.S. investigators began probing separate allegations that Israel sought to purloin American cluster bomb technology.⁴⁶⁹ Perhaps it was a sense that the Jewish community was under psychological siege that motivated Abram's enigmatic allegations that "lower echelons" in the Administration were seeking to weaken the de-facto alliance between Israel and the United States.⁴⁷⁰

Abram's overall assessment of the political clout of the Presidents Conference was generally positive, though he was candid about its

⁴⁶⁷ Brettschneider, op. cit., p. 133. *Tikkun* largely removed what Brettschneider calls "silencing politics" i.e. it helped redefine the political culture of American Jewish politics vis-a-vis criticizing Israel.

⁴⁶⁸ cited in *The Washington Post*, February 4, 1989

⁴⁶⁹ *Near East Report*, August 4, 1986. In what seemed to be a pattern of such charges, Recon Optical, manufacturers of aerial spy cameras, also charged Israeli espionage at their plant; see *Near East Report*, August 25, 1986. The case was dismissed by a federal judge. See *NER*, September 15, 1986.

⁴⁷⁰ JTA, August 1, 1986

limitations:

The Presidents Conference is a collection of elected heads of American Jewish organizations. It takes its direction from them and tries to express the will and opinions of this community. The American Jewish community is a vital functioning of American democracy and it has a certain influence--as it should have--upon American policy makers. It is not pretentious enough to say it's a shaper of policy, but it adds its influence to elements that shape policy. It does it openly, as others do in a free society. The Presidents Conference has some influence, for instance, in shaping of the ultimate arms-package to Saudi Arabia recently. But we were not the sole shapers of the policy. There were scores of senators and congressmen who joined believing that certain weapons, such as the Stinger missiles, should not be sold to the Saudis out of fear that they might end up in the hands of terrorists.

⁴⁷¹

Palestinian Aspirations

The well-entrenched policy of offering vague-sounding symbolic statements intended to assuage unease within the pro-Israel community while maintaining an overall strategy aimed at satisfying Arab aspirations for Israeli withdrawal from the territories captured in the 1967 Six Day War was maintained. In early August, for instance, Vice President Bush said that he did not want to see Jerusalem divided.⁴⁷² Actually, the U.S. consistently opposed Israeli sovereignty over any part of Jerusalem (including pre-1967 West Jerusalem) in the absence of Arab acquiescence. During his visit to Jerusalem Bush met privately with Palestinian-Arabs. He reiterated long-standing U.S. conditions for bringing the PLO into the negotiating process.⁴⁷³ Bush said that "negotiations must take into account the security needs of Israel, the security needs of all other states in the region and the aspirations of

⁴⁷¹ JTA, August 6, 1986. While it may seem melodramatic the psychological ambiance contributing to Jewish insecurities should not be totally discounted. Bitburg was still a raw memory.

⁴⁷² JTA, August 8, 1986

⁴⁷³ *New York Times*, July 30, 1986.

the Palestinian people."⁴⁷⁴ Bush was not alone. Dovish elements within the Labor Party led by Secretary General Uzi Baram were also calling for Palestinian self-determination.⁴⁷⁵ Peres was slightly more circumspect but his goal was to turn over administrative control of Judea and Samaria to Arab authority.

Labor elements and American policy emphasized the Palestinian issue, while using the Jordanian option to circumvent an intransigent PLO. Israel and Jordan were supposedly working together to diminish PLO influence in the West Bank.⁴⁷⁶ Meanwhile, U.S. officials were, for the first time, funneling \$4.5 million in aid for West Bank Arabs through Jordan.⁴⁷⁷ Jordan's own seesaw relationship with the PLO was on the upswing. King Hussein allowed some of the 25 PLO offices he had ordered closed only weeks earlier to resume operations.⁴⁷⁸ Peres made it clear that he could be persuaded to attend an international conference with (non-PLO) Palestinian participation, adding that this did not imply acceptance of Palestinian statehood.⁴⁷⁹ Shamir, due to become Prime Minister in a matter of weeks, emphasized his opposition to an international conference.⁴⁸⁰ Naturally, in this atmosphere, the Presidents Conference had no interest in challenging the direction of the US-led peace process.

⁴⁷⁴ *Near East Report*, August 25, 1986

⁴⁷⁵ *Near East Report*, August 25, 1986

⁴⁷⁶ JTA, September 30, 1986

⁴⁷⁷ *New York Times*, August 1, 1986. The PLO denounced the plan, *FBIS* November 14, 1986

⁴⁷⁸ *Near East Report*, September 1, 1986

⁴⁷⁹ *FBIS*, August 1, 1986. After the September Peres-Mubarak summit in Alexandria both leaders agreed on the utility of an international conference. *FBIS*, September 12, 1986. But Peres rejected out of hand Arafat's request for direct Israel-PLO talks, *FBIS*, December 19, 1986. If an international conference could not be achieved and Jordan did not want to directly negotiate Israeli withdrawal from Judea and Samaria Peres was prepared to hold "proximity talks" at a neutral site using an intermediary, *Near East Report*, September 29, 1986

⁴⁸⁰ *FBIS*, September 15, 1986

Arafat announced, somewhat disingenuously, that Israel need not turn over the West Bank and Gaza directly to the PLO. He recommended that Israel relinquish the area to the UN which would then presumably hand it over to the PLO.⁴⁸¹ Arafat explained his tactics to an Arab-language publication: "Sometimes we deem it necessary to intensify our military action and on other occasions we might deem it necessary to intensify our media campaigns, political action, or diplomatic efforts according to the circumstances and the stages of our struggle."⁴⁸²

That despite concerted American efforts to woo the PLO into the peace process, Arafat continued to insinuate a zero sum approach to the conflict, continued to frustrate the Administration. As a confidence building measure, the Carter Administration decided in 1978 to allow the PLO to maintain its Palestine Information Office (PIO) in Washington, D.C. The PIO was funded by the PLO in violation of the Foreign Agents Registration Act. In early October 1986 Edwin Meese, Counselor to the President, told the Presidents Conference that the Justice Department was "probing" the situation.⁴⁸³ Ultimately, the State Department concluded that keeping the PLO office open did not conflict with the country's opposition to terror or its official policy regarding contacts with the PLO. The intelligence community reportedly urged the Justice Department to allow the office to remain open rather than go underground. A State Department spokesman explained that in any event: "The PLO is an umbrella organization which includes some terrorists and some organizations that foster terrorism, but also includes the Palestinian version of the Red Cross and a bar association."⁴⁸⁴ In the American analysis the PLO revealed both "violent" and "diplomatic" elements. So, for instance, after a PLO attack against IDF soldiers and their families attending a

⁴⁸¹ *Arab News*, October 19, 1986

⁴⁸² *Near East Report*, October 6, 1986

⁴⁸³ *JTA*, October 2, 1986

⁴⁸⁴ *Near East Report*, November 17, 1986

ceremony outside the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem (the father of one of the soldiers was killed and 69 others were injured), the State Department criticized: "All those elements in and out of the PLO who have asserted responsibility."⁴⁸⁵

Intellectuals on the Israeli left did not share U.S. and Labor Party reservations about open dealings with the PLO. Arafat's refusal to formally embrace a non zero sum stance was written off as a self-imposed and inconsequential stumbling block. A delegation of Leftists traveled to Bucharest, in November, for a symposium which included members of the PLO.⁴⁸⁶ Romanian President Nicolae Ceausescu's efforts to orchestrate "a larger political context" did not succeed. Nevertheless, the brief session further bolstered the perception that the struggle had entered a radically new phase. The sense that times were changing was further underscored when two PLO supporters appeared on Israel television to condemn the stabbing of an Israeli civilian.⁴⁸⁷

Insecurity

American Jewish insecurity made it that much more unlikely that US policy on the Palestinian-Arabs would be challenged. Labor Party and State Department policies appeared, at any rate, to be in sync. And the leadership was in no position to do anything but swallow its doubts about Palestinian

⁴⁸⁵ *Near East Report*, October 27, 1986

⁴⁸⁶ JTA, November 7, 1986; see too, *Near East Report*, November 24, 1986. Peres, who was seeking non-PLO Palestinian Arab interlocutors, called the session a "farce."

⁴⁸⁷ *Arab News*, December 16, 1986

intentions. American Jews had their own problems. If their self-confidence had been shaken in 1985 by the Pollard affair, 1986 left the community reeling not only from the Iran-Contra affair but also from the Ivan Boesky humiliation.⁴⁸⁸ As the *American Jewish Year Book* explains: "Another concern was potential anti-Semitism. Earlier in 1986 New York City had been rocked by political scandals involving Jewish officeholders. There was fear that Boesky's downfall, by attracting even more attention to Jewish dishonesty in the metropolis, might provide potent ammunition to bigots, especially in the South and West, who were predisposed against big cities, Jews, and Wall Street."⁴⁸⁹

Ending With Disassociation

At year's end, the U.S. abstained as the UN Security Council condemned Israel for its handling of a new outbreak of West Bank violence. Defense Minister Rabin complained that media depictions of the violence were skewed ignoring the fact that the PLO had incited the violence. But the United States was not interested in the origins of this latest cycle of violence. For American policy makers the only possible solution remained Israeli withdrawal.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁸ The President told *Time* magazine that Israel was largely to blame for the idea of funding the Nicaraguan rebels with the proceeds of American arms sales to Iran. According to Reagan: "Another country was facilitating the sale of these weapons systems. They then were overcharging and were apparently putting the money into the bank accounts of the leaders of the Contras. It wasn't us funneling money to them. This was another country." While the White House later backtracked on the *Time* report, Israel's involvement in the tangled and murky Iran-Contra affair did little to boost its standing in American public opinion. See *American Jewish Year Book 1988*, (New York: AJCommittee), p.169. As the AJYB explains "Israeli officials were reported to be baffled and disturbed by the president's comments, and on December 2, Israel firmly denied the charge."

⁴⁸⁹ *American Jewish Year Book*, 1988, p. 200.

⁴⁹⁰ JTA, December 10, 1986

VII

Perceptual Framework

Nothing much changed with regard to the categorization of the conflict during 1987. The perception of the struggle remained well-entrenched along non-zero sum parameters. Belief that the conflict was communal driven was widely embraced.

The Presidents Conference, under Abram's leadership, was reticent in its public statements on the Palestinian issue. No doubt many in the Presidents Conference hoped Peres would somehow find a modus vivendi with the Palestinians regardless of Likud objections. Others, such as the Anti-Defamation League, wanted to leave the entire matter to the Israelis themselves. The dominant American Jewish-PLO milestone was a meeting held between Arafat and a peace camp delegation (comprised of Jerome Segal and several New Jewish Agenda activists) in Tunis.

An alternative Jewish self-image had begun to emerge. Outside the Presidents Conference, the peace camp took a proactive stance. They too actively supported Labor's flexible approach to the peace process. But they felt Labor was not going far enough. Segal's Arafat meeting was intended to pave the way for Israel-PLO talks by breaking down psychological barriers and "de-demonizing" Arafat. Even beyond the peace camp there was a sense that Arab intentions were truly changing. Where there is smoke there is fire. The sheer number of hints of Arab moderation was encouraging.

Despite their keen interest in facing up to Palestinian aspirations, the

internal opposition, mimicking Labor, was by no means ready to embrace the PLO. In this they had an ostensible ally in Shultz.

Also, with Labor's tacit endorsement, the internal opposition became increasingly outspoken. The conflict had robbed Israel of its splendor, they complained. At year's end, when the *Intifada* erupted, their hope was that the crisis atmosphere would force Israel to pull out of Gaza, Samaria and Judea.

The cognitive consistency to which much of the Presidents Conference affiliated Jewish leadership adhered held that Israel's survival, while vitally important, was less and less in doubt. What they doubted was whether Israel would continue to embody liberal values. Increasingly, they worried aloud that the Jewish State would become a semi-theocratic garrison state. Far from harming Israel, they told themselves, their criticism of its West Bank policies was helping to save it. This cognitive dissonance was fed by the divisions within the Israeli polity.

With Labor backing, the Presidents Conference held fast to the consistent goal of supporting the direction of the U.S. led peace process. In this they were opposed by the peace camp which was lobbying for unconditional PLO inclusion. The leadership, however, steadfastly opposed U.S. talks with the PLO until it met the 1975 conditions. Opposition from the Jewish right, though nettling, came almost exclusively from outside the Presidents Conference.

Environmental factors

The progressive shift in perceptions can be attributed to a variety of factors. Arab states expressed a willingness to enter into indirect talks with

Israel through an international conference; Labor party luminaries, such as Abba Eban, began a dialogue with PLO-aligned Arabs in Israel giving impetus to similar efforts by others in Israel and abroad; Even Likud figures engaged in talks with PLO-aligned Arabs. In this context, it became ever more untenable to hold the PLO in the odium of past years or to argue that the rules of the game had not changed.

The Israeli government was bitterly fragmented, with Labor and Likud factions sending conflicting signals. Plainly, the Israelis were unable to articulate a consensus position on the Palestinian issue and this greatly affected the American Jewish leadership. It certainly left the consensus-dependent Presidents Conference immobilized and opened the door to further fragmentation. A number of leading constituent groups within the Presidents Conference openly split with Shamir and were supporting Peres' initiatives aimed at bringing about an international conference. Peres argued that a conference would serve as a stepping stone for direct talks with the Palestinians.⁴⁹¹ If Peres did not seem overly concerned about the nature of that representation (though he paid lip service to excluding the PLO) then why should the Jewish leadership? They shared Peres' confidence that if the agenda and modalities could be controlled the risk of a Palestinian-Arab state emerging from the talks would be reasonable.

The political agenda had been set. The tough stance taken by the United States against unconditional PLO participation, combined with Labor's embrace of Palestinian centrality, preempted the Presidents Conference from lobbying on the issue. Another Jordanian-PLO rapprochement during the year made a mockery of the idea that the PLO could be excluded from peace-

⁴⁹¹ See for example, *The New York Times*, February 12, 1987 and *The Washington Post*, February 26, 1987. The PLO had also been calling for an international peace conference, suggesting that it would be willing to participate as part of a joint delegation, *Arab News*, March 1 and 7, 1987

making scenarios.

Several unfamiliar actors, whose activities will be explored in the pages to follow, came to prominence in 1987. They included: Jerome Segal, Charlie Biton and Moshe Amirav. Others, including Ted Mann, Uri Avneri, and Alexander Schindler, reprised their roles.

International Conference

America's peace process strategy remained the same: to facilitate the entry and participation of the Palestinian Arabs (perhaps the PLO) into a conflict resolution framework. The mission was to bring about an end to the Arab-Israel conflict. As Shultz tells it, he began to crystallize in his own mind what an ultimate solution would look like:

By early 1987, I had become more convinced than ever that the most promising way to approach the Palestinian-Israel conflict lay in some form of shared, overlapping, or interwoven sovereignties across Israel, the West Bank, and Jordan...So, with this endgame in mind, I felt the idea was to figure out what interim steps would best get the parties there...The process would start with an international conference, as King Hussein insisted. That was a way to give the king the legitimacy taken from him by the Arab decision at Rabat that gave the PLO the role of representing the Palestinians...

This approach was anathema to Likud and its splintered advocates in the United States. Shultz was determined to circumvent Shamir and work with Peres. In this he had the tacit support of the Jewish leadership. Once the details were in-place, Shamir would come under withering pressure to acquiesce. With Peres abandoning Israel's long-standing demand for direct negotiations, Shamir's stance appeared petulant and intransigent. Meantime, former President Carter visited the region and announced that both Syria and

Jordan were ready to discuss peace with Israel within the framework of an international peace conference. In Israel, Carter scolded those who wanted to retain Judea and Samaria.⁴⁹²

Under Peres' leadership, the Israeli Foreign Ministry sought to interest the United States in providing economic aid to the West Bank in order to promote non-PLO elements.⁴⁹³ But the idea that, once the Palestinian cause was embraced as the crux of the Arab-Israel conflict, you could then address the problem while bypassing the PLO was self-delusion. The political culture of the region simply did not allow it. The Egyptians recognized this and continued to champion PLO participation.⁴⁹⁴ The Jordanians, who had expelled the PLO leadership when the Arafat-Hussein talks collapsed, rehabilitated their ties with the PLO. Jordan and the PLO consulted on how to spend \$9.5 million, in mostly Saudi money, earmarked for the Administered Territories.⁴⁹⁵

Within the American political system, support for Reagan Administration Middle East policies was generally high.⁴⁹⁶ However, Senator Robert Dole (R-Kan.), contemplating a race for the White House in 1988, called on the Administration to close the PLO offices in the capital: "It's outrageous that this terrorist organization--which is out to destroy the state of Israel--can operate freely here."⁴⁹⁷ On the whole championing Israel's cause resulted in serious political costs to the Jewish establishment. Earlier in the year, for instance, Jewish-Catholic relations were strained by Archbishop of New York John Cardinal O'Connor's refusal to meet with Israeli leaders

⁴⁹² JTA, March 30, 1987. Carter also argued that Arafat and the PLO leadership could not be excluded from the peace making process. *Arab News*, March 27 & 30, 1987.

⁴⁹³ *Near East Report*, January 19, 1987

⁴⁹⁴ *Near East Report*, January 19, 1987

⁴⁹⁵ *Near East Report*, February 23, 1987

⁴⁹⁶ JTA, April 20, 1987

⁴⁹⁷ *Near East Report*. February 23, 1987

while on a visit to Jerusalem. The Pollard issue would not go away. Jonathan Pollard was sentenced to life in prison in March. Meanwhile, a U.S. federal grand jury indicted an Israeli colonel, Aviem Sella, for "running" Pollard.⁴⁹⁸

In March, a Presidents Conference delegation returned from a visit to Israel with, in the words of a press statement, "a deeper understanding of Israel's actions and motives concerning a number of vexing issues."⁴⁹⁹ What the leaders may have understood better than before was that not only were Israelis profoundly divided, Labor had undertaken to engage in a high degree of political suasion. Labor's approach to an international conference was an example of how it was making strategic choices intended to force choices. Laborite Abba Eban joined Hanna Seniora, a pro-PLO Palestinian, in issuing a call for an international conference.⁵⁰⁰ Meanwhile, Peres explored the concept with Soviet and Palestinian-Arab observers at the Socialist International meeting in Rome.⁵⁰¹ Still, Peres was not yet ready to make the leap to unconditional PLO participation. He and Shamir appeared to be united against a PNC/PLO role. Egypt's request that Israel allow 52 members of the PNC to attend a council meeting in Algiers was, therefore, promptly rejected.⁵⁰²

Many in the labyrinth that is the PLO feared that perception of moderation might become a self-fulfilling prophesy. On April 18, the PNC met in Algeria to discuss PLO - Jordanian cooperation on joint representation. Opponents successfully challenged Arafat's tactics of having the PLO take a back seat while Jordan ostensibly represented Palestinian interests. Ultimately, the PLO Executive Committee renounced the 1985 agreement with Jordan on

⁴⁹⁸ *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Diary of Events, Year Book 1988/9

⁴⁹⁹ JTA, March 25, 1987 Later, in early April, Morris Abram of the Presidents Conference and Edgar Bronfman of the World Jewish Congress paid a joint visit to the Soviet Union.

⁵⁰⁰ *Arab News*, March 27, 1987

⁵⁰¹ *Washington Post*, April 8, 1987

⁵⁰² FBIS, April 15, 1987

pursuing a joint diplomatic effort. Internal harmony (Abu Nidal was rumored to have attended) came at the expense of PLO moderation.⁵⁰³ State Department disappointment was palpable. While in no way diminishing Palestinian centrality, the State Department would not yield on conditions for PLO participation. Murphy cautioned that the peace process should not be hostage to the PLO's internal politics.⁵⁰⁴

All this followed a secret meeting in London (behind Shamir's back) between Peres and King Hussein (Shultz's representative Wat Cluverius was in London as a facilitator). Shultz relates what Peres aide Yossi Beilin told him about the session:

The two had agreed...that the Secretary-General of the United Nations would invite the permanent members of the Security Council...and the parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict to negotiate ...based on...242 and 338...The conference would invite the participants to form geographical, bilateral committees to negotiate the issues between them...Palestinian issues would be dealt with in the committee of a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation and an Israeli delegation; participation in the conference would be based on the parties' acceptance of 242 and 338 and the renunciation of violence and terrorism...Hussein had taken a tough line on the PLO. He said the PLO would fall into line when it saw the process going forward without it..⁵⁰⁵

On April 20, Peres finally told Shamir about the secret London meeting. Shamir aide Eli Rubenstein later explained to Shultz that in Shamir's view, if the UN was involved the PLO would be involved. "This international conference has become a passion. He is utterly against it."⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰³ *Near East Report*, April 27, 1987

⁵⁰⁴ JTA, April 23, 1987

⁵⁰⁵ Shultz, op. cit., p. 938. Shultz did not know how to present the agreement to Shamir. "If I took it to Shamir as the Hussein-Peres agreement that it was, Shamir would certainly veto it on the spot."

⁵⁰⁶ Shultz, op. cit., p. 940

In the U.S. Congress, meantime, Representative Jack Kemp (R-NY) led an effort to close the PLO offices in the United States under the federal anti-racketeering law (RICCO). These offices were the PLO Information Office in Washington, officially registered with the Department of Justice, and its New York UN Observer Mission opened as a result of UN General Assembly's Resolution 3237 inviting the PLO to participate in UN activities.⁵⁰⁷

Shultz also took a tough line toward the PLO. In a fiery address before the Annual Policy Conference of AIPAC, in May, he ruled out PLO participation in the peace process:

Shultz: So you have to look for people who are qualified and ready, so let's ask a few questions. Is the PLO qualified?

Audience: No.

Shultz: Hell, no! Let's try that on for size. PLO?

Audience: Hell, no!

Shultz: You got it! Look at what they've just done. Their alliance involves the most violent and radical elements around, and they just put it together again. They showed once again that they don't want peace; they want the destruction of Israel, so they're not qualified.

Palestinians? Certainly. They have to be part of peacemaking. There are Palestinians who know that the only answer is through a non-violent and responsible approach to direct negotiations for peace and justice. We have to continue to find them, help them, and support them.

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⁵⁰⁷ JTA, May 7 & 15 1987. Kemp was opposed by Reps. Gus Savage, David Bonior, Charles Hayes and Nick Joe Rahall who circulated a "Dear Colleague" letter arguing that Arafat was the leader of a Government -in-Exile, See *Near East Report*, July 6 & 13, 1987 and *New York Times*, July 2, 1987

⁵⁰⁸ Lukacs, op. cot., pp. 87-88

Shultz skillfully blended an anti-PLO message around a pro-Palestinian theme. Against Shamir's wishes, the United States would continue to "explore the feasibility of a Mideast conference."⁵⁰⁹ Taking a page from Peres, with whom he met privately at the AIPAC Conference, Shultz explained that the international conference was the framework, but "the name of the game is direct, face-to-face negotiations."⁵¹⁰

The cleavages within the "unity" government influenced the actions of American Jewish leaders.⁵¹¹ Their sympathies lay squarely with Peres and Shultz. The American Jewish Committee commissioned another Steven M. Cohen survey and found, not surprisingly, that American Jews were now more willing to criticize the Shamir Government.⁵¹² Moreover, the emergence of a legitimate internal opposition was now a fait accompli. Thus criticism of Israeli policies among Presidents Conference leaders became commonplace. Malcolm Hoenlein, Executive Director of the Presidents Conference, suggested that this willingness to side with Labor over Likud represented "a maturation of the relationship."⁵¹³ This maturation was exemplified in various spheres. David Arnov, who broke with UJA to establish the New Israel Fund, said that like many Israelis, he found the Jewish State to be a "very complicated, very divided, very troubled place."⁵¹⁴

⁵⁰⁹ JTA, May 19, 1987

⁵¹⁰ Near East Report, May 25, 1987. Shultz writes: "Shocked by the criticism and lack of support in Israel for his London agreement, Peres went out of his way to say that he did not blame me. His aides, however, were deeply bitter. Before long, they were telling the press that I was responsible for the collapse of this unprecedented agreement." Shultz, *op. cit.*, p. 942

⁵¹¹ Peres had demanded elections and that Shamir step down over the debate about an international conference. However, lacking the votes needed to force elections, Peres said his party would stay in the Government until it had enough votes to bring down the coalition. *Wall Street Journal*, May 14, 1987 Shamir and Peres fought over and sent conflicting instruction cablegrams to Israel's embassies abroad, see *New York Times*, May 15, 1987

⁵¹² *New York Times*, April 29, 1987

⁵¹³ *New York Jewish Week*, May 8, 1987

⁵¹⁴ *New York Jewish Week*, May 8, 1987. The establishment of the New Israel Fund is one way the competing elites sought to manipulate dimensions and widen the circle to achieve political ends.

For Rabbi Wolf Kelman, a leader of the Conservative wing of Judaism, the ennui resulted from Israel having been “de-charismatized.” Kelman said: “It didn’t happen overnight. Its a process that’s been happening since the Yom Kippur War. I would date it to that period, in 1973 and ‘74, when Golda Meir’s, omnipotent Israeli collapsed.”⁵¹⁵

These statements must be understood in the context of what was happening on the ground. While hardly a day since 1967 passed in absolute peace, by mid-1987 smoldering violence, rioting and unrest became increasingly common in the Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem and in the Territories.⁵¹⁶ This violence reinforced the view among Israel’s American Jewish critics that the occupation had to end.

Segal’s Tunis Mission

The use of political manipulation to undermine Likud was hardly new. Peres’ Laborites had engaged in it and so had the Americans. For the past several years, the internal opposition had also made use of political suasion tools. But the most overt use of political manipulation, thus far, was undertaken by the peace camp.⁵¹⁷

Most (but not all) peace activists, as noted earlier, were new to Jewish communal concerns. They traced their political legacy to the anti-Viet Nam war movement. Jerome Segal, who emerged as a peace activist leader, had virtually no involvement in Israel or Jewish affairs until he become absorbed in the Palestinian Arab cause while doing unrelated work as a junior State

⁵¹⁵ *New York Jewish Week*, May 8, 1987

⁵¹⁶ Fall 1987 issue of WAJIPP Newsletter “Israeli-Palestinian Peace”

⁵¹⁷ The one other group not mentioned, outside elites, engaged heavily in political manipulation. Their efforts will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Department staffer.⁵¹⁸

Segal traveled to Tunis, in June, to meet with Arafat in what was billed as the "first American Jewish delegation representing Jewish organizations ever to meet the Chairman of the PLO."⁵¹⁹ This mission to the PLO leadership was aimed at convincing them to display greater public moderation. Segal also saw his task as bringing the PLO's message of peace and moderation to a larger audience. Segal was accompanied by Hilda Silverman of the New Jewish Agenda and Mary Appelman of the America-Israel Council for Israel-Palestinian Peace. In terms of political suasion, the meeting served to manipulate dimensions and widen the circle of "Jewish leadership." In subsequent years, Segal has served as an informal advisor to the PLO and has helped them develop a "blue-print" for a Palestinian State. He heads the Washington D.C. based Jewish Peace Lobby.⁵²⁰

In her description of their meeting with Arafat, Silverman offered some insight into the principles and philosophy of the peace camp:

I spoke mostly...on Jewish fears. I've heard that in past meetings he hasn't wanted to listen to that. But he couldn't have been more responsive...When I spoke to him of the visit of Sadat to Jerusalem and told him that was the high point of the lives of many Jews in Israel as well as the United States, I had expected him to dismiss it, but he was nodding and smiling.⁵²¹

...Arafat especially talked about how difficult it is to get the PLO perspective and information about the PLO to the U.S. media. ..Concern about the Charter { the PLO Charter} was one of the issues that did come up in one of the conversations; the response was "we cannot now, we cannot do it." It's a real psychological problem for both sides. There's no question in our minds that

⁵¹⁸ Personal Interview conducted January 8, 1992 in Silver Spring, Maryland

⁵¹⁹ JTA, June 15, 1987

⁵²⁰ Personal Interview conducted January 8, 1992 in Silver Spring, Maryland. As is often common with like-minded political movements there is an interlocking directorate among peace camp organizations. For instance, Hilda Silverman of the New Jewish Agenda represents the America-Israel Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace in Washington.

⁵²¹ *Near East Report*, June 29, 1987

that was one of the things that would happen at the time there are serious negotiations...

{Regarding terrorism}...I think it's desperately important for people to understand that we were talking to people who are subject to violence every single day of their lives, and they are representing people who are subject to violence...I think it's very important for the media particularly to see and share with the American public the violence that is being done to the Palestinians...⁵²²

Segal lobbied against closing PLO offices in the United States: "There's a very deep symbolic issue here. It goes beyond the question of dialogue...There's a history of denial of their existence."⁵²³ In a further illustration of political suasion, the peace camp insinuated that Arafat had embraced non zero sum goals but that there was a psychological explanation as to why the PLO could not modify its violent rhetoric: Arafat's first responsibility was to meet the needs of his own constituency, not the semantic concerns of Israeli or American Jews.

Peace Offensive

What separated the peace camp from other Jewish critics of Israel was their unconditional embrace of the PLO, and their readiness to ignore violent PLO rhetoric. Some days after the Segal-Arafat meeting, the PLO reaffirmed its rejection of Israel and reiterated its call for "armed struggle until the establishment of an independent Palestinian State."⁵²⁴ There were some very real dangers associated with even tactical moderation. For instance, Hanna Seniora, editor of the Jerusalem newspaper *Al-Fajir* (and Eban's interlocutor earlier in the year), was threatened for contemplating a run for the Jerusalem City council by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)⁵²⁵ But

⁵²² "Israeli-Palestinian Peace," *WAJIPP, Fall 1987 Newsletter*

⁵²³ *Near East Report*, June 29, 1987

⁵²⁴ *Near East Report*, June 29, 1987

⁵²⁵ *JTA*, June 23, 1987

despite difficulties in conveying a coherent message of moderation, Arafat apparently made a strategic decision to accentuate the PLO's image of moderateness. Contacts with "progressive" Jewish and Israeli "peace elements" became routine. On June 11, a delegation of left-wing Israelis met with members of the PLO Executive Committee in Budapest.⁵²⁶ Later in the month, Abdel Wahab Darousha, an Arab Knesset Member, announced that Arafat was willing to meet Knesset members who supported the national rights of Jews and Palestinians.⁵²⁷ At the same time peace camp activists, associated with the New Jewish Agenda, intensified their lobbying on behalf of PLO inclusion in the peace process.⁵²⁸

The taboo against negotiating with the PLO was fading largely because, among the intelligentsia and progressives in Israeli (and to a lesser extent within the American Jewish community), there was a shift in how the conflict was labeled. Once the conflict shifted perceptually to non zero sum terms, as it did for some, the old regime became irrelevant. That is why Ezer Weizman commented that the PLO would have to be included in the peace process.⁵²⁹ Complicating the perceptual ambiance were rumors spawned by an Israeli Government suffering from a form of multiple personality syndrome. At the trial of Uri Avneri and Ari Eliav, a Shin Bet (General Security Service) agent testified that the government had sanctioned their illegal meetings with the PLO. The Shamir component of the Government deprecated the

⁵²⁶ *Encyclopaedia Judaica, Year Book 1988/9, Diary of Events*

⁵²⁷ JTA, June 23, 1987

⁵²⁸ JTA, July 20, 1987. The attention and energies of the American Jewish establishment were diverted elsewhere during the summer once again over the divisive communal dispute about Israel's Law of Return and the perennial "who is a Jew" question. In sheer numbers the law affected only a small handful of converts who immigrated to Israel. But the issue carried profound symbolic importance to the Jewish leadership (particularly for a number of major UJA benefactors). Hypothetically, some Jewish leaders and their families would be ineligible for automatic Israeli citizenship if the Law of Return were changed.

⁵²⁹ April 24, 1987, FBIS

report.⁵³⁰

In the U.S., meanwhile, the symbolism of continuing to allow two PLO offices to remain open-- when only one was mandated by the United Nations-- weighed heavily on the perceptual environment. In July, Murphy said that for complicated international legal and constitutional reasons he had strong reservations about closing the offices.⁵³¹ The Administration continued to signal the Palestinian Arabs that, although the PLO could not be a party to the peace process without meeting American demands, the U.S. would continue to pursue the Palestinian component. Shultz explained: "You have to find Palestinians that are able to represent the Palestinian people on the West Bank and are acceptable to Israel."⁵³²

In August, a Shamir aide reported confidentially to Shultz (without the knowledge of the Israeli embassy in Washington) that the Prime Minister met with King Hussein outside of London and that if left to their own devices they might be able to work something out. "Was there a chance here," Shultz writes disparagingly, "that Shamir had caught a mild case of peace fever?"⁵³³ Peres was, of course, also sending emissaries to Shultz to lobby for an international conference.⁵³⁴ Charles Hill, Shultz's Executive Assistant, sought to sell the international conference idea to Shamir on the grounds that it would lead to face-to-face negotiations with the Arab states.⁵³⁵ Shamir decried

⁵³⁰ *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 41, No. 4, p. 587 quoting *FBIS* June 19, 1987

⁵³¹ *JTA*, July 30, 1987. Murphy testified before a Senate committee which was considering a bill aimed at closing PLO offices in the United States. See, *Near East Report*, August 3, 1987. Plainly, the Administration expected that with time the PLO would be a party to the peace process.

⁵³² *JTA*, August 7, 1987

⁵³³ Shultz, *op. cit.*, p. 943. Shamir was interested in working out a deal with Jordan via direct talks. Hussein wanted to explore whether there was any way he could convince Shamir to accept an international conference. Neither side was prepared to change positions.

⁵³⁴ It is not clear if Abba Eban's October visit with Shultz was on Peres' instructions. Eban sought to impress on Shultz that a crisis of some sort was brewing. "All looks fine. But there is rumbling underneath. The urgency of it all doesn't scream at you, unfortunately." Shultz, p. 945.

⁵³⁵ *Near East Report*, August 17, 1987

the United States' open alignment with Labor. He cautioned the United States not to interfere in domestic Israeli politics. But the American Ambassador in Tel Aviv, Thomas Pickering, asserted the U.S. was intent on working with both Shamir and Peres. As for U.S. criticism of Shamir:

It is true that some in Israel who have been sensitive to our position have criticized us merely for articulating it, but nowhere in my diplomatic history did the doctrine of non-interference in the internal domestic affairs ever impinge upon a state's right, indeed obligation, to its own people to make its views known...Where I think people have made a mistake in Israel is in asking the United States not to express its views.⁵³⁶

Shultz took the case for an international conference directly to the pro-Israel community. He told a Hadassah convention: "I don't have to tell you what time it is on the demographic clock in Israel...We observe that this peace process is beset by partisanship...we know that no one (not us) not Israel, not the Arabs --improves the chances of peace by doing nothing at all, by just sitting around."⁵³⁷

Progressives Meet Arafat

On September 8, Arafat attended a meeting in Geneva "on the Palestine question" organized at the behest of UN NGO's. He declared that the PLO was prepared to participate in an international conference based on all relevant United Nations resolutions including SC Resolutions 242 and 338.⁵³⁸ Inherent in Arafat's message was that Palestinian participation would not be bound by American conditions. He also met and posed with Knesset members Charlie Biton, Tawfik Zayyad, Matti Peled and Muhammad Miari of

⁵³⁶ *Near East Report*, August 10, 1987

⁵³⁷ *Near East Report*, August 3, 1987

⁵³⁸ JTA, September 4, 1987. Rep. Nick Joe Rahall was another speaker at the Geneva conclave.

the Progressive List for Peace party. Later Arafat summoned Biton to his hotel suite to declare: "Tell Shamir and others that I am ready to meet them anywhere and talk on all subjects."⁵³⁹ Arafat's dalliances with Israeli progressives left Peres skeptical. Said Peres: "I did not hear Yasir Arafat's announcement. I only heard what Charlie Biton said Yasir Arafat's announced ...Arafat loves to play word games occasionally, especially, when he sees some Israeli leftists..."⁵⁴⁰

Anticipating harsh Congressional legislative action, the State Department preemptively closed the Washington PLO offices.⁵⁴¹ The PLO Observer Mission in New York remained open. The Administration was walking a fine line between domestic political imperatives and its commitment to addressing Palestinian aspirations. The State Department said the United States continued to support the "legitimate rights" of the Palestinian people.⁵⁴² The State Department explained the closure by citing contacts between the PLO and the Abu Nidal group, Abul Abass' leadership role within the PLO, as well as terror acts committed by the PFLP: "This action is being taken to demonstrate U.S. concern over terrorism committed and supported by organizations and individuals affiliated with the PLO."⁵⁴³ The Presidents Conference enthusiastically welcomed the announcement, although, echoing the consensus position within Israel, the Presidents

⁵³⁹ *Washington Times*, September 9, 1987 At a Geneva news conference Arafat said that West Germany owed the PLO reparations. The Palestinian-Arabs "are paying the price of the Holocaust, which took place in Germany. Perhaps West Germany should pay me compensation because I, the Palestinian people, are paying the price for the Holocaust."

⁵⁴⁰ *Near East Report*, September 21, 1987

⁵⁴¹ *Near East Report*, September 21, 1987. "50 Senators sponsored legislation...calling for closure." The State Department notified the head of the office, Hassan Abdul Rahman, an American citizen, of the closing on September 17. Meanwhile, the ACLU announced it would fight the closing as a free speech case, *New York Times*, October 3, 1987.

⁵⁴² JTA, September 17, 1987

⁵⁴³ *Near East Report*, September 21, 1987 At this time Abram and the Conference of Presidents were focused on the upcoming Reagan-Gorbachev summit. Abram had given a gloomy assessment of the plight of Soviet Jewry at a national press club news conference.

Conference said that the New York PLO should also be closed.⁵⁴⁴

Amirav

The Israeli Left was not alone in courting the PLO. Likud Knesset Members Moshe Amirav and Ehud Olmert caused the "national camp" a great deal of discomfiture when their own meetings with Dr. Sari Nusseibeh and Feisal Hussein, Jerusalem Arab leaders with well-established PLO ties, were revealed. Amirav remarked: "It is possible that now, in light of the leaks of the talks, my partners to the talks will be forced to make a denial."⁵⁴⁵ Dan Meridor of the Likud strongly criticized the meetings, claiming that they gave legitimacy to the PLO.⁵⁴⁶ He might have added that the revelations left many in the American Jewish leadership wondering.

According to Amirav's report intended for Shamir, and not released at the time, the parties agreed to propose secret Likud-PLO talks:

...Based on the establishment of a region of Palestinian self-administration in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza. The Palestinian self-administration will cover this area -- which encompasses some 5,000 sq. km. --and its capital will be in East Jerusalem. . . Such an interim arrangement would guarantee Israel's security and enable it to maintain its settlements in Judea and Samaria at a fixed and unchanged level... It is proposed, under the plan for this interim arrangement, to advance within a year to the establishment of the Palestinian self-administration, which would wield powers approaching those of a state.

⁵⁴⁴ JTA, September 17, 1987

⁵⁴⁵ JTA, September 22, 1987 Shortly after the meetings became public, Nusseibah was beaten by Arab attackers. Interestingly, Olmert not only emerged politically unscathed, he was eventually elected Mayor of Jerusalem on the Likud ticket, see *Jerusalem Post, International Edition*, December 11, 1993. Amirav, on the other hand, broke with the national camp and became director of the Council for Peace and Security which comprises, "Generals and other high-ranking reserve and retired officers publicly taking the position that the occupation is destructive to Israeli security." See, *Walking the Red Line, Israelis in Search of Justice for Palestine*, op. cit.

⁵⁴⁶ JTA, September 22, 1987

Conditions for entering negotiations:

...Mutual recognition...Recognition of the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people--not as refugees, but as a people--to its own state...
Recognition of Israel's existence within the 1948 borders and of its right to exist within said borders in peace and security (i.e. 242 or amendment of the Palestinian Covenant...⁵⁴⁷

Internal Opposition

Under the leadership of Ted Mann, the American Jewish Congress emerged in the forefront of the internal opposition. In a break with tradition, the AJCongress sided publicly with Labor in supporting Israeli participation in an international peace conference. This stance both reflected and reinforced the prevailing non zero-sum analysis among many in the Jewish establishment. Mann declared that American Jews had a right to participate in the debate over what was best for Israel. Na'amat USA (formerly Pioneer Women) moved quickly to side with the AJCongress.⁵⁴⁸ The Conference of Presidents reacted to the AJCongress announcement with a roundabout statement. Abram's letter read, in part:

Restraint in giving public advice to Israel on matters of security has been the tradition of the Conference of Presidents from its very beginning... {but at the same time} membership in the Conference does not restrict constituent organizations from taking their own individual position subject to their sense of the common good.⁵⁴⁹

Shamir's reaction to the AJCongress pronouncement was considerably more direct. In a letter to Abram, he wrote that only Israelis could decide their

⁵⁴⁷ Lukacs, op. cit., pp211-212

⁵⁴⁸ JTA, September 23, 1987. Na'amat describes itself as a "part of a world movement of working women." Its philanthropic work supports Habonim-Dror, the Labor Zionist youth movement. See, *AJYB*, 1990, p. 577.

⁵⁴⁹ JTA, October 13, 1987

future: "The regrettable recent attempt to breach this understanding sets a dangerous precedent. There is a shock of disbelief in Israel."⁵⁵⁰ Abraham H. Foxman, national director of the ADL, a centrist voice, also took the AJCongress to task:

...While it is good to be involved there are limits, the most significant limit being that decisions relating to security must rest with Israel, not American Jews, because the consequences of those decisions could mean life or death for the people of Israel...now that restraint is being challenged from without and from within...Today, it is the foreign minister of Israel and a major American Jewish organization who invite our involvement...What has changed?... Should American Jews enter the Israeli internal fray, our effectiveness on the American scene will surely be diminished...The very meaning of community action will be placed in question.⁵⁵¹

Shultz in Israel

Parallel to these events, Arab resistance to Israeli control of the West Bank took on a more systematically violent turn. In fact, Shultz's October visit to Israel (his first in two years) was marred by violence.⁵⁵² Palestinian leaders from the Territories refused to meet with Shultz because of last-minute PLO opposition.⁵⁵³ The Secretary had come to Israel to see if Shamir could somehow be cajoled into accepting an international conference by a semantic slight of hand: the meeting would be termed a "summit." A myriad of "understandings" and "assurances" addressing Israeli concerns about an

⁵⁵⁰ JTA, October 13, 1987

⁵⁵¹ *Jerusalem Post*, October 14, 1987. It must be said that Foxman has steadfastly adhered to this centrist line. He criticized the Coalition for Israel, on the Jewish right, for challenging Labor policies at an August 9, 1993 press conference held at the National Press Club.

⁵⁵² JTA, October 14, 1987

⁵⁵³ JTA, October 20, 1987 Shultz comments that there was more to it. "I had made a mistake in letting our embassy set the meeting in my hotel, the Jerusalem Hilton, which was ringed by armed Israeli security guards. When I saw the guards, I realized the Palestinians would not regard that environment as neutral ground and that pictures taken of them coming and going would be used against them, possibly in a deadly way." Shultz, pp. 946-947

international conference would be part of the package. Under intense pressure, Shamir agreed to an international conference provided it led straightaway to direct negotiations with the Arabs.⁵⁵⁴ Shultz writes:

As I was leaving for the prime minister's residence, Murphy said. "If Shamir's answer is no, this will be a brief, pleasant evening. If his answer is yes, we'll be up all night negotiating an MOU [memorandum of understanding] with them."

But that was not the way it turned out. I had a private dinner with Shamir. We talked about problems in the region, my negotiations with the Soviets, the problems of Soviet Jewry, the Israeli economy. After dinner, two or three people on each side joined us, and we turned to the issue at hand. Our session was brief and direct. "Well, Mr. Secretary," Shamir concluded softly, "you know our dreams, and you know our nightmares. We trust you. Go ahead."

That was it. No more had to be said. He had rolled the dice with us...

The next evening, at King Hussein's Palace Green residence in London, I put the proposal to him as one from the president of the United States...

The next day, Tuesday, October 20, I met again with King Hussein. He had made up his mind: his answer was no.

The king gave me two reasons. His nerves went raw at the very mention of Shamir. "I can't be alone with that man..." He did not believe that Shamir would ever permit negotiations to go beyond the issue of "transitional" arrangements for those living in the West Bank and Gaza....⁵⁵⁵

Internal Opposition Presses Disassociation

Taking situational advantage of various developments on the ground,

⁵⁵⁴ JTA, November 20, 1987 Shamir's position was made public some weeks later.

⁵⁵⁵ Shultz, op. cit. pp.947-948. Afterwards, Shultz writes, "I briefed my delegation on the king's decision. They were downcast. 'Stop talking about it,' I told them. 'It's over. No more memos. No need for a postmortem.'"

several groups joined the AJCongress in mobilizing support against continued Israeli control over Judea and Samaria. The internal opposition had made its choice: intensified criticism of Israeli policies would be used to force a policy change. Anticipating a visit to the U.S. by Shamir later in the month, Schindler exhorted American Jews to take part in the controversy over the peace process. Speaking at the 59th Annual UAHC Convention, the leader of Reform Judaism called on Israel to “reject the status quo” in the West Bank and Gaza and “to relentlessly pursue all avenues to peace that will maintain the Jewish and democratic character of the State.”⁵⁵⁶ He mitigated this criticism by demonstrating an understanding of Israeli concerns that an international conference would quickly turn into a kangaroo court. Essentially embracing Labor’s political line, Schindler argued that: “The prolongation of the status quo...in Judaea, Samaria, and Gaza exposes Israel to infinitely greater risk than does any international umbrella for direct negotiations.”⁵⁵⁷ The American Jewish Committee took much the same stance at their National Executive Council meeting held in Atlanta. After listening to an address by Jimmy Carter, the AJCommittee released a position paper terming the status quo in the Territories “dangerous.”⁵⁵⁸ Meanwhile, the Administration vigorously adhered to its policy of disassociation. Israel’s efforts to secure and control Judea, Samaria and Gaza district were routinely undermined. So, when the Israelis considered deporting Mubarak Awad, head of the inappropriately named Palestinian Center for the Study of Non-

⁵⁵⁶ JTA, November 2, 1987. A month or so earlier, Peres told the UN: “We who have experienced others’ domination, do not wish to dominate others. We, who sought justice and security, do not wish to deny them to others...” See, Lukacs, op. cit., p 215

⁵⁵⁷ JTA, November 2, 1987

⁵⁵⁸ JTA, November 3, 1987

Violence, the U.S. strenuously objected.⁵⁵⁹

In November, a Federal District Court in Washington dismissed civil liberties arguments and upheld a State Department order closing the PLO Information Office.⁵⁶⁰ Meanwhile, the UN successfully thwarted Congressional moves to close the PLO Observer Mission.⁵⁶¹ The State Department said that, while the U.S. had the legal authority to close this office, "As a practical matter it is too late to challenge the institution of permanent observer missions, or the extension of that institution to non-governmental organizations like the PLO."⁵⁶²

Parenthetically, the freedom for Soviet Jewry movement was the lone area of Jewish communal life in which a virtual consensus prevailed. In December, Jewish organizations were heavily engaged in staging a massive demonstration, Freedom Sunday, which brought over 200,000 people to Washington for a rally timed to precede the Reagan-Gorbachev summit.⁵⁶³

Land Mark Event - Intifada

The perceptual turning point came five and a half years after the start of the Lebanon campaign with the outbreak of the *Intifada*.

⁵⁵⁹ JTA, November 20, 1987 Awad was in Israel on an expired visa. He had become an American citizen and claimed to be a disciple of Gandhi. Israeli authorities insisted that Mubarak was actually a PLO operative. He was later said to have instigated disturbances in the Territories and authored an Intifada leaflet which called on the Arabs to, "Strike painful blows at the fascist entity in order to induce the collapse of the economic and social structure of the Zionist entity." He had also been quoted as saying: "The PLO wants the entire Palestine and I agree. Palestine is for me the Galilee, Akko, Ashdod--everything. This is Palestine for me." See *Myths & Facts, 1989* (Washington, DC: Near East Report), p. 192

⁵⁶⁰ JTA, December 3, 1987

⁵⁶¹ JTA, December 9, 1987

⁵⁶² *Near East Report*, November 9, 1987. In December Congress passed a bill, never implemented, ordering both offices closed. See, JTA, December 21, 1987

⁵⁶³ JTA, December 7, 1987

The *Intifada* irrevocably influenced American Jewish perceptions of the Palestinian cause. Its antecedents are, therefore, worth reviewing. In late November 1987 six IDF soldiers were killed and 7 wounded in a daring surprise attack by an Arab irregular who entered their Galilee army outpost on a hang-glider.⁵⁶⁴ This operation raised morale among the Arabs in the Territories and was followed several days later by the fatal stabbing of an Israeli civilian in Gaza. The actual beginnings of the *Intifada* can be traced to rioting on December 8.⁵⁶⁵

Thereafter, the paroxysm of violence in the Territories became worse. The ferocity of the tumult in Gaza led to a stormy debate in the Knesset with Peres called for the dismantling of Jewish settlements located in the Gaza District.⁵⁶⁶ As the mayhem spread, Defense Minister Rabin blamed Syria and Libya for fomenting the violence. Plainly, the frenzy was of a magnitude and

⁵⁶⁴ JTA, November 27, 1987

⁵⁶⁵ Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari explain what happened: "For all intents and purposes, December 8 had been a day like most others in the Gaza Strip. Admittedly, a fatal traffic accident had occurred there in the afternoon, but traffic deaths are so commonplace in Israel and the territories that it often seems the public is totally inured to them. In this case an Israeli truck had hit a car carrying laborers from the Gaza Strip, immediately killing four of the passengers and badly injuring the others. The item was broadcast over the radio as a matter of course--another statistic that was expected to faze almost no one.. Then something odd happened: all at once, it seemed, Gaza was abuzz with a wild rumor that was to spark an unprecedented wave of demonstrations. The crash, this rumor had it, had not been an accident at all but a cold-blooded act of vengeance by a relative of the Israeli stabbed to death in Gaza's main market two days earlier...By evening a leaflet was already in circulation...and the following day the Arabic newspaper al-Fajr...pronounced the death of the four passengers to have been "maliciously perpetrated."

...As thousands of mourners returned from the funerals early in the evening, their procession turned into an outright assault on the (IDF) outpost. Crowds of angry people, young and old, closed in on the barbed-wire fence and began throwing stones into the compound. Shots fired in the air did nothing to deter the rioters, who were shouting curses and chanting the cry "*Jihad! Jihad!*...In the past, demonstrations and other disturbances had always broken up at nightfall, when the residents closed themselves up in their homes. This time the rioting began at dusk and continued well past eleven o'clock...(Still) No additional forces were sent to Gaza. Neither was Jebylya placed under curfew..."See *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising --Israel's Third Front*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990, p. 17

⁵⁶⁶ JTA, December 9, 1987

nature not experienced since the Arab uprisings of the 1920's and 1930's.⁵⁶⁷ The violence experienced in the Jerusalem area was unprecedented. On the West Bank and Gaza, mobs of Arab young people burned tires, threw rocks, bottles, and molotov cocktails.

Media coverage of the violence mushroomed. The vast international press corps already stationed in Israel was augmented by auxiliary reporters, TV crews and photographers. Images of Palestinian rage were televised to viewers worldwide. Israeli security forces, under Rabin's leadership, were at a loss to contain the unrest.⁵⁶⁸ In response to charges that the presence of TV cameras actually stimulated violence, Shamir considered closing the territories to the news media.⁵⁶⁹ Ultimately, no substantive restrictions were placed on media coverage.

The violence which may well have begun spontaneously soon became orchestrated. Divisions arose among the Arab inhabitants of the Territories-- and the PLO leadership in Tunis-- about where to take the *Intifada*. The interminable violence further tarnished Israel's already battered image. Even more importantly, it reinforced earlier objections, raised by elements of the

⁵⁶⁷ JTA, December 11, 1987. Rabin was in New York for a previously scheduled series of appearances. He was later criticized for remaining abroad and underestimating the nature of the violence. The Intifada recalled earlier periods of violence during the years of the British Mandate. In the 1920s, 67 Jews were killed in Hebron in Arab rioting. Between 1936 and 1939 517 Palestinian-Jews were murdered. See, *Myths & Facts* (1989) p. 9 ;*Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 8 p. 235; and Maurice Samuel, *What Happened in Palestine*, Stratford Company, Boston, 1929, for details on the previous uprisings.

⁵⁶⁸ Given Labor's interest in withdrawal from the Administered Territories, Israel was not psychologically prepared or morally comfortable with crushing the uprising. Contrast Rabin's indecisiveness with how Syria's Hafez Assad dealt with a Sunni *intifada* in Hama. For details see *New York Times*, February 11, and 21, 1982; *Christian Science Monitor*, February 12, 1982, and *Jerusalem Post International Edition*, March 26, 1982. When Rabin talked tough about "force, power and blows" he was roundly condemned.

⁵⁶⁹ JTA, December 16, 1987

143 SETTLEMENTS



- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| 1 Alfei Menasheh | 7 Beit Aryeh |
| 2 Emanuel | 8 Givat Ze'ev |
| 3 Karnei Shomron | 9 Ma'aleh Adumim |
| 4 Oranit | 10 Betar |
| 5 Elkanah | 11 Efrat |
| 6 Ariel | 12 Kiryat Arba |

	December 1987	May 1991
Alfei Menasheh	1,900	2,800
Emanuel	1,900	4,000
Karnei Shomron	—	4,000
Oranit	1,100	2,750
Elkanah	1,560	3,000
Ariel	5,300	10,000
Beit Aryeh	625	1,050
Givat Ze'ev	3,400	6,000
Ma'aleh Adumim	11,100	15,000
Betar	—	1,550
Efrat	1,500	3,150
Kiryat Arba	3,700	5,500

FIGURE NO. 5

pro-Israel community in the United States, to Israel's continued retention of the Territories. The State Department weighed in with complaints about Israel's handling of the unrest.⁵⁷⁰

Jewish Leadership Responds

Understandably, the violence (and saturation coverage of it in the media) caught the Presidents Conference unprepared. The leadership had been intensively focused on the Soviet Jewry issue and basking in the success of the Washington rally. Some three weeks after the start of the unrest Jewish leaders were divided on its significance and lessons. Responding to press inquiries, Abram said the unrest had "been planned, instigated and incited by Palestinian terrorists led by the PLO and Moslem fundamentalist groups."⁵⁷¹ Taking a different vantage point, Schindler said the violence "should shock Israel's government" into ending the status quo.⁵⁷² From outside the President's Conference, Americans for A Safe Israel lambasted Schindler for criticizing Israel.⁵⁷³ However, any semblance of solidarity with Israel crumbled in the face of the televised rioting.

Following a now familiar pattern, the United States joined in a UN Security Council vote deploring Israel's handling of the violence.⁵⁷⁴ Jewish leaders complained that the State Department's response to the violence was "unbalanced."⁵⁷⁵ But in fact, both the U.S. vote and their own conflicted attitudes underlined the symbiotic relationship between perception and policy. Shultz's description is illustrative:

⁵⁷⁰ JTA, December 16, 1987

⁵⁷¹ JTA, December 23, 1987

⁵⁷² JTA, December 23, 1987

⁵⁷³ JTA, December 23, 1987

⁵⁷⁴ JTA, December 24, 1987

⁵⁷⁵ JTA, December 28, 1987

The Intifada created a whole new situation, one that in its own way altered the fundamental concept of the peace process.

...The scene in Israel and the occupied territories was ghastly: "Israeli Police Storm Temple Mount: Witnesses Say Tear Gas Fired Inside Two Islamic Holy Places." headlined the *Washington Post*...

Four days after the Temple Mount clash, Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin declared that the intifada would be dealt with by "force, power and blows," portraying this as a way to reduce the use of live ammunition and the killing of demonstrators. But he also said--repeatedly--that "there is no military solution to this problem." Images of Israeli brutality appeared almost nightly on American television and elsewhere throughout the world. Concern was intense in the American Jewish community. Violinist Issac Stern came to see me, spoke of his shock, and said that on his upcoming trip to Israel, he would refuse to meet with any Israeli leaders.⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷⁶ Shultz, op. cit., pp. 1016-1017

VIII

The year in which the perceptual change of the Arab-Israel conflict was codified began much as the previous year had ended: with world attention locked on the violence and counter-violence on the West Bank and Gaza District. But by year's end, chaperoned by the outside Jewish elite, the long flirtation between the United States and the PLO was consummated, finally.

Perceptual Framework

Palestinian Arab rage against Israel's presence in the Territories was definitive confirmation, near universal opinion held, that their plight was at the core of the Arab-Israel conflict. The violence hardened the categorization of the conflict as Israeli v. Palestinian. Ironically, now that the conflict was well established perceptually in non zero sum terms, the actual level of Arab violence, and violent rhetoric, became practically irrelevant to the conceptualization of the struggle.

The consensus dependent Presidents Conference was torn between wanting to defend Israel's handling of the *Intifada*, while not appearing to support retention of the Administered Territories. This left the field of action open to the internal opposition, peace camp, and most notably, to the outside elite.

Their own self image impelled the outside elite and peace camp to help Israel and the PLO come to terms with each other's aspirations. To accomplish this they sought to, first of all, facilitate a U.S. - PLO dialogue. The internal opposition was considerably more conflicted, and limited itself, largely, to towing the Labor line. The image of Arab intentions, for all three elements, was influenced to varying degrees by Arafat's flirtation with the "magic words." The cognitive consistency for all the players was a belief that Israel's

physical survival was no longer in doubt, but its liberal bona fides were. Therefore, 1988 brought no change in cognitive dissonance. However, the goals of these players had never been more splintered. The standard goal, since the start of the "unity" Government, of supporting the U.S. led peace process (to the extent it was also in harmony with Labor's stance), was unsatisfactory to the outside elite. The outside elite viewed themselves as more worldly and better attuned to the thinking of the progressive wing of the Labor Party than the peace camp which favored unconditional PLO inclusion in the peace process. With the ascendancy of the outside elite the community's center of power (on the PLO-talk issue) was no longer in the hands of the Presidents Conference or even the internal opposition. They were left to paying lip-service in opposition to a US-PLO dialogue until after Arafat uttered the "magic words."

Political Environment/Key actors

The political environment was replete with violence; intense criticism of Israel from traditionally pro-Israel voices; rebuke from the media; persistent hints of PLO moderation; behind-the-scenes coordination between the outside elite and progressive elements of the Labor Party; public disputes among Presidents Conference groups; and accelerated maneuvering by the Administration to cajole the PLO into meeting US demands for a dialogue.

Several players emerged in supporting roles including: Robert Lifton, Henry Siegman, Ted Ellenoff, Menachem Rosensaft, and Stanley Sheinbaum. They joined Vorspan, Segal, Hauser and others in the Jewish community in paving the way for U.S.-PLO dialogue.

“The Palestinians in the occupied territories had come center stage with a vengeance,” writes Shultz, “and Israel’s brutal crackdown was doing great damage to its own interests and its international reputation.”⁵⁷⁷ The Administration’s answer was to use political suasion to accelerate the “peace process” and press on with disassociation. To that end, the United States supported a Security Council vote against plans by Israel to deport *Intifada* “ring leaders.”⁵⁷⁸ More substantively, Shultz proposed to parlay the latitude presented by the *Intifada* into self-government for the Palestinian Arabs by February 1989.⁵⁷⁹ This approach was in harmony with long-standing American strategy to facilitate the entry and participation of the Palestinians (perhaps the PLO) into the peace process. Shultz controlled the political agenda by framing discussion around “territory for peace” and whether Arafat would utter the “magic words.”

All parties engaged in political suasion benefited from an atmosphere of crisis, imperfect information and insinuation. Arafat announced his willingness to accept “all UN resolutions” pertaining to the Arab-Israel conflict. Meanwhile, Peres muddied the waters by commenting that the Israeli Government had been “indirectly approached” by the PLO “to check whether we are prepared to open negotiations.” That left both Shamir and the PLO in the position of denying any such overture.⁵⁸⁰ An Israeli official,

⁵⁷⁷ Shultz, op. cit., p. 1020

⁵⁷⁸ *New York Times*, January 6, 1988. The Presidents Conference chose to address the issue in terms of international law. Said Abram: “Israel under the Geneva Convention is absolutely responsible for maintaining order in the territory under its control for, among other reasons, the sake of the inhabitants. International law does not bar even capital punishment in the execution of the responsibility to preserve public order. Israel does not employ so harsh a sanction, but in the most extreme cases of individuals who pose a grave and immediate threat to public order Israel has occasionally deported the perpetrators.” *Near East Report*, January 11, 1988; Shultz also made use of international law. Abraham Sofaer, the State Department’s legal advisor wrote against closing the PLO’s UN Observer Mission. He argued that closing the PLO office would be a violation of international law and undermine the peace process. *New York Times*, February 5, 1988

⁵⁷⁹ Shultz, op. cit., p. 1019

⁵⁸⁰ FBIS, January 14 & 15 1988

associated with the Shamir camp, rejected Arafat's comments as duplicitous, arguing that many UN resolutions were inimical to Israeli survival.⁵⁸¹ This was typical of Israel's impaired diplomatic position. The Government was at odds with itself over the underlying cause of the violence and how to promote peace in the context of the unrest. Peres and Shamir used envoys and proxies to lobby their positions with Washington and the American Jewish community. As Foreign Minister, Peres advocated an international peace conference as the first step toward direct negotiations. As Prime Minister, Shamir was adamant in opposing anything but direct talks.⁵⁸² Peres embraced Shultz's peace initiative, which he said would lead to the convening an international conference within 2-3 months and limited self-rule for the Palestinians in the immediate future.⁵⁸³ Shamir, however, insisted that any Palestinian autonomy scheme be implemented according to Camp David Accord stipulations.⁵⁸⁴ Labor's stance was bolstered by the mobilizing support of Peace Now, which organized mass demonstrations demanding a "political solution" to the Palestinian problem.⁵⁸⁵ Outside the Israeli Consulate in New York, peace activists associated with the New Jewish Agenda held a vigil and fast to protest Israel's handling of the violence.⁵⁸⁶

Arab leaders scurried to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the West Bank and Gaza violence. Their foreign ministers, meeting in Tunis, pressed for convening an international conference with PLO participation. At the UN, the PLO demanded an Israeli withdrawal from the Territories and interim deployment of UN forces, while Palestinians

⁵⁸¹ JTA, January 15, 1988

⁵⁸² JTA, January 25, 1988

⁵⁸³ *New York Times*, February 2, 1988. Parenthetically, Peres denied that U.S. funds were being funneled to the Labor Party in connection with promises for the safe passage of Iraqi oil, via a pipeline, to Jordan's port of Aqaba. See *New York Times*, January 30 and *Washington Post*, January 31, 1988

⁵⁸⁴ FBIS, February 1, 1988

⁵⁸⁵ *New York Times*, January 24, 1988

⁵⁸⁶ *New York City Tribune*, January 26, 1988

“determine their own future.”⁵⁸⁷ This line was also pursued when *Al-Fajr* editor Hana Sinyora and Gaza lawyer Fayiz Abu Rahme met with Shultz in Washington.⁵⁸⁸

Soul-Searching

Abram and Hoenlein thought they had worked out a consensus position not to go public with statements criticizing Israel’s inept handling of the Intifada.⁵⁸⁹ But the internal opposition was distraught by graphic television coverage of the violence and what it connoted about liberal Jewish values. The *American Jewish Yearbook* notes that Jewish organizations were “concerned over possible growing animosity in America, not just toward Israel but toward the American Jewish community as well.”⁵⁹⁰ These feelings unleashed a torrent of criticism. Schindler went public with a demand that the IDF end “indiscriminate beatings,” which were “an offense to the Jewish

⁵⁸⁷ *New York Times*, January 24, 1988

⁵⁸⁸ *New York Times*, January 24, 1988 They also presented Shultz with a 14 point plan developed in consultation with the PLO. They rejected autonomy schemes and pressed for a PLO-led state. *Near East Report*, February 8, 1988

⁵⁸⁹ JTA, January 27, 1988

⁵⁹⁰ *AJYB*, 1990, p. 212. There is an important cognitive component which explains, in my view, why approval seeking is so much a part of the American Jewish psyche. Meir Kahane offered one explanation: “We Jews are obsessed with love. By this I mean the compulsive need to have the world, the non-Jew, love us. It is a product of the centuries of Galut—exile—in which sufferings, persecutions, and holocausts engendered with us fears, insecurities, and inferiority complexes of all kinds. No matter how loudly we proclaim our equality, no matter how belligerently we insist that we are really accepted, deep in our hearts we are not sure; we desperately need reassurance...And so we attempt to buy the love of the non-Jew in a hundred and a thousand different ways.” See, Meir Kahane, *Never Again: A Program For Survival*, (Los Angeles: Nash Publishing, 1971). These views should be contrasted with those of Albert Vorspan, Schindler’s deputy and a theoretician of Reform Judaism. In a book co-authored with Eugene Lipman, he argued that peace was the ultimate goal of Judaism and offered a liberal platform of “social action” which he called the essence of Judaism. See, Albert Vorspan, and Eugene J. Lipman, *Justice and Judaism: The Work of Social Action*, (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1959).

spirit.”⁵⁹¹ He cabled Chaim Herzog, President of Israel, to passionately denounce Israel’s handling of the *Intifada*. (the *New York Times*, published the cable as an Op-Ed essay).⁵⁹² The AJCongress’ Henry Siegman deplored “beatings” of Arab rioters. From Tel Aviv, AJCongress head Ted Mann said: “The current policy of force and beatings is regarded by us as inhumane and simply unacceptable.”⁵⁹³ The ‘national camp’ did manage to mobilize some American Jewish support for Israel --holding demonstrations and protesting what they viewed as unfair media coverage of the violence-- but these efforts drew scant media attention.⁵⁹⁴ The (Orthodox) National Council of Young Israel criticized Schindler and the AJCongress.⁵⁹⁵ But the Jewish right was poorly organized, under-funded and faced an unsympathetic prestige press and a Jewish media dominated by Israel’s critics.

Behind the scenes, the Conference of Presidents continued to unsuccessfully grapple with what had become, for American Jews, a public relations nightmare. Some five weeks into the *Intifada* the umbrella group

⁵⁹¹ JTA, January 25, 1988. Herzog, whose political background before assuming the Presidency was with Labor, responded by saying that there never were instructions for indiscriminate beatings. In a letter which began “Dear Alex,” the President wrote: “The instructions issued to our security forces have been clarified following the public discussion they evoked...The question that I must ask you is, what do you see as the alternative? Not one of our critics so far has come forward with such an alternative. Not one of them...I hate the idea of our boys using force against Arabs...the alternative facing us today...is between suppressing these riots or allowing them to develop into a new Teheran or Beirut...The situation is fraught with danger...If you criticize our methods of achieving law and order, as many in Israel do, you should at least advise us what the alternative is...” *President Herzog’s Letter to Rabbi Alexander Schindler, Communicated in English by the President’s Office, Jerusalem, January 25, 1988*

⁵⁹² JTA, January 25, 1988

⁵⁹³ *The New York Post*, January 26, 1988 (Reuters dispatch)

⁵⁹⁴ JTA, January 25, 1988. For example, a coalition of centrists and right wing groups, led by Kenneth Kelner of the Manhattan Region of the Zionist Organization of America, held a demonstration outside the headquarters of the ABC television network. They protested media coverage of the violence as one-sided and unfair. Other groups also expressed displeasure, at one time or another, with the nature of the coverage. Virtually none of the criticism, however, made a case for Israel’s permanent presence in the Territories. (AFSI being an important exception).

⁵⁹⁵ *AJYB*, 1990, p. 259

publicly endorsed Israel's handling of the uprising. A carefully crafted statement said: "Use of force is sometimes indispensable to restore order." As the *American Jewish Year Book* explains: "What enabled it to do so was a message from Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Shamir stating that force was not being used indiscriminately, but only against violent demonstrators and those resisting arrest."⁵⁹⁶ Abram then went public to confirm that: "Israel does not have a policy of indiscriminate beatings."⁵⁹⁷

But the public perception was that Israel did have such a policy. This motivated Jewish persons prominent in the entertainment community, who had never previously spoken out on Israel-Arab affairs, to do so now. Actor and celebrity Woody Allen wrote a *New York Times* Op-Ed essay, saying that as a Jew he was "appalled beyond measure by the treatment of the rioting Palestinians by the Jews." He called for "every method of pressure--moral, financial and political--to bring this wrong-headed approach to a halt."⁵⁹⁸

Public Opinion

Nor were the concerns of the internal opposition assuaged. The American Jewish Committee, which held observer status in the Presidents Conference, told the Israeli press that American Jews were "offended" by Israel's actions on the West Bank.⁵⁹⁹ Not all Americans were offended, it turned out. In a poll (not limited to Jews) conducted by the centrist ADL, 12% of respondents said the IDF was "not harsh enough" in handling the riots;

⁵⁹⁶ *AJYB*, 1990, p. 259

⁵⁹⁷ *JTA*, January 28, 1988

⁵⁹⁸ *JTA*, January 29, 1988. Other prominent entertainment industry critics of Israeli policies were Martin Sheen, Edward Asner, and Richard Dreyfuss. Parenthetically, in connection with how elite opinion is activated, it is worth noting that supporters of Israeli retention of Judea, Samaria and Gaza were almost never granted Op-Ed space by the *Times'* editors (the same holds true for the *Washington Post*).

⁵⁹⁹ *JTA*, February 3, 1988

29% said Israel's actions were appropriate and 23% had no opinion. The AJCommittee's stance was embraced by 36% of Americans. The ADL said that, compared to an August 1981 poll, there had been no erosion of support in American public opinion for Israel due to the *Intifada*. Other findings included: 43% of those interviewed said the PLO is "most responsible" for the unrest in the West Bank and Gaza and 78% said an international peace conference should be convened. One of the poll's most illuminating findings, coming after twenty-one years of media coverage, was that 33% of the poll's respondents did not know how Israel came to "occupy" the West Bank and Gaza; 16% thought it was because of Israeli invasion and a bare majority, fifty-one percent, said that it was "because the Arabs lost a war they had started."⁶⁰⁰ But as the violence and negative media coverage continued, the Presidents Conference again sought to formulate a consensus position. In early February it issued a statement of general support that had the backing of the entire body including the internal opposition.⁶⁰¹

Meanwhile, the PLO sought to capitalize on the sympathy being generated by the media for the Palestinian cause. Taking a page from the *Haganah*, the PLO sought to replicate the *Exodus* saga by sailing a boatload of activists, including some 100 Arabs who had been deported by Israel over the years, into Haifa harbor. Well known personalities from Jesse Jackson to Bruno Kreisky were also expected to be on board.⁶⁰² Shultz, incidentally, deprecated the scheme.⁶⁰³ At any rate, the "boat of return" plan was ultimately sabotaged when three senior Fatah officials involved in implementing it

⁶⁰⁰ JTA, February 4, 1988. Poll results showed public opinion to be fluid and, given media coverage of the violence, remarkably understanding of Israel. See, *ADL Press Release* "There has been no erosion of the American people's 'bedrock support' for Israel..." , February 4, 1988. The poll appears to show that Jewish critics of of Israel were far more dissatisfied with Israeli policies than average Americans.

⁶⁰¹ JTA, February 5, 1988

⁶⁰² JTA, February 8, 1988; *Haganah* was the Labor affiliated pre-State Jewish underground.

⁶⁰³ JTA, February 16, 1988

were killed by a car bomb in Cyprus.⁶⁰⁴ Nevertheless, there was no dearth of publicity for the *Intifada*. For instance, CBS Television devoted its popular *48 Hours* program to the plight of the Palestinians.⁶⁰⁵

Shultz persevered in his efforts (and received Peres' encouragement) to organize Arab-Israel talks within the framework of an international conference. Murphy, meanwhile, floated the idea of a phased IDF pull out, starting in the spring, from Judea, Samaria and Gaza as a step toward ending the rioting.⁶⁰⁶ At about the same time, a decision on whether to shut the PLO's UN Observer offices was again postponed by the Reagan Administration.⁶⁰⁷

Disassociation Pressed

Criticism of Israeli policies within the organized Jewish community continued unabated. Leaders of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council (NJCRAC) debated the issue of "who and what" was to blame for Israel's declining image.⁶⁰⁸ Ultimately, NJCARC's annual meeting in Los Angeles endorsed the Reagan Administration's peace initiatives.⁶⁰⁹ Communal insiders leaked a story saying that UJA donors might be reluctant to make contributions because of unhappiness with Israeli policies. In fact, UJA's "Super Sunday" metropolitan New York fundraising campaign raised a

⁶⁰⁴ *New York Times*, February 15, 1988

⁶⁰⁵ February 9, 1988; Among those interviewed were seven Islamic fundamentalists who made no pretense at having embraced non zero-sum goals. One youth told Bob Simon: "I want Palestine--all of it entirely...Palestine is indivisible. Haifa, Acre, Jaffa, Galilee, Nazareth--all these are parts of Palestine." The network nightly news broadcasts provided saturation coverage to the *Intifada*. In January, ABC News gave 67 minutes, NBC 50 minutes and CBS 48 minutes. *Near East Report*, March 7, 1988

⁶⁰⁶ JTA, February 9, 1988

⁶⁰⁷ JTA, February 12, 1988

⁶⁰⁸ JTA, February 16, 1988

⁶⁰⁹ *AJYB*, 1990, p. 259

record amount of money.⁶¹⁰ But the cycle of criticism and self-criticism persisted. A Presidents Conference delegation in Israel found Labor and Likud leaders bitterly divided. Vorspan saw this as justifying the internal opposition: "If there is a schizophrenia on the highest level in Israel, what expectations can we have from the Presidents Conference?"⁶¹¹ But the official Presidents Conference line, enunciated by Abram, was that American Jewish criticism should be kept private.⁶¹²

While the internal opposition still found it necessary to justify antagonism toward Israeli policies, the peace camp felt no such compunctions. *Tikkun* magazine's Lerner wrote an impassioned seven page editorial supporting the creation of a Palestinian-Arab state in Judea, Samaria and Gaza. He said that "American Jewish silence" on the Palestinian issue was actually a betrayal of Israel. "We did not survive the gas chambers and crematoria," Lerner wrote, "so that we could become the oppressors of Gaza."⁶¹³

The most vigorous voice within the Presidents Conference calling for an end to public criticism of Israel came from the centrist ADL. Burton S. Levinson and Abraham Foxman asked:

What has really changed that justifies this easy dropping of our commitment to unity? Has the enemy disappeared? Let us have faith that should real peacemakers emerge in the image of Sadat that the people of Israel will seize the opportunity, finding peace with security. For now, there are no such peacemakers.

⁶¹⁰ JTA, February 12, 1988. After the September 1993 Rabin-Arafat agreement, UJA leaders had high hopes that it would be much easier to fund raise. Almost immediately, the UJA developed an advertising campaign with peace as its central theme. However, one regional UJA leader on the East Coast acknowledged that contributions were at the same level as before the Rabin-Arafat accord. Confidential Source, December 15, 1993.

⁶¹¹ AJYB, 1990, p. 259.

⁶¹² AJYB, 1990, p. 259

⁶¹³ *Tikkun*, March 1988

Our free-for-all inhibits the search for peace. It generates pressures on Israel to make concessions prior to negotiations. It encourages the Arabs to believe that the American-Israeli relationship can be weakened after all, leading them inevitably to the conclusion that they do not have to consider peace because a U.S.-Israel break opens up future possibilities for yet another Arab war against Israel.⁶¹⁴

AFSI, which favors Jewish sovereignty over the Administered Territories, orchestrated an advertisement in the Israeli newspaper *Ma'ariv* signed by scores of American Jewish leaders. The Hebrew language ad declared:

We support Israel and the Israel Defense Forces wholeheartedly in their efforts to restore calm in the Land of Israel.

We urge the people of Israel to reject the demands of those American Jews who, having found easy access to the media, use it to vilify Israel. Their harsh words do not represent the true sentiments of the American Jewish community.

We urge you to resist pressure from whatever source...We are with you in heart and soul. Be strong and have courage!⁶¹⁵

Nevertheless, the critics dominated the polemical field. The symbiotic relationship between Israeli and American Jewish critics grew increasingly stronger. In late February, writers Yehuda Amichai, Amos Elon, A.B. Yeshoshua and Amos Oz called on American Jews to "speak up" against Israeli policies.⁶¹⁶ Meanwhile, Defense Minister Rabin said the troubles on the

⁶¹⁴ "Let Us Step Back," Press Release, Anti Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, March 8, 1988

⁶¹⁵ *Ma'ariv*, February 26, 1988. In addition to being signed by many Americans For A Safe Israel (AFSI) leaders from across the country, the ad was also signed by one former Chairman of the Presidents Conference, Rabbi Israel Miller, and by individuals associated with two orthodox groups, the UOJC and Emunah, which are Presidents Conference organizations. AFSI itself never applied for Presidents Conference membership.

⁶¹⁶ JTA, February 22, 1988.

West Bank were connected to Likud's "strategic mistake" of going to war against the PLO in Lebanon.⁶¹⁷

Reagan

Ronald Reagan's sentiments may have been with Israel. In practical terms, however, strategic policy was deferred to Shultz and State Department specialists. Personally, Reagan did not hold Israel entirely to blame for the violence: "We have had intimations that there have been certain people suspected of being terrorists, outsiders coming in, not only with weapons but stirring up and encouraging the trouble in those areas."⁶¹⁸ But it was Shultz's more focused explanation of the violence-- as resulting from 20 years of occupation-- that guided American policy. As for a dialogue with the PLO, Reagan explained: "One of the blocking points (was) how do you sit down and try to get into a talk about peace when someone says they have no right to exist? And, I'm sure that the Secretary of State is apprised of this fact, and we'll see what we can do there."⁶¹⁹ Indeed, Shultz pledged to pursue reports that Arafat had moderated his stance on accepting UN resolutions 242 and 338.⁶²⁰

The internal opposition achieved another in a string of successes when several well known rabbis, from Judaism's three main branches-- Binyamin Walfish, of the Orthodox Rabbinical Council of America, Wolf Kelman of the Conservative Rabbinical Assembly and Joseph Glazer of the Reform Central Conference of Rabbis-- publicly called on Israel to trade land-for-peace.⁶²¹

⁶¹⁷ FBIS, February 25, 1988

⁶¹⁸ JTA, February 26, 1988

⁶¹⁹ JTA, February 26, 1988

⁶²⁰ JTA, February 26, 1988

⁶²¹ JTA, February 26, 1988. Interestingly, Walfish later had an apparent change of heart and signed on with those protesting territory for peace. Confidential Source, October 1993.

While Abram opposed criticism of Israeli policies he was sympathetic to Shultz's quest for a solution. The status quo, he said, could not continue. Embracing the essence of Labor's position, Abram said that Palestinian aspirations for a homeland should be realized in Jordan.⁶²²

The line between reportage and advocacy was repeatedly crossed.⁶²³ Simultaneously, a mutually interdependent relationship between media coverage, policy development and American Jewish attitudes promoted political suasion.⁶²⁴ Jim Lederman, a veteran journalist, explains the phenomenon:

The loop had developed a self-sustaining centripetal dynamic of its own, sucking anyone who ventured near, like Arab-Americans and American Jews, into its vortex. The U.S. - based stories were not merely human interest or reaction pieces. Eventually, they became vehicles for constituency mobilization behind American intervention. . . .A fascinating dynamic developed. Israeli spokesman, bereft of any ideas on how to alter the flow of the loop, came to believe that they could not change things and virtually gave up trying to intervene to alter the course of the news flow...

...There was a growing feeling within the State Department that not only did someone have to step in to halt the killings and beatings, but the United States had to move to save Israel from itself, This feeling was, in part, the

⁶²² JTA, February 29, 1988 and *New York Times*, February 25, 1988. Abram apparently favored Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank but not Palestinian sovereignty there. Others took the "Jordan is Palestine" idea more literally. It is worth recalling that Jordan comprises 77% of Palestine according to the British Mandate. Most Arabs living in Jordan are of Palestinian descent. Some PLO maps include all of Jordan and Israel as part of Palestine. Moreover, hardline Jews who accept that the Balfour Declaration promised the Jews a homeland in Palestine include Jordan in their map of historic Palestine..

⁶²³ For specific examples, see, Jim Lederman, *Battle Lines: The American Media and the Intifada*, (New York: Henry Holt, 1992).

⁶²⁴ As noted earlier, the *Intifada* remained the major item on American network television news. All told 165 minutes were devoted to the *Intifada*. Some 700 reporters covered the efforts by an estimated 5000 IDF forces to quell the violence. See *Near East Report*, March 7, 1988.

result of the heavy coverage given to the moral anguish American Jewish leaders were evincing as a result of the beatings policy and the continuing pictures of bloodied and beaten Palestinians. The intense press coverage given the American Arab and Jewish communities helped to create the kind of domestic constituency and consensus necessary for direct diplomatic intervention. A *Jerusalem Post* story on January 25 about a wall in Ramallah covered with bloodstains from Palestinians who had been beaten, galvanized journalists, liberal American Jews, and administration officials alike behind an interventionist policy. No less important, however, were the open splits within the Israeli cabinet over which policy to pursue in dealing with the Palestinians. These splits, it was hoped in the administration, would provide an opening for direct American action.⁶²⁵

The internal opposition was most effected by the coverage and this spurred on disassociation. The AJCommittee's Hyman Bookbinder, for example, said U.S. Jews were distressed by Israel's policies in the Territories, but continued to support Israel on other issues.⁶²⁶ The establishment was also not interested in pursuing an ill-timed confrontation over the PLO's UN Mission. Indeed, the Administration received Jewish support for its efforts to keep the PLO's UN Mission in New York open.⁶²⁷ When domestic political drives accelerated maneuvering to close the mission (efforts in the House spearheaded by Kemp), Jewish organizations disavowed any involvement. "They are not doing this at the request of the American Jewish community," Phil Baum of the AJCongress explained. "Our hope was to induce the State Department to use the powers it had to close the Washington office. We wanted to send a symbolic message that the PLO is a terrorist organization and it was not welcome in the United States."⁶²⁸ Abram said he thought both PLO offices were terrorist missions but that the Observer Mission could not be easily closed because it was established in accordance with international

⁶²⁵ Lederman, op. cit., pp 251-254

⁶²⁶ JTA, February 29, 1988

⁶²⁷ JTA, February 29, 1988

⁶²⁸ *Washington Times*, March 2, 1988

agreements.⁶²⁹

Labor Lobby

Labor heavily lobbied the Jewish leadership in support of disassociation. And, the Jewish leadership, in turn, lobbied heavily against Likud. Nimrod Novik, a Peres aide, told a visiting delegation from the Presidents Conference: "I dread the day that we face an American public fed up with what it sees on TV, an American Congress fed up with what it sees on TV, a new American Administration picking up the pieces if this peace initiative does not succeed...People have to bite the bullet and see what they can do for peace."⁶³⁰ What were the American people seeing and hearing at around this time? Lederman offers the following:

Peter Jennings introduced a piece by saying, "A Palestinian doctor claimed the Israelis broke into a hospital, fired tear gas, and dragged out two boys and beat them." The next night, in an introduction to a piece on Israeli plans to cut press access, Dan Rather stated, "In the West Bank, Israeli troops fired tear gas into a hospital, then grabbed a teenager and threw him down a flight of stairs, sat on him, and beat him with a club." Both introductions were factually correct. However, they also were distortions of the truth. As AP had reported on March 1, Palestinian youngsters had been using hospitals and schools for six weeks as havens, hideouts, and staging grounds for rock and firebomb attacks... These two particular introductions were not one-time lapses...⁶³¹

The media was not the only source of confusion. *Ma'ariv* quoted Peres as telling high school students in Eilat that: "We have to listen very closely to what Hussein is saying. He wants the PLO but without Arafat. So let's agree

⁶²⁹ JTA, March 9, 1988

⁶³⁰ *New York Times*, March 2, 1988

⁶³¹ Lederman, op. cit., p. 265

with him on this version. The PLO yes, Arafat no."⁶³² His remarks were broadcast by Israel Army Radio. Nevertheless, Peres denied making the statement and told the Presidents Conference delegation that he opposed the establishment of a Soviet-backed PLO-led state as a danger to Israel.⁶³³ Vorspan, Schindler's deputy and a severe critic of Israeli policies in his own right, remarked that in this confusing atmosphere it would be a grave mistake to "impose conformity through a Presidents Conference or through any other vehicle," on the Jewish leadership.⁶³⁴ Meantime, Abram and a contingent from the Presidents Conference called on Bethlehem Mayor Elias Freij who told them that the PLO covenant which called for Israel's destruction was "dead." Freij told them that the *Intifada* offered a twofold message: "We don't want the military occupation, and we do want to make peace with Israel. The vast majority of our people are sincere in their desire to make peace once and for all."⁶³⁵ Abram's comments afterward verified the perceptual orientation that had become unofficial policy at the Presidents Conference: "I have made it perfectly clear that the status quo is not indefinitely acceptable to American Jews. What I'm also trying to say is that first of all I understand that the occupation is the cause of the disturbances. An occupation is a condition that exists until peace."⁶³⁶ He then urged Israel to seek peace. Paradoxically, he later joined Prime Minister Shamir at a farewell dinner for the Presidents Conference delegation in cautioning that public criticism of Israel was harmful.⁶³⁷

Intensifying their political suasion activities, elements of the Jewish

⁶³² *Jerusalem Post*, March 2, 1988. Peres' comments are hard to analyze. Labor had long favored the Jordanian option. But it is hard to imagine that Peres expected the PLO to purge Arafat in order to move toward accommodation with Israel.

⁶³³ *Jerusalem Post*, March 2, 1988

⁶³⁴ JTA, March 2, 1988

⁶³⁵ *Jerusalem Post*, March 1, 1988

⁶³⁶ *New York Times*, March 2, 1988

⁶³⁷ JTA, March 4, 1988

leadership worked behind the scenes with key pro-Israel senators to orchestrate an open letter to Shamir criticizing his opposition to the land-for-peace formula.⁶³⁸ The letter was initiated by Sen. Carl Levin (D. Mich.), Rudy Boschwitz (R-Minn), Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), Howard Metzenbaum (D-Ohio), Warren Rudman (R-NH), William Cohen (R-M), Alan Cranston, (D-Calif.) and Daniel Moynihan (D-NY).⁶³⁹ Hyman Bookbinder, the Washington lobbyist for the AJCommittee said of the letter: "I accept this as a legitimate process that is going on."⁶⁴⁰

In truth, sympathy for the Shamir line was widespread within the American Jewish community.⁶⁴¹ Two pro-Israel Senators, Arlen Specter (R-Penn.) and Chic Hect (R-Nevada), opposed their colleagues' letter.⁶⁴² The Orthodox Rabbinical Council of America called criticism of Shamir an "outrageous interference in Israel's internal politics." At about the same time, ZOA warned that it would "embolden the enemies of Israel." In the face of countervailing pressure, Abram's limpid comment was to deny that Shamir was an obstacle to peace.⁶⁴³

Pressing Disassociation

Efforts by Israelis to influence American Jewish public opinion as well as Shamir's reception by Reagan Administration officials led to several demonstrations set to coincide with his visit to the United States. An

⁶³⁸ David Luchins, an aide to Senator Moynihan, said the Senator came under intense pressure from pro-Israel activists to sign the letter. He said that even a Washington D.C. AFSI member supported the letter. *Telephone conversation, March 9, 1988*. The White House welcomed the criticism of Shamir.

⁶³⁹ For text see Lukacs, op. cit., p102

⁶⁴⁰ *New York Times*, March 7, 1988

⁶⁴¹ *AJYB*, 1990, p. 260

⁶⁴² *JTA*, March 8, 1988 and *New York Times*, March 7, 1988

⁶⁴³ *AJYB*, 1990, p. 260.

estimated 50,000 Peace Now demonstrators rallied in Jerusalem to demand that Shamir pursue a "land-for-peace" exchange.⁶⁴⁴ A pro-Shamir rally in Tel Aviv also drew tens of thousands of demonstrators.⁶⁴⁵ At a 5 A.M. stopover at New York's JFK Airport, on his way to Washington, Shamir was greeted by about 100 enthusiastic "peace-for-peace" supporters.⁶⁴⁶

The Administration went out of its way to portray the Shamir visit as a failure. After Shamir again rejected the international conference proposal put forth by the United States, Shultz said: "We haven't found our way to bridge all of the differences."⁶⁴⁷ Shamir tried and failed to convince Shultz to press an international campaign to replace Palestinian Arab refugee camps in Israel and the Territories with permanent housing units.

Both Shamir and Reagan lobbied the Jewish leadership. The President told a UJA audience that "We will not leave Israel to stand alone, nor will we acquiesce in any effort to gang up on Israel."⁶⁴⁸ But the next day at a White House ceremony, with Shamir standing nearby, the President made the disassociation policy explicit; support for Israel did not extend to its West Bank policy. The Administration would continue to press for an international conference: "The United States will not slice this initiative apart and will not abandon it. Those who will say 'no' to the United States plan, and the prime minister has not used this word, need not answer to the United States. They'll need to answer to their people on why they turned

⁶⁴⁴ A three column picture on the front page of the Sunday *New York Times* portrayed the rally as the "largest since the Palestinian protests began," March 13, 1988. A second front page story reported that "top (IDF) commanders are known to believe they have been assigned an impossible task...the troops in the field are frustrated."

⁶⁴⁵ *New York Times*, March 14, 1988. This report was not accompanied by a front-page photo.

⁶⁴⁶ Interview with Jonathan S. Tobin, February 5, 1993, Queens, N.Y. The pre-dawn airport rally had been organized by the Zionist Organization of America-Manhattan Region and AFSI

⁶⁴⁷ *New York Times*, March 16, 1988

⁶⁴⁸ *New York Times*, March 16, 1988

down a realistic and sensible plan to achieve negotiations."⁶⁴⁹ Administration officials specifically wanted Shamir to influence his supporters within the American Jewish community to support the Administration's approach.⁶⁵⁰

Shamir told the same UJA audience addressed by the President, that *Intifada* rioting was aimed at the destruction of Israel.⁶⁵¹ Explaining why he opposed abandoning Judea, Samaria and Gaza, Shamir was repeatedly interrupted with applause and cheers.⁶⁵² Back in New York, he was greeted by demonstrations of support arranged by the national camp. On March 21 several thousand people staged a pro-Shamir rally outside his Park Avenue hotel.⁶⁵³ Addressing an open meeting sponsored by the Conference of Presidents, Shamir asked U.S. Jews to stop criticizing Israel: "Even if there are some differences of views, I don't think that it is permitted to Jewish personalities to exert pressure on their governments and ask them to pressure Israel."⁶⁵⁴ In Los Angeles, "despite a boycott by some community leaders who disagreed with his views, 1,600 people turned out to hear the prime minister speak, and others had to be turned away."⁶⁵⁵

This was not the message the internal opposition wanted Shamir to take back to Israel. When he spoke at venues under their control he was

⁶⁴⁹ *Washington Post*, March 17, 1988. In an Op-Ed essay arguably directed at American Jewish leaders Shultz wrote: "The United States is a firm and consistent supporter of direct, bilateral negotiations between Israel and all of its neighbors as the means to achieve a comprehensive peace. At the same time, the United States has always been willing to consider any approach that could lead to direct negotiations, including an international conference." *Washington Post*, March 18, 1988

⁶⁵⁰ *Washington Post*, March 17, 1988

⁶⁵¹ JTA, March 16, 1988

⁶⁵² *AJYB*, 1990, p. 260

⁶⁵³ *Interview Jonathan S. Tobin, Americans For A Safe Israel*, op. cit.

⁶⁵⁴ *New York City Tribune*, March 21, 1988. My assumption is that Shamir meant to say that it was inappropriate for Diaspora Jewish leaders to criticize Israel, not that it was "not permitted". He may have been trying to translate the Hebrew phrase "*lo kedai*."

⁶⁵⁵ *AJYB*, 1990, p. 260

received coolly. Virtually all the questions Shamir received at one Federation meeting were critical of his policies.⁶⁵⁶ The head of the AJCongress charged that some Shamir allies espoused positions similar to those of Meir Kahane. Henry Seigman also claimed that American Jews supported Labor's stance. "Israel must offer to negotiate with the Palestinians, not because this makes good public relations but because only by ridding itself of the permanent occupation of nearly 2 million Palestinian Arabs will Israel survive physically and retain its democratic values and Jewish essence," said Seigman.⁶⁵⁷

U.S. - PLO Contacts

Revelations that U.S.-PLO secret contacts were ongoing served to further undermine the rationale for the "no talk" policy. In March, *CBS News* reported that General Vernon Walters, the US Ambassador to the UN, met with PLO leaders in Tunisia.⁶⁵⁸ Walters responded with a categorical denial: "I deny it, it is a lie, I have not met a PLO representative in Tunis. I am not authorized to speak with the PLO."⁶⁵⁹ Walters did confirm that he had previous contacts with the PLO in the 1970s. "The report was correct in saying I spoke to them in 1975 (sic). They were killing Americans and I was sent to tell them to stop and they did. But that was 13 years ago," Walters said.⁶⁶⁰ Indeed, Walters' first meeting with the PLO's Ali Hassan Salameh occurred when he was deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency (and Salameh was on the Agency's payroll). That meeting took place at Kissinger's request in November 1973. Its purpose was to arrange for an end to attacks by Arafat-

⁶⁵⁶ JTA, March 22, 1988

⁶⁵⁷ *Washington Post*, March 22, 1988. Seigman opposed a role for the PLO. JTA March 23, 1988

⁶⁵⁸ JTA, March 10, 1988

⁶⁵⁹ JTA, March 10, 1988

⁶⁶⁰ JTA, March 10, 1988

led terrorists against American targets.⁶⁶¹ The two met again in 1974 when Walters reportedly suggested that the United States would respond positively if the PLO abandoned violence against Americans and improved its relationship with other Arab states. According to Khaled al-Hassan, the PLO “followed through at Rabat” where the Arab states designated it the authorized representative of the Palestinians but “we didn’t get anything for it.”⁶⁶² Hoenlein said that the Presidents Conference accepted “Walter’s assurances that he did not meet with the PLO and we wait for further clarifications.”⁶⁶³

In one form or another the PLO now dominated the peace process agenda. Arafat worked diligently to stay in the media spotlight. He complained that American peace initiatives excluded the PLO.⁶⁶⁴ Elsewhere, Arafat expressed satisfaction that some Arab citizens of Israel had joined in the *Intifada*. “The most important thing is that the uprising has also spread to those who have lived under the occupation since 1948: those whom Israel calls Israeli Arabs.”⁶⁶⁵ In the U.S., meanwhile, the PLO spurned Justice Department notification to close its UN Mission. Zeidi Terzi, the PLO UN representative, argued that the order was a violation of international law. In any event, the Mission stayed open and the legal issues remained unsettled.⁶⁶⁶

⁶⁶¹ Wallach & Wallach, p. 408 on the Salamech-PLO (and CIA) connection; p. 409-410 on the Walters meeting. Kissinger also mentions the PLO meetings in his memoirs, Vol. 2 p.1036-1037.

⁶⁶² Wallach & Wallach, p. 412

⁶⁶³ JTA, March 10, 1988

⁶⁶⁴ JTA, March 14, 1988

⁶⁶⁵ Interview with Egyptian newspaper *Al Wafd* cited in *Near East Report*, March 28, 1988. Arafat’s sea-saw between moderate and militant sounding rhetoric needs to be understood in the context of fears by the PLO leadership that any deviation from its radical anti-Israel line would reduce its influence over West Bank and Gaza Arabs. See for example, *Jerusalem Post*, March 4, 1988.

⁶⁶⁶ JTA, March 16, 1988

Eban v. Shamir

The main “villain” of the political environment in which the US-PLO relationship played itself out was Shamir. His intransigence was the singular cause for the continued violence. American network news programs, especially ABC, pursued a campaign to delegitimize Shamir.⁶⁶⁷ And interviews with Israelis were heavily weighed (in terms of both the visual and verbal) in Labor’s favor. Abba Eban’s comments about the violence to Pierre Salinger of ABC were fairly typical: “This is a situation that cannot get better--like a malignant disease.”⁶⁶⁸ His forthcoming support for a U.S. PLO dialogue would be an important milestone.

Eban’s opposition to the “malignancy” of occupation was a source of cognitive dissonance for Shamir critics. With his large following among American Jews Eban’s mellifluous voice carried extra clout. So, when Eban publicly called for talks with the PLO, said it had moderated its position and supported PLO participation at an international peace conference, a major pillar of the “no talk” infrastructure crumbled.⁶⁶⁹ Eban now emerged as a key backer of the outside elite. Peres, Labor and the internal opposition were not yet prepared to call for talks with the PLO. The American Jewish Congress urged only that Israel accept the Administration’s approach on Palestinian representation.⁶⁷⁰

⁶⁶⁷ Lederman writes: “Its reports on March 14 and 15, for example, emphasized the fact that Shamir had the support of only half of the cabinet and half of the Israeli people. This was true, certainly, but it ignored the fact that in a democracy, and particularly under the Israeli system of government, a leader needs only the support of half of the people in order to rule--or at least to block opposition initiatives.” op. cit., p. 269

⁶⁶⁸ Lederman, p. 250

⁶⁶⁹ JTA, March 22, 1988. Polls in the US indicated that increasing numbers of better-educated Americans now supported the Palestinian cause. JTA, March 23, 1988

⁶⁷⁰ JTA, March 23, 1988. They did not, however, call for PLO participation.

Was Eban right? Had the PLO's mission--Israel's destruction-- changed? In 1939 Churchill said of Stalin's regime: "I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia. It is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma; but perhaps there is a key. That key is Russian national interest."⁶⁷¹ PLO politics is even more difficult to unravel because many voices, independently, define its "national" interest. The PLO is a multifaceted, decentralized, umbrella entity led-- to be unkind-- by a political chameleon. This makes it next to impossible to separate tactics from strategy and strategy from mission. All that can be done is to take cognizance of the perceptual milieu. "Our struggle with Israel," Ibrahim Souss, the PLO representative in Paris explained, "is a war of civilizations, and we have to use all the weapons at our disposal."⁶⁷² Arafat frankly told a Kuwaiti newspaper that he speaks one language for Western media consumption and another when he is addressing Arab audiences.⁶⁷³ In a speech to the 16th PNC meeting in Algiers in 1983, Arafat artfully described a "flexible 'yes and no' position (*ia'am* in Arabic, a pun combination on the word *ia* or no and *na'am* or yes).⁶⁷⁴ My own view is that Asher Susser of Tel Aviv University's Shiloah Institute is correct in saying: "The PLO's concept of self-determination has never been confined to the West Bank and Gaza, and, like the term democratic state...is a euphemism for the dissolution of Israel...Zionism and Palestinian national rights, as defined by the PLO, are mutually exclusive."⁶⁷⁵ The editor of *Falastin A-Thawra*., Ahmed Abd A-Rahman wrote in 1988: "The *Intifada* is the tool for the complete liberation of Palestinian land."⁶⁷⁶ Nevertheless, by 1988 to espouse the argument that the PLO had not, all but formally, embraced a non zero sum mission was

⁶⁷¹ *Respectfully Quoted*, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 1989

⁶⁷² International Herald Tribune, August 31, 1988

⁶⁷³ Interview, January 5, 1988 cited in *Contemporary Mideast Backgrounder*, (Jerusalem) March 1988

⁶⁷⁴ Asher Susser, "Double Jeopardy: PLO Strategy toward Jordan and Israel" published by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, (1988) cited in *Contemporary Mideast Backgrounder*, (Jerusalem) September 1988

⁶⁷⁵ cited in *Contemporary Mideast Backgrounder* (Jerusalem) September 1988

⁶⁷⁶ *Ibid* (CMB)

anathema.

Shultz PNC Meeting

On March 26, Shultz circumvented America's commitment not to publicly negotiate with the PLO by meeting with Edward Said and Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, prominent members of the Palestine National Council (PNC).

For 15 years, U.S. officials have been meeting with members of the PLO, despite assurances to Israel that Washington would neither recognize nor negotiate with the group. Some liaisons were secret, some were quiet. The few that were public were hastily forgotten. Now Washington has entered a new phase of close encounters with the PLO, signaling fresh receptiveness to Palestinian views and pressuring the intransigent Shamir. . . A former business associate of George Shultz is Palestinian construction magnate Hasian Sabbagh, a PNC member. Washington sources say the two men have also seen each other socially.⁶⁷⁷

Despite the formal connection between the PNC and the PLO, the State Department held firm to its earlier declarations that U.S. policy toward the PLO was unchanged.⁶⁷⁸ In fact, Article 7a of the PLO covenant (adopted in 1964 and revised in 1968) holds the PNC to be "the supreme authority of the Liberation Organization, drafting its policy and planning."⁶⁷⁹ Moreover, Abu-Lughod and Said emphasized that they were acting as Arafat emissaries.⁶⁸⁰ Years later Shultz justified the meeting this way: "But these were American citizens; no one could justifiably complain about a U.S. government official meeting with U.S. citizens."⁶⁸¹ Among those who could not fault Schultz for

⁶⁷⁷ *Newsweek*, April 11, 1988: "The violence inspired Shultz to press on with his peace initiative."

⁶⁷⁸ JTA, March 28, 1988

⁶⁷⁹ *Contemporary Mideast Backgrounder*, (Jerusalem) June 4, 1985. Independent members of the PNC have always been appointed by the PLO, according to CMB.

⁶⁸⁰ *Near East Report*, April 4, 1988

⁶⁸¹ Shultz, op. cit., p. 1029

holding the meeting was the AJCommittee."⁶⁸²

Perhaps to further heighten the sense of crisis, some days later the State Department warned Americans against traveling to the West Bank and Gaza.⁶⁸³ State Department official Richard Schifter, on a visit to the region, accused Israel of "brutalizing" the Palestinians.⁶⁸⁴ All this was having its intended effect. By April 6, an Israeli poll showed 60% of the people favoring an international conference. "When I left the region," writes Shultz, "I made it clear that I was not giving up and that I would be back. 'He [Shultz] is wearing us down. How can we get him to go home and stay home,' the press reported an Israeli official as saying. The problem was, I was *not* wearing them down."⁶⁸⁵

The momentum was slowing. Previously, Shultz had been able to count on the backing of the internal opposition to lobby Israeli officials. Now some of these groups were wavering. "By this time," Shultz concluded, "Israeli leaders, especially Shamir, had weighed in with the Americans and turned them sour."⁶⁸⁶ The AJCommittee's Ted Ellenoff suggested that criticism of Israel should be restricted to the Jewish media. The committed internal opposition did not waver. In fact, it was more emphatic than ever. At the AJCongress, where Robert Lifton had replaced Ted Mann, criticism of Shamir had become, if anything, more strident.⁶⁸⁷ Still, AIPAC's Tom Dine

⁶⁸² JTA, March 28, 1988. On the other hand, Shamir viewed the meeting with "the utmost gravity." Abu Lughod was on record as saying: "...And I am hopeful that not only will the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza end, but the whole area [of Palestine] will eventually be liberated as a result of the Palestinians' struggle for national liberation." *Near East Report*, April 4, 1988

⁶⁸³ JTA, March 28, 1988

⁶⁸⁴ JTA, March 30, 1988

⁶⁸⁵ Shultz, p. 1032

⁶⁸⁶ Shultz, p. 1032

⁶⁸⁷ JTA, March 29, 1988 check this citation

told Shultz: "The pro-Israel community has lost its enthusiasm for the initiative. Inactivity is the word."⁶⁸⁸ That is precisely why, from the Administration's viewpoint, in the final countdown to a U.S. -PLO dialogue, the involvement of the outside elite was critical.

On matters of substance the Administration, Labor and the internal opposition shared a common outlook. Their consensus was to formally exclude the PLO from the peace process, oppose the establishment of a Palestinian state, yet foster Palestinian participation in the peace process. There were some differences in nuance. Labor wanted Israel to maintain security control over Judea, Samaria and Gaza (in some form) and opposed the dismantling of Jewish communities in the Territories.⁶⁸⁹

Shultz summarized United States policy on a variety of PLO-related issues in late March. A Palestinian state was "just not in the cards," he said. However, the law passed by Congress requiring the PLO to close its UN Mission was "dumb" and further legitimized the PLO at the UN.⁶⁹⁰ Shultz again defended his meeting with the Palestinian delegation, saying that the PNC and the PLO were not the same. "It does not in any way change our policy, which I follow not simply because it was set in 1975, but I think it's a very important idea that we are not going to talk to and negotiate with the PLO."⁶⁹¹ What was holding up progress, Shultz implied, was Shamir's intransigence.⁶⁹²

⁶⁸⁸ Shultz, p. 1032

⁶⁸⁹ Peres listed these "no's" on radio. FBIS April 6, 1988

⁶⁹⁰ JTA, March 31, 1988

⁶⁹¹ JTA, March 31, 1988

⁶⁹² *Washington Post*, April 7, 1988

Anti-Shamir Ads

Starting in 1988, an avalanche of professionally produced political advertisements critical of Shamir's policies began to appear in the print media. The advertisements contributed to, as well as reinforced, perceptual changes. The ads appeared in *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post* and *USA Today*.⁶⁹³ Occasional advertisements supporting Shamir also appeared. They were placed by a handful of wealthy freelancers who made no concerted effort to match the opposition's aggressive campaign. The anti-Shamir advertisements came from a variety of sources. What they lacked in terms of a unifying message was more than made up by the sheer volume of the ads.⁶⁹⁴

⁶⁹³ Jerusalem Post, January 27, 1989

⁶⁹⁴ JTA, April 1, 1988. The National Association of Arab Americans placed full page ads entitled "Who is NOT complying with the U.S. Position on the Middle East?" Tikkun Magazine placed full page ads demanding: "Israel Must End The Occupation" These ads began: "We the undersigned American Jewish teachers, writers, and intellectuals..." Another Tikkun ad declared: "No, Mr. Shamir. Don't assume that American Jews support your policies toward the Palestinians." Individuals long associated with left-wing anti-Zionism capitalized on the availability of funds generated by the anti-Israel mood in the country. One full page ad in the *New York Times* proclaimed: "The Time Has Come...End All Aid to Apartheid Israel." This ad was placed by the Campaign to End all Aid to Israel and for a Democratic Secular Palestine and signed by hundreds of individuals, including Rabbi Elmer Berger and Dr. Alfred M. Lilienthal two longtime opponents of a Jewish State, leaders of the National Lawyers Guild (an ultra-Left group), and by William M. Kuntsler. The (ad hoc) Council of Presidents of National Arab-American Organizations placed ads in the *Washington Post* which asked: "How Many More Deaths, Mr. Shamir?" Perhaps the best organized and financed series of ads was published by the Foundation for a Middle East Peace in *The Washington Post* (though elsewhere too) by the Foundation for Middle East Peace. These ads explicitly made the non zero-sum case with headlines such as "The Solution to the Middle East Conflict? A Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza at Peace With Israel." An ad aimed at the left-wing Jews appeared in *The Nation* entitled "Time to Dissociate From Israeli Policies," sponsored by the Jewish Committee on the Middle East and signed by professors Don Peretz, Joel Bein, Yigal Arens (the son of Likud politician Moshe Arens) and Seymour Melman. Parenthetically, *Newsweek* advertised itself to advertising professionals with a two-page spread in *Adweek* showing a photo of the *Intifada*. The single line of copy read: "We're not afraid to say it."

In this political environment, Israel's ineffectual efforts to re-establish order in the West Bank and Gaza were viewed, ipso facto, as illegitimate. Anti-Shamir forces achieved a propaganda coup by forcing a U.S. manufacturer of tear gas to stop selling to Israel.⁶⁹⁵ In April, Israel expelled eight more Intifada activists. In this instance, the U.S. vetoed a Security Council resolution which would have condemned Israel on the grounds that it did not contain "a scintilla of balance."⁶⁹⁶

Violence in Judea, Samaria and Gaza abated, but only temporarily, following Israel's killing, on April 16, of the PLO's top military strategist, Abu Jihad (Kahlil Wazir), in Tunis. He had been the operative most directly responsible for PLO coordination of *Intifada* policies.⁶⁹⁷ American Ambassador to the UN Thomas Pickering said the action was "outside the standards of human rights which we and Israel share and advocate together."⁶⁹⁸ Concerned about a further escalation, the Administration used third party Arab states to urge Arafat not to retaliate.⁶⁹⁹

On April 24, Americans for a Progressive Israel (affiliated with the Mapam wing of the Labor Party) organized an anti-Shamir rally in New York which drew 2,000 protesters.⁷⁰⁰ Meanwhile, Abba Eban, who had become the mentor of the outside elite, toured the United States to mobilize Jewish audiences against Shamir's policies as well as to make the case for PLO inclusion in the peace process. The selection of attorney Menachem

⁶⁹⁵ JTA, April 7, 1988

⁶⁹⁶ *New York Times*, April 16, 1988. See to *AJYB*, 1990, p. 232.

⁶⁹⁷ The IDF counter-terror unit Sayeret Matkal reportedly carried out the operation. Ezer Weitzman was the only dissenting vote in the Cabinet. *Washington Post*, April 21, 1988

⁶⁹⁸ JTA, April 27, 1988

⁶⁹⁹ JTA, May 11, 1988. Arafat accused the U.S. of complicity in Abu Jihad's murder. He termed warnings about targeting Americans in retaliation "insolent." *Near East Report*, May 16, 1988

⁷⁰⁰ *AJYB*, 1990, p. 260

Rosensaft as the new leader of Labor's U.S. affiliate was a harbinger of its increased radicalization. Rosensaft urged Jews to "speak out" against Israeli policies in the West Bank.⁷⁰¹ Rosensaft straddled the line between the internal opposition (his position made him a participant in Presidents Conference deliberations) and outside elite. Within eight months, he became the highest ranking Presidents Conference member to meet with Arafat.

The very ubiquity of the PLO in the political environment allowed it to dominate the peace process agenda. In April 1988, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev urged Arafat to recognize Israel so that the PLO could sit at the bargaining table. In the domestic political arena, Jesse Jackson continued to raise the Palestinian Arab cause in his quest for the Democratic presidential nomination.⁷⁰² Generally speaking, pro-Palestinian Arab sentiment had been gaining momentum among Democratic party activists at the district level. In California, for example, anti-Israeli forces claimed a "moral victory" because defeat of a proposal to include a pro-Palestinian plank in the Democratic party platform was overcome only after serious consideration.⁷⁰³

Meantime, the rhetoric of moderation resonated within the political environment. Saleh Khalef {Abu Iyad}, second in command to Yasir Arafat and the group's chief of internal security, told a French reporter that the PLO was not out to destroy Israel. The PLO Covenant, "which the Israelis promote

⁷⁰¹ JTA, April 27, 1988

⁷⁰² JTA, April 12, 1988

⁷⁰³ JTA, May 2, 1988. Prompted by Jesse Jackson, Democratic parties in seven states called for Palestinian self-determination (sometimes explicitly for a Palestinian state). The AJCommittee's Ira Silverman attributed the promotion of the PLO state idea to "a highly organized effort...They've been doing their homework." This made the Jewish community "deeply troubled," according to Silverman. See *The New York Times*, June 23, 1988. The issue of Palestinian sovereignty was debated in Atlanta at the Democratic Convention platform committee. Although defeated, James F. Zogby, an Arab-American leader, said "We're making history. The deadly silence has been shattered. We won a victory because we have had a debate in our party." See, *The New York Times*, July 20, 1988

so much--we do not include them since the 1974 PNC meeting that reshaped our program."⁷⁰⁴ He complained that it was the Israelis who reject peace not the PLO: "Unfortunately, the Israelis of today speak the same language the Arabs used to speak 30 years ago...We say yes to peace, yes to a political solution, de-facto recognition of the Palestinian homeland."⁷⁰⁵

Given the perceptual framework undergirded by talk of moderation and television images of Israeli brutality, it is hardly surprising that a national survey conducted by Reagan pollster Richard Wirthlin discovered that more college educated Americans (42 percent) were sympathetic to the Palestinian cause than Israel's (38 percent). The pollster said that, overall, fewer Americans were now willing to give Israel the benefit of the doubt.⁷⁰⁶ Another survey by the *Los Angeles Times* discovered that most American Jews were opposed to the Likud's approach to the peace process; they overwhelmingly supported an international conference; 41% felt there was an element of racism in Israel's treatment of the Palestinians; 29% supported

⁷⁰⁴ JTA, May 6, 1988

⁷⁰⁵ JTA, May 6, 1988 Earlier in the year he said: "The establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza does not contradict our ultimate strategic aim, which is the establishment of a democratic state in the entire territory of Palestine, but rather it is a step in that direction." January 25, 1988 in *Al Safir*, Lebanon quoted in *Near East Report*, May 23, 1988; Nor did he distinguish between the West Bank and the coastal region. He told the Kuwaiti newspaper *Al-Qabas*, "Palestine always was and will ever remain Arab. Palestine is Jerusalem, Jericho, Nazareth, Hebron." cited in *Near East Report*, May 2, 1988. Abu Iyad was assassinated, it is widely believed by the Abu Nidal group, in January 1991, with the approval of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein. *New York Times*, January 16 & 17, 1991. Jon Immanuel wrote: "Abu Iyad is an enigma in the PLO leadership. The only one to have written an account of his own life that was translated into English and Hebrew, his personality is nevertheless a mystery. He has been described as a family man and a womanizer, a thinker and a thug, the organizer of Black September and a sensitive moderate..." *Jerusalem Post International Edition*, January 18, 1991. In his book *My Home, My Land*, (New York: Times Books, 1981), co-authored with Eric Rouleau, a French journalist and diplomat of Jewish descent, he wrote that as early as 1968 he expressed interest in co-existence with Israelis in a single secular democratic state that would replace the Jewish State. He later wrote vaguely of a two-state solution. Khalef also complained that "Fatah's entry into the PLO in 1968 compromised its revolutionary character...Our movement has become bureaucratized. What it gained in 'respectability' it lost in militancy." (p. 221).

⁷⁰⁶ *The New York Jewish Week*, April 1, 1988.

a PLO-led Palestinian state in Judea, Samaria and Gaza; and fully two-thirds favored Israel finding “a way” to accommodate Palestinian aspirations. The survey also revealed that fifty-six percent of American Jews did not contribute financially to Israel and two-thirds had no affiliation with any Jewish organization. Of particular interest were findings regarding media coverage. Three percent of non-Jews said the *Intifada* story was the one they had been paying the most attention to. But thirty-three percent of Jews regarded “Israeli unrest” as the news story they had been following most closely. Indeed, slightly more Jews than non-Jews (27%-24%) said that Israeli policies over the last several years had become “unacceptable” to them. On the one issue that still loosely united Labor and Likud: talks with the PLO, 61% of American Jews said the United States should not negotiate with the PLO while 52% of Americans in general favored US-PLO talks. Least surprising, by a margin of 57% to 49% American Jews favored Peres over Shamir.⁷⁰⁷ Popular opinion was now where the Administration and a significant segment of the Jewish establishment wanted it to be.

Vorspan's Soul-Searching

The *New York Times* under Max Frankel's stewardship was strongly committed to an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza. The *Times*' magazine, edited by James L. Greenfield, offered a series of scathing portraits of the Jewish presence in Judea, Samaria and Gaza. The paper published frequent critiques of Israeli West Bank policies (in the form of news, analysis and commentary), as noted earlier. However, the publication of Albert Vorspan's diary in the *Magazine* section was a momentous expansion of the newspaper's policy fostering Jewish dissent. Vorspan, the senior vice president of Reform Judaism's Union of American Hebrew Congregations, chronicled the “soul-searching” he did before publicly

⁷⁰⁷ *Los Angeles Times*, April 12, 1988

breaking with Shamir policies. His decision to publish a diary reporting on events at closed meetings was very much in keeping with the situational advantage seeking element of political suasion:

Some of us are upset about the position of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. Its chairman, Morris Abram, seems to be putting a kosher stamp on everything--shootings, deportations, excessive force. Yet our group and several others represented believe in taking a more critical line. We have ceased to be Jewish champions of social justice and become cheerleaders for failed Israeli policies...Meeting of the full Commission of Social Action of Reform Judaism. Gen. Yehoshafat Harakabi, former head of Israeli military intelligence, tells us that to continue the occupation indefinitely will bring on the "Belfastization" of the West Bank. Territorial compromise is essential to Israel's security...{Polls show} American Jews overwhelmingly support the United States proposal for a Middle East peace conference, approve of public dissent...hold a more favorable opinion of George Shultz than of Yitzhak Shamir...I remember the comment at the Shamir meeting in New York three weeks before: "Now you know how unrepresentative you are," they had told me. I smile faintly, thinking of that, and feel more hopeful about the future.⁷⁰⁸

Reaction to the publication of Vorspan's diary varied. Israel's Consul General in New York Moshe Yegar, a Shamir appointee, condemned Vorspan.⁷⁰⁹ AIPAC's Tom Dine and Malcolm Hoenlein of the Presidents Conference immediately criticized Vorspan--not for what he said--but for "going public" in the secular media. Such public expression of disunity

⁷⁰⁸ Albert Vorspan, "Soul-Searching," *The New York Times Magazine*, May 8, 1988. Vorspan was not the only one soul-searching. The Jewish wire service JTA (in large measure dominated by key players of the internal opposition) circulated an Op-Ed essay by Rabbi Bernard S. Raskas of St. Paul, Minnesota. Entitled "An alternative to the Centrality of Israel," Raskas asked for Jewish independence from Israel and argued that: "Recent troubling events have caused many American Jews to question the centrality of Israel in Jewish life...Cannot Israel and the American Jewish community live as a duet?" *New York Jewish Week*, April 1, 1988. Vorspan had an enviable knack for getting his pieces published in the *Times*. His next published Op-Ed essay about a flat tire, "A Flat Story, But It's Wrenching," appeared August 8, 1988

⁷⁰⁹ JTA, May 12, 1988

among American Jews would, they argued, damage the pro-Israel community.⁷¹⁰ In a letter to the editor, Abram took a similar line, complaining:

I deeply resent the unfair and unfounded accusations against me... [Vorspan's] outrageous charge that I put "a kosher stamp on everything--shootings, deportations, excessive force," is belied by the series of unequivocal public statements I issued in the name of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. The metaphor in itself is offensive...The fact remains that public debate and criticism can have a very different effect in Israel and the United States.⁷¹¹

Peres' own political suasion campaign of divide and conquer was aimed at emboldening the Jewish leadership to criticize Shamir and back Labor. He participated in the AJCommittee's annual meeting and, quite likely, encouraged its leadership to support Labor's stance.⁷¹² At a Presidents Conference appearance, Peres urged Shamir critics to "speak out" as a "free people."⁷¹³ The *American Jewish Year Book* reflected on the Peres visit: "Indeed, buoyed by the support of...minister and Labor bloc leader Shimon Peres...American Jews who considered the Shamir stance overly intransigent became quite vocal during the spring and summer."⁷¹⁴

As Peres engaged in the political manipulation of the Jewish establishment, the Administration was doing its best to elevate the Labor leader's stature. The White House offered accolades for his forward thinking vision. In contrast, the Administration implied that Shamir was "negative" and consistently rejected new ideas for peace.⁷¹⁵

⁷¹⁰ JTA, May 10, 1988

⁷¹¹ *New York Times Magazine*, June 12, 1988

⁷¹² JTA, May 13, 1988

⁷¹³ JTA, May 19, 1988

⁷¹⁴ *AJYB*, 1990, p. 260

⁷¹⁵ JTA, May 19, 1988. See too, *Washington Post*, May 18, 1988

By this point, the internal opposition did not need much encouragement to lobby Shamir on behalf of the Administration's policy. AJCongress head Robert Lifton met with Shamir in Jerusalem. He publicized his opposition to Shamir's policies and proffered the advice that the status quo in the Territories had to be brought to an end.⁷¹⁶ In New York, the Workmen's Circle, a secularist fraternal organization whose roots were non-Zionist (but generally pro-Israel) democratic socialism, endorsed the Peres approach to the peace process.⁷¹⁷

Against a backdrop of continuing violence in the Territories, Shultz paid his fourth visit to the Middle East in June to pressure Shamir into going along with an international conference.⁷¹⁸ He wrote later:

In my arrival statement on June 3, I asked: "What is the Arab-Israeli conflict? It is the competition between two national movements for sovereignty on one land...The fate of Zionism and Palestinian nationalism are interdependent." I intended to stir things up with this equation of Israel and Palestinians in the same utterance with the words "national" and "sovereignty."⁷¹⁹

In a cliché that had become de rigueur, Shultz warned that it was "an illusion" to think the "status quo" could be maintained.⁷²⁰ To heighten the sense of crisis, a component of political suasion, the White House implied that Shultz might have to suspend his peace making efforts if Israel were not

⁷¹⁶ JTA, May 25, 1988

⁷¹⁷ JTA, May 24, 1988. The organization also publishes the secularist Yiddish language *Forward* newspaper. In 1990 they began publishing a small but influential English-language "insiders" newspaper also called *The Forward*.

⁷¹⁸ *Near East Report*, June 13, 1988

⁷¹⁹ Shultz, op. cit., p. 1032

⁷²⁰ JTA, June 6, 1988. Shamir was in the US at the time fund raising for the next Likud election campaign.

more forthcoming.⁷²¹

The internal opposition intensified its efforts to mobilize support for an Israeli withdrawal from Judea, Samaria and Gaza. The AJCongress brought retired IDF Generals Aharon Yariv and Ori Orr to the United States on a speaking tour. Addressing mostly Jewish audiences, they made the case that a West Bank and Gaza withdrawal was achievable from a security viewpoint. The generals conceded that the areas would require an IDF "presence" and have to remain "demilitarized."⁷²² In an effort which brought together the internal opposition, outside elite and peace camp, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (under the leadership of Schindler and Vorspan) spearheaded a campaign by 12 other groups, which resulted in an open-telegram to Shamir supporting Shultz's peace initiatives. They also called upon Israel to--as a goodwill gesture--withdraw from some of the administered territories.⁷²³ Groups joining in the campaign included: Labor Zionist Alliance (Menachem Rosensaft's group), Americans For A Progressive Israel, Holocaust Survivors Association USA (Rosensaft's other group), International Center for Peace in the Middle East (ICPME) and the Progressive Zionist Caucus.⁷²⁴ Peace camp elements, broadly defined, were also active independently. The CPUSA sponsored a speaking tour by Nazareth Mayor Tawfiq Zayyad and attorney Felicia Langer. They met with the Association of Black Journalists, New York area labor leaders and members of

⁷²¹ JTA, June 7, 1988

⁷²² JTA, June 14, 1988 They formed a group called the Council for Peace and Security. See, *New York Times*, May 31, 1988. "Our main goals are to counter the false perceptions about peace and security, and to bolster national confidence by emphasizing that because of our strength we can afford to make concessions for peace," according to Moshe Amirav, the ousted Likud official. See, *Jerusalem Post International Edition*, June 11, 1988

⁷²³ JTA, June 14, 1988

⁷²⁴ JTA, June 14, 1988, In terms of assessing how influential these groups were, I think that what counted, from a public relations vantage point, was their ability to gain wide publicity for anti-Likud pronouncements.

the New York City Council⁷²⁵

To this onslaught of faultfinding, the reaction of Presidents Conference members who did not disparage Shamir, was circumspect. Those who had not participated in the criticizing were not necessarily proponents of the Likud line. The non-critics argued the narrow case that the haranguing of Israeli policies had gotten out of hand. Abraham Foxman of ADL, for instance, urged that criticism should be kept to a minimum.⁷²⁶ For his part, Abram wrote an Op-Ed essay published in the *Jerusalem Post* saying:

Many American Jews argue that since the status quo is politically unacceptable, they are morally impelled to speak publicly, even though these issues directly concern Israel's security. Their strongest argument is that since the Israeli government is sharply divided, there is no logical or ethical reason why American Jewish leaders should not advocate positions that are supported by one cabinet minister instead of another...On the other hand, American Jews do not live in Israel, vote in Israel or die in defense of Israel. We cannot dictate security policies...and we should not take a public stand in the debate...Israel must now rely almost exclusively on the United States...public criticism of Israel's defense policies can only have the effect of misleading American public opinion and loosening the American commitment to Israel's security...⁷²⁷

⁷²⁵ *People's Daily World*, June 7, 1988

⁷²⁶ JTA, June 15, 1988

⁷²⁷ *Jerusalem Post International Edition*, June 25, 1988

Pro-Shamir Camp

A variety of factors, not the least of which was a legacy of nearly 30 years of Labor Party rule in Israel, contributed to Labor's ideological dominance over the pro-Israel community in the United States.⁷²⁸ As noted elsewhere, a strong organizational base of support for the Jabotinsky ideological line did not exist in the United States. Begin's 1977 victory did little to change the structural and ideological balance of power among Jewish organizations in the United States.⁷²⁹ Begin and later Shamir were dependent on the kindness of ideological strangers.

To be sure, there were a number of groups which were sympathetic to Likud's political philosophy. But none effectively, coherently and systematically advocated support of Likud's policies. The most prominent openly sympathetic group was the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), a Presidents Conference member. But financial and organizational adversity made ZOA's voice inside the Presidents Conference faint and ineffective. Likud USA, a sometimes Presidents Conference member (they did not always pay their dues), suffered from multiple organizational frailties. Likud USA's main role was not, at any rate, political mobilization. It served mostly as a funnel for campaign dollars to the Israeli party. Likud USA also serves as the "address" of the Jabotinsky movement and its Betar-Tagar youth movement.

Outside the Presidents Conference, pro-Shamir groups tended to be small and fiercely ideological. But ideological cleavages, personality differences and organizational turf battles made a united front unobtainable. Despite its shortcomings, the most prominent 'national camp' group active in the American Jewish arena in the period under study was Americans For A Safe Israel (AFSI). AFSI was the vanguard of the anti-"land-for-peace"

⁷²⁸ For a fuller treatment of the organizational structure of the organized American Jewish community see chapter 4.

⁷²⁹ It seems to me that the reasons for this might well serve as an excellent dissertation topic.

movement. But the group was ill-suited to match the mobilizing prowess of its ideological opponents. AFSI also lacked a clear organizational focus (shifting from academic think-tank to Washington lobby to mobilizing force and back again). It suffered from a financial and leadership base too narrow to effectively challenge the balance of power inside the American Jewish community. In summary, a legacy of historical, structural, personality and ideological factors resulted in an American Jewish-right that was ill-prepared to have anything more than a marginal impact on the events described here.

PLO - Outside Elite Alliance

In June, the PLO escalated its peace offensive. Bassam Abu Sharif, Arafat's press spokesman, circulated a statement announcing that the PLO accepted UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 despite the fact that "neither resolution says anything about the national rights of the Palestinian people."⁷³⁰ *The New York Times* published a version of the statement, first distributed to reporters in Algiers at the Arab summit, as an Op-Ed essay:

The Palestinians want that kind of lasting peace and security for themselves and the Israelis because no one can build his own future on the ruins of another's...The P.L.O. raison d'être is not the undoing of Israel but the salvation of the Palestinian people and their rights, including their right to democratic self-expression and national self-determination. The P.L.O. accepts (UN SC) Resolutions 242 and 338. What prevents it from saying so unconditionally is not what is in the resolutions but what is not in them...We are ready for peace now, and we can deliver it...⁷³¹

The outside elite promptly embraced the Abu Sharif statement even though its implied recognition of Israel was contingent upon the establishment of a PLO-led state. Rita Hauser, chairperson of ICME's

⁷³⁰ JTA, June 23, 1988

⁷³¹ *New York Times*, June 22, 1988

American Section, said it was “the most constructive statement the PLO has ever made. It is an enormous leap forward. What we want now (from the PLO) is a clarification that this is really the consensus of the majority of the organizations in the PLO.”⁷³² Philip Klutznick called on the Israelis to join ICPME in embracing Abu Sharif’s statement.⁷³³

With the Abu Sharif communication, ICPME come forth as the major pro-PLO lobby within the American Jewish community. In ICPME’s view, important segments of the PLO had gone through a metamorphosis and no longer sought the destruction of Israel. Instead, the new mission of the PLO was to set up a Palestinian-Arab state in the West Bank and Gaza which would live in peaceful coexistence with Jewish State. Fifteen ICPME leaders in the United States signed a statement applauding the Abu Sharif statement. Among the signatories were: Kenneth Arrow, Irving Howe, Rita Hauser, Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, Rabbi Wolfe Kelman, Philip Klutznick, Professor Seymour Martin Lipset, Nathan P. Glazer, Theodore Mann, Letty Cottin Pogrebin, Daniel Thursz, and Menachem Rosensaft.⁷³⁴

Peres professed to see “nothing new” in the Abu Sharif essay and claimed it did not “merit a response.”⁷³⁵ Foxman, of ADL, decried ICPME’s embrace of Abu Sharif as too public and premature. He said that it might have been more appropriate to tell Shamir quietly “Hey, fella, this is what you and we have been waiting for.”⁷³⁶ The reaction of the internal opposition was typified by Al Chernin of NJCRAC who said that Abu Sharif’s writings were clearly more than “just a restatement of old positions.” But he pointed out that there was no way to know if Abu Sharif spoke

⁷³² *Jerusalem Post*, July 6, 1988. See too, *The New York Times*, July 2, 1988

⁷³³ *Jerusalem Post*, July 6, 1988

⁷³⁴ JTA, July 1, 1988

⁷³⁵ FBIS, June 22, 1988 In the interim, Shamir denied press reports that he had authorized secret negotiations with the PLO through an Israeli Arab intermediary regarding Israeli POW’s missing in Lebanon. See, FBIS June 27, 1988

⁷³⁶ *Jerusalem Post*, July 6, 1988

authoritatively for the PLO.

The PLO's immediate reaction to the statement by Abu Sharif had been negative.⁷³⁷ While not endorsing the statement, Arafat called for a positive reciprocal gesture from the Administration. His number two, Abu Iyad (Salah Khalaf) said, "the important thing now is to...block the vain political gestures made by Bassam Abu Sharif and his deviationist statements in all fields."⁷³⁸ Farouk Kaddoumi, PLO Foreign Minister, said Abu Sharif was expressing "the private views of the author."⁷³⁹ The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a constituent of the PLO, also denounced Abu Sharif.⁷⁴⁰ Officially, the State Department termed the remarks "constructive" but not "authoritative."⁷⁴¹ Vice President Bush, who would be a presidential candidate in November, observed: "We keep hearing the PLO has all but recognized Israel's right to exist. The PLO has done this and the PLO has done that. The PLO must have a direct, definitive, clear statement regarding recognition of the appropriate U.N. resolutions 242, particularly, and 338 and renunciation of terror."⁷⁴²

Abram Breaks With Shamir

In a break with Presidents Conference protocol that was as historic as it was anticlimactic, Abram publicly endorsed Labor's interpretation of the land-

⁷³⁷ *Jerusalem Post*, July 6, 1988

⁷³⁸ *Near East Report*, July 11, 1988 quoting Reuters, June 28.

⁷³⁹ FBIS, July 1, 1988

⁷⁴⁰ JTA, July 23, 1988. The Damascus based Palestinian factions condemned the statement. See, FBIS June 21, 1988.

⁷⁴¹ JTA, June 23, 1988. Beirut's *Al-Shafir* reported remarks by Arafat which were said to be supportive of the Abu Sharif statement. See, FBIS June 23, 1988. Shultz comments in his memoirs: "Were the Palestinians genuinely trying to change their approach to Israel? Israel had always been able to say that it was ready to talk but had 'no Arab partner.' Now Palestinians wanted to say that 'no Israeli party' could be found on the other side of the table." Shultz, op. cit., p. 1033

⁷⁴² *New York Jewish Week*, July 8, 1988

for-peace formula. He said, "The Israelis must convince the Palestinians that if they recognize Israel and forswear their covenant of violence, territorial compromise becomes a realistic goal."⁷⁴³ Meantime, Rabin also reiterated support for the "Land-for-peace" blueprint. The Defense Minister said: "Even though I accept the principle of territories for peace, I will not encourage any giving in to violence in whatever form--civilian violence, terror, or threats of war or wars." Speaking at the National Press Club in Washington D.C., Rabin said that moderate Palestinians were afraid to enter into talks with Israel because they feared being assassinated by the PLO.⁷⁴⁴

It must be recalled that the Zionist right opposed talks with the PLO purely on pragmatic grounds: there was nothing to discuss if Arafat's goal was to "liberate" Palestine out from under the Jews. But there is reason to believe that Shamir had become curious about a possible shift in PLO intentions. In mid-July, Shamir's office denied Abu-Sharif's claim that the Jewish State had been secretly negotiating with the PLO on an interim agreement for the West Bank. The two sides had been indirectly negotiating through the good offices of Rumania, according to Abu Sharif. Supposedly, at these talks, Israel offered to allow the PLO to take over many of the functions handled by the Civil Administration. Shamir acknowledged only that he had received a private message from Nicolae Ceausescu through the Rumanian President's special emissary Konstantin Metea.⁷⁴⁵ Moshe Shahal, a Labor Cabinet minister,

⁷⁴³ JTA, June 27, 1988

⁷⁴⁴ JTA, June 30, 1988

⁷⁴⁵ JTA, July 18, 1988 See too, FBIS, July 13, 1988 and July 18, 1988. Shamir explained: "Maybe they want to exploit ideas which they know we support. But a negotiation must be within a framework which we support too. The autonomy can't be a figleaf, for a short time, leading to the cession of the territories to the PLO. It has to be in a framework--or else nothing serious can come of it..." Regarding Abu Sharif's earlier moderate statement Shamir noted: He is part of the PLO machine. And other senior leaders immediately dismissed {the document}. It is a game they play 'to confuse the enemy.'" *Jerusalem Post International Edition*, July 23, 1988 On Amirav's efforts to pursue contacts between Likud and the PLO, Schiff & Ya'ari write: "To this day, the truth about that strange affair remains buried under a clutter of contradictions and denials..." Amirav was pursuing "kind of super-autonomy." Apparently, "Amirav had gone far beyond what Shamir was prepared to swallow..." op. cit., p 277.

insisted that Abu-Sharif's claims were accurate and that Shamir did in fact hold indirect talks with the PLO while in Rumania. Shahal said Shamir's overture to the PLO about taking over civilian duties in the West Bank was based on earlier recommendations made by Moshe Amirav (the ousted Likud official who had held talks with PLO-supporters).⁷⁴⁶ Whether by design or otherwise the incident served to sow discord and confusion within the Israeli polity.⁷⁴⁷

Several personnel matters are worth briefly noting for what they tell us about how the players were positioned in the waning days of the US-PLO dialogue scenario. In late July, Abram was asked to stay on an additional six months as chairman of the Presidents Conference, "as a result of a recent decision to have the term of office correspond to the calendar year."⁷⁴⁸ In Israel, meanwhile, the Labor Party failed to select Abba Eban as one of its top twenty candidates for the next Knesset elections.⁷⁴⁹ This indignity forced Eban out of government service. Thereafter, he devoted himself to, among other projects, the International Centre for Peace in the Middle East.⁷⁵⁰ In New York, Ira Silverman's appointment as Executive Vice President at the AJCommittee signaled that the organization would continue to follow a centrist direction within internal opposition. "I don't believe in speaking out against Israel," Silverman said. "What I do believe in is stating plainly our view about how best to achieve a peace for Israel."⁷⁵¹ It was precisely this thinking that impelled the outside elite to take the initiative.

⁷⁴⁶ JTA, July 19, 1988

⁷⁴⁷ JTA, July 20, 1988

⁷⁴⁸ JTA, July 27, 1988

⁷⁴⁹ *Washington Post*, June 16, 198. Seats are captured on the basis of proportional vote-getting.

⁷⁵⁰ He had founded ICPME in 1982 with the support of wealthy American Jews including Stanley Sheinbaum. See, Wallach & Wallach, p. 454. Ultimately, spurned by Labor, Eban began to spend long periods of time outside of Israel on book and television projects.

⁷⁵¹ JTA, July 22, 1988

Whatever the truth about the Abu Sharif affair, in the final analysis Shamir held firm to the principle that the nature of the conflict had not altered. The *Intifada*, he said, "has not changed our basic situation. It has merely served to underscore the existential nature of the conflict. The fact that it has spread across the green line--in arson, stone-throwing, occasional fire-bombs, the effort 'to destroy the unification of Jerusalem' - this proves conclusively that the conflict is not over territory, but over Israel's very existence."⁷⁵² If Shamir's remarks suggested fortified weariness, Peres' give the impression of being forward looking and flexible. U.S. plans to meet with prominent PLO aligned Arabs from the Territories, Peres said, did not bother him "because we, too, meet with them" and such meetings do not constitute talking to the PLO.⁷⁵³ That did not go far enough for Mubarak, who persisted in lobbying for a U.S. - PLO dialogue. He even insinuated that the two sides were close to talking, which compelled the State Department to issue the customary statement that U.S. policy toward the PLO remained unchanged.⁷⁵⁴

Advertising "David v. Goliath"

Media advocacy reporting of the *Intifada* continued to influence the perceptual environment. *Time* magazine, for instance, referred to Arafat as "homeless."⁷⁵⁵ This underdog theme was emphasized, in the summer of 1988, by an advertising campaign in the Washington D.C. Metro subway system, sponsored by the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. The campaign featured graphic photographs of terrified-looking Arabs being

⁷⁵² *Jerusalem Post International Edition*, July 23, 1988

⁷⁵³ JTA, July 29, 1988

⁷⁵⁴ JTA, July 28, 1988

⁷⁵⁵ *Near East Report*, August 1, 1988. NER comments: "The interview never mentions the PLO billions

confronted by heavily armed Israeli soldiers.⁷⁵⁶ Their tax-dollars, Metro riders were informed, paid for the Israeli occupation of Gaza and West Bank. Israel's human rights policies were likened to those of South Africa.⁷⁵⁷

Jordan Bows Out

Piqued by the PLO's ascendancy, as propelled by the *Intifada*, Jordan's King Hussein announced that he was formally severing ties with the West Bank in order to accommodate PLO wishes to establish a state. Ironically, only months earlier, it had appeared that pro-Jordanian Arabs in the Territories had gained influence.⁷⁵⁸ But by August 1988, nine months into the uprising, the King declared: "The independent Palestinian state will be established on the occupied Palestinian land after its liberation, God willing."⁷⁵⁹ If any further certification of the "Palestinianization" of the Arab-Israel conflict was needed, the King's announcement incontrovertibly conferred it.

For Labor and many in the American Jewish leadership, who had been counting on Jordan to facilitate talks with non-PLO Palestinians, the news was very bad indeed. Official US reaction was to avow that Jordan would continue to play a central role in the peace process.⁷⁶⁰ White House spokesman Fitzwater said of the King's move: "It does not change anything from our perspective. It doesn't alter our approach. Our policy is not changed in any way by this action."⁷⁶¹ Shultz commented later that the decision did "turn the spotlight on the PLO. If the PLO failed to change its policies, the newly emergent voices produced in the territories by the intifada might start speaking themselves without much reference to the PLO. In my view, that

⁷⁵⁶ JTA, July 29, 1988

⁷⁵⁷ *Washington Post*, July 29, 1988

⁷⁵⁸ Schiff and Ya'ari p. 12 and pp 42-45

⁷⁵⁹ *New York Times*, August 1, 1988

⁷⁶⁰ JTA, August 1, 1988

⁷⁶¹ JTA, August 2, 1988

would be a potentially positive development."⁷⁶²

Further Peace Camp Initiative

Jerome Segal had traveled to Tunis and Israel in 1987 to promote the idea that the PLO unilaterally proclaim Palestinian independence.⁷⁶³ Segal believed having their "own state" would politically enable the Palestinians to make peace with Israel.⁷⁶⁴ The idea gained further publicity after Israeli security forces located a political blue-print for independence, apparently written by Segal, at the Arab Studies Institute in east Jerusalem. A version of the plan had earlier appeared in the Arabic language Jerusalem newspaper *El Kuds*. Segal was said to have influenced the thinking of Faisal Hussenni's circle in Jerusalem.⁷⁶⁵

Though the plan was seemingly far-fetched (the PLO did not control the territory in dispute), the novelty of a Jew from the United States "fathering" PLO statehood generated significant attention in both the Israeli and US media. Ignoring Israel's physical control over the land, Segal "reinterpreted" traditional international legal requirements for state sovereignty. His model called for the establishment of a PLO-led state along boundaries analogous to the 1947 UN partition plan (including parts of Israel within the greenline).⁷⁶⁶ And PLO officials did hint that a declaration of Palestinian independence was imminent.⁷⁶⁷ Shamir retorted that Israel would crush any efforts at Palestinian independence.⁷⁶⁸

⁷⁶² Shultz, op. cit., p. 1033

⁷⁶³ Segal's background and thinking is discussed previously. A proposed text for the proclamation appears in his *Creating The Palestinian State*, p. 62

⁷⁶⁴ Personal interview conducted January 8, 1992, op. cit.

⁷⁶⁵ Schiff & Ya'ari, p. 279. The document may have existed since 1983 and not been the work of Segal. See, *The New York Times*, August 8, 1988 and August 15, 1988

⁷⁶⁶ JTA, August 8, 1988

⁷⁶⁷ FBIS, August 16, 1988 and *The New York Times*, August 17, 1988

⁷⁶⁸ *Christian Science Monitor*, August 11, 1988

That Segal had been a State Department employee (with the Agency for International Development) was largely downplayed. So too was the fact that he consulted with State Department officials prior to, as well as after, his discussions with PLO leaders.⁷⁶⁹ Nor is he mentioned in Shultz's memoirs. Yet, the case can be made that Segal laid the psychological groundwork for Hauser and the outside elite. He addressed the perceived transformation of the conflict to a non zero sum struggle in psychological terms:

When the outside observer identifies aspects of the Palestinian struggle as counterproductive, it is worth remembering that implicit in this notion is a definition of the objective of the struggle. One significant component of what the Palestinian resistance has been about, even if the Palestinians do not frequently articulate this to themselves, is that it is a search for a way to bear defeat with dignity. This is not to say that this is all the struggle is about. It is clearly an effort to prevent further defeat, to prevent dispossession from the West Bank and Gaza. It is a struggle to recover from some aspects of prior defeats; in particular for Palestinians to emerge from a stateless refugee status to citizens of a Palestinian state. And on the aspirational level it reflects a desire to reverse past defeats and to return to lost lands.⁷⁷⁰

"Beginning in mid-August," Shultz writes, "feelers from the PLO came into my office,"⁷⁷¹ They came in the form of William Quandt, the former NSC staffer, who brought Shultz messages from the PLO via Muhammad Rabia, an Arab American with ties to Arafat. These were by no means the only channels. Vernon Walters reportedly met secretly with Arafat in Morocco.⁷⁷²

⁷⁶⁹ Personal Interview conducted January 8, 1992, op. cit. Segal explicitly denied that he was acting as an agent of the State Department in his contacts with the PLO. There is no reason to doubt his veracity. See too JTA August 19, 1988. In recent years Segal has dedicated himself to the creation of a Palestinian-Arab state. To that end, he established the Jewish Committee for Israeli-Palestinian Peace. and also founded the Jewish Peace Lobby to counteract the work of AIPAC. Segal raises most of the funds for these activities from within the Jewish community. However, he received seed-money from several major Foundations.

⁷⁷⁰ Segal, op. cit. p. 16. Unfortunately, Segal does not address what would happen if the "aspirational" were ever actualized.

⁷⁷¹ Shultz, op. cit., p. 1035

⁷⁷² *New York Times*, August 10, 1988

Public meetings were more difficult. Murphy arranged to meet in Egypt with PLO-approved West Bank Arabs. The goal was to come up with an acceptable Palestinian delegation to attend an international conference. The PLO canceled the meeting at the last minute when Murphy rejected the idea of issuing a joint US-PLO communique at its conclusion.⁷⁷³ He later told a B'nai B'rith gathering in Baltimore that Israeli efforts to control the Intifada had been "ineffective and a times counterproductive" but that the Palestinians had to accept that "Israel is a reality."⁷⁷⁴

Increasingly, the "PLO talk" issue became one of gamesmanship. Proponents of dialogue inside Israel sought to undermine the boycott by letting it be known that both Shamir and Peres had received "messages" from the PLO through a number of European leaders.⁷⁷⁵ For its part, the PLO intensified its peace offensive. Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad) announced that the movement "naturally" recognizes Israel on the basis of UN General Assembly Resolution 181 (the 1947 UN partition plan). On this basis, he said, the PLO was prepared to start talks with the Jewish State.⁷⁷⁶ Reaction from both Likud and Labor was dismissive.⁷⁷⁷ The United States also viewed reliance on G/A Resolution 181 as unhelpful and privately the American Consul General in east Jerusalem, Philip Wilcox, advised Arab leaders to take a different tact. Somewhat later, the *Intifada* leadership issued a leaflet calling on the PLO to come up with a clear and comprehensive program at the forthcoming PNC session.⁷⁷⁸

⁷⁷³ JTA, August 11, 1988

⁷⁷⁴ *Near East Report*, September 12, 1988

⁷⁷⁵ JTA, August 12, 1988

⁷⁷⁶ JTA, August 15, 1988. He also used the opportunity to say that King Hussein had broken ties with the West Bank out of fear that the *Intifada* would spread to Jordan (which the PLO considers also part of Palestine).

⁷⁷⁷ JTA, August 16, 1988. The PLO Executive Committee had meantime decided not to declare a Palestinian State. Salah Khalaf said that: "This year will certainly become the year of the proclamation of a Palestinian State" based on UN Resolution 181 --the 1948 Partition Plan. See, *Near East Report*, August 29, 1988

⁷⁷⁸ JTA, August 24, 1988. Wilcox denied the meetings has taken place.

As the uprising grinded on Israel sought to contain the violence with plans to deport 25 *Intifada* leaders.⁷⁷⁹ But Deputy Secretary of State John Whitehead warned Oded Eran, deputy chief of mission at the Israeli Embassy in Washington, that “damage to our bilateral relations will occur” unless Israel reconsidered. To which the Presidents Conference said, after months of relative silence, that while the U.S. could rightfully criticize Israeli policies it was concerned about the tone of Whitehead’s warning.⁷⁸⁰

The presence of Palestine Liberation Organization facilities in the United States remained on the American political agenda throughout the summer months. At the end of June 1988, a Federal District Court judge in New York ruled that the United states could not close the PLO’s Observer Mission to the UN. Justice Department officials said they did not know if they would appeal the ruling.⁷⁸¹ In Israel meanwhile, four left-wing Israelis who met with PLO representatives in Rumania were jailed for violating an Israeli law against contacts with a terrorist organization.⁷⁸² By late August, the Administration with the backing of the Jewish leadership opted not to appeal a New York Federal judge’s ruling that the United States could not legally oust the PLO’s UN Observer Mission. Among Presidents Conference member organizations only ZOA had actively pushed for the closing.⁷⁸³ However, the Administration’s decision to shut-down the PLO’s Washington, D.C.

⁷⁷⁹ All told 60 people had been deported since the rioting began. *Near East Report*, September 5, 1988

⁷⁸⁰ *New York Jewish Week*, September 2, 1988.

⁷⁸¹ *Jerusalem Post*, July 1, 1988

⁷⁸² JTA, July 1, 1988

⁷⁸³ JTA, August 30, 1988. How little support the idea of closing the New York office had is illustrated by editorial comment on the decision not to appeal. *The New York Times* (July 5, 1988) called efforts to close the PLO’s Mission to the U.N. , “shabby” jeopardizing “the right of the American people to hear a public debate enriched by views of even the most quarrelsome sources. For that, a complaisant Congress is to blame.” *The Washington Post* (July 2, 1988) called the effort “misdirected,” adding: “Advocacy of unpopular ideas, heated discourse on matters of international affairs and the dissemination of material supporting any political cause are protected by the First Amendment.”

Information Office was upheld by the United States Court of Appeals.⁷⁸⁴

Also during the summer of 1988, there was a good deal of speculation about a possible Arafat visit to the US. He received a speaking engagement invitation from members of the National Press Club in Washington. At the same time, the PLO leader was invited to address the UN General Assembly in New York. The State Department refused to say what it would do if Arafat requested a U.S. entry visa.⁷⁸⁵

The Administration continued to place much emphasis on maintaining good lines of communication with the Jewish leadership. Benjamin Waldman, previously assistant press secretary in the 1988 Pat Robertson presidential campaign, was appointed the White House liaison to the Jewish community at the end of August. Waldman was preceded by Matt Zachari, who served briefly in the position after Max Green left the post in late June 1988.⁷⁸⁶

Peace Camp in Tunis

Segal made another trip to Tunis in August. Various formulae were considered to bring the PLO directly into the negotiations. He pressed for his "independence" idea as a way for the PLO to gain stature as a nation-state. Such standing, he argued, would make it politically feasible for the PLO to make the requisite concessions demanded by the State Department. His advice to Arafat and Salah Khalef was to proclaim the State of Palestine;

⁷⁸⁴ *New York Times*, August 6, 1988

⁷⁸⁵ JTA, August 31, 1988

⁷⁸⁶ JTA, September 1, 1988

recognize the Jewish State's right to exist; and launch a "peace offensive." But they told him a state would not be declared until the end of the year. Segal conveyed the results of his meeting to high-level State Department officials.⁷⁸⁷ Of course, it must be remembered that contacts between Arafat and Shultz were taking place through a variety of intermediaries. But the Jewish go betweens served a dual purpose: building momentum for a US-PLO dialogue while helping to set the domestic political stage for this eventuality.

"The question is not how to replace the PLO," said Avraham Tamir, director general of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, "but to change it." Conceding the PLO's inexorable momentum toward complete international legitimacy, Tamir said: "Everyone knows that the PLO is the national organization for the Palestinian people. There is no replacement for that organization." But Shamir did not think the PLO could be changed and called for Tamir's resignation. The controversy was papered over when the Foreign Ministry spokesman explained that: "Tamir did not in any way, shape or form say that Israel should talk with...recognize the PLO...or create a Palestinian state."⁷⁸⁸ The fracas merely called attention to the continuing inability of the "unity" Government to speak with one voice. Peres' trip to the UN in New York for meetings with Reagan and Egyptian Foreign Minister Ismat Abdel was denounced by a Likud minister as a "gimmick" aimed at helping the Labor Party in the upcoming Israeli elections.⁷⁸⁹

Bush & Dukakis

U.S. presidential campaign politics found both George Bush and Michael Dukakis taking similar stands supporting the substance of American

⁷⁸⁷ JTA, September 6, 1988

⁷⁸⁸ JTA, September 6, 1988 . Tamir argued that the Intifada would continue until a peace process acceptable to the Palestinians was in place. See, *Near East Report*, September 12, 1988

⁷⁸⁹ JTA, September 8, 1988

peace process policy, as well as opposing the creation of a PLO state in Judea, Samaria and Gaza.⁷⁹⁰ In all likelihood, the internal opposition favored a Dukakis victory. Beyond the candidate's liberal-left credentials, his Jewish wife, Kitty, was known to be "privately critical of some Israeli government policies, particularly the Army's role in the occupied West Bank and Gaza. In a recent interview in *Tikkun*, a liberal Jewish opinion journal, she compassionately described the despair of young Palestinians in refugee camps. She makes clear, however, that she considers the Palestine Liberation Organization 'evil.' The occupation, she told *Newsweek*, 'is a tragic situation that calls for a settlement that is fair and equitable to both sides.'"⁷⁹¹

Eban - Peres Cooperation

Despite their well-known antipathy for one another, Eban cleared a speech with Peres outlining conditions the PLO would have to meet to enter the peace process. In the interim, Eban urged European leaders not to endorse PLO plans to declare a Palestinian State. Peres declared he was prepared to talk directly with Palestinians who renounce violence and accept Israel's existence. The PLO, said Peres, had been unable to "squeeze a military option" out of the *Intifada*. At the same time moderate Palestinian Arabs had been unable to "squeeze a political option" out of the PLO.⁷⁹² Perhaps as a form of pressure on the PLO, Peres continued to pursue the Jordanian option.⁷⁹³

Shultz also tried to cajole the PLO into taking steps that would facilitate its entry into the diplomatic process. He did not want the next Administration to be saddled with the "no talk" Gordian knot.⁷⁹⁴ In an address before a Washington think tank Shultz stated:

⁷⁹⁰ JTA, September 9, 1988

⁷⁹¹ *Newsweek*, August 1, 1988

⁷⁹² JTA, September 9, 1988

⁷⁹³ JTA, September 15, 1988

⁷⁹⁴ Shultz, op. cit., p.1035

No participant in a peace process can wave the flag of justice in one hand , and brandish the weapons of terrorism in the other. All participants must renounce violence and terrorism. Each must agree to negotiate on the accepted international basis of Security Council 242 and 338...The United States cannot accept "self-determination" when it is a code word for an independent Palestinian state...to expect the PLO to accept Resolutions 242 and 338 as the basis for negotiations is not to ask it to make a concession...⁷⁹⁵

Shultz also emphasized the land-for-peace formula as the best approach to resolving the conflict. Yet he also insisted that the Administration opposed the creation of a PLO-led state.⁷⁹⁶ And he warned against the idea of transferring the Palestinian Arabs to Jordan and designating the former eastern Palestine as the Palestinian state. Finally, he remarked that it would be unreasonable to expect Israel to withdraw to its precise pre-1967 borders, much less the 1947 Partition Plan boundaries.⁷⁹⁷ Likud ministers accused Shultz of using the speech to promote the Labor party's standing with the Israeli electorate.⁷⁹⁸

Shana Tova

The number of tracks used to promote a US-PLO dialogue is dizzying. Arafat asked French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas to sound out Peres on Israel's willingness to recognize a PLO-led state in the West Bank. Dumas asked Arafat: "If I publicly say that you have recognized Israel de facto, would you deny having said that to me?" "No, I would not deny that," Dumas quoted Arafat as answering. The PLO leader added that he accepted UN

⁷⁹⁵ *Near East Report*, September 26, 1988

⁷⁹⁶ JTA, September 19, 1988

⁷⁹⁷ *Near East Report*, September 26, 1988. Shalah Khalaf said Israel had misinterpreted PLO statements regarding the 1947 partition plan. He reiterated that the PLO wanted a state in the West Bank and Gaza and did not claim land within Israel's pre-1967 borders. FBIS, September 26, 1988

⁷⁹⁸ JTA, September 19, 1988

Resolution 242.⁷⁹⁹ Meanwhile, Quandt was telling Shultz that the PLO was almost prepared to meet US demands for a dialogue. About the only stumbling block was the impact a dialogue announcement would have on the Bush campaign. Shultz writes:

From us, the PLO wanted a commitment to start a dialogue and to accept the Palestinians' right to self-determination. . . I would not consider acceptance of "self-determination," since, in this case, that had become a code signifying acceptance of an "independent Palestinian state." The PLO by then had promoted its idea to quite a few interested parties and observers, and I was feeling pressure from both directions. A prominent Jewish congressman urged me to make the call for Palestinian self-determination; if I did, "I'll only criticize you mildly," he said. I would not in any way endorse an independent Palestinian state, but I told Murphy to point out to anybody who asked that our conditions were clear and unequivocal-- and that the United States would respond once those conditions were met.

On September 12, I was informed that the hard-line PLO leadership had accepted a document that met the conditions. So what would the United States do? "Open a dialogue," we answered. That same day, I reviewed these developments with the president and showed him the language we were told the PLO would put out, and what we would say in response. President Reagan thought our approach was just right, but Ken Duberstein, who had replaced Howard Baker as chief of staff, was deeply concerned that U.S.-PLO talks might upset George Bush's presidential campaign.

...Echoes of all this discussion reached Israel. On September 12, I received a letter from Prime Minister Shamir emphasizing what we well knew: he had no trust at all in the PLO. "American beckonings only strengthen them and hamper efforts to deal with non-PLO Palestinians," he said.

Hearing no more from the PLO we did nothing...Quandt urged...we pass a message through him that we would be "unable to handle" a positive PLO decision until after our presidential election. I felt that no such comment was needed...⁸⁰⁰

⁷⁹⁹ JTA, September 23, 1988. Meanwhile, Mubarak said he would invite Iraq to become the second Arab state to make peace with Israel.

⁸⁰⁰ Shultz, op. cit., p. 1036

Arafat, meanwhile, continued to cultivate the anti-Shamir camp. He concluded a September 14 news conference in France by wishing everyone a "*Shana Tova, Shana Tova*" --the traditional Hebrew New Year greeting. "I mean a year of peace--a peace year, a year of peace for all our children, all our people."⁸⁰¹ Speaking in New York, Eban said that while the PLO was mellowing it was not yet ready to be included in the peace process. "There seems to be a growth in rational consciousness (within the PLO), but we shouldn't pluck the tree before it is ripe."⁸⁰² The PLO "hadn't done enough," according to Eban. It had still not issued a decisive, unambiguous statement recognizing Israel and renouncing terror. Said Eban: "The US should put a higher priority on yielding agreements between the PLO and Israel. Whether we like it or not, it's going to happen. In that case, we should accept Talleyrand's advice that we 'cooperate with the inevitable.'"⁸⁰³ And Eban called on Labor party supporters in the U.S. to help advance United States efforts at brokering an Arab-Israel peace settlement.

The Conservative branch of Judaism had been reluctant to align itself politically with either Peres or Shamir. In September, however, its leadership had a change of heart. With eighty-four percent of Conservative rabbis polled favoring negotiations framed around land for peace, Rabbi Ismar Schorch, chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, declared that retention of Judea, Samaria and Gaza would be "nothing short of catastrophic." He said if present trends continued Israel would be mired with "a government held hostage by extremists on the West Bank, the privatization of arms, the brutalization of Israel's youth and a refusal to address the Palestinian

⁸⁰¹ *Near East Report*, September 26, 1988. The perception of moderation was aided when group of Israeli leftists from Yesh Gvual, the Progressive Movement for Peace and Enough of the Occupation, met with Khalid al-Hasan in Geneva. *FBIS*, September 7, 1988 The following month the Progressive List for Peace party led by Knesset Members Matityahu Peled and Muhammad Mi'ari signed an agreement with Mahmud Abbas in Belgrade calling for the creation of a Palestinian state with its capital in Jerusalem. *FBIS*, October 20, 1988

⁸⁰² *JTA*, September 30, 1988

⁸⁰³ *JTA*, September 30, 1988

problem.”⁸⁰⁴

Mobilization by peace camp activists against Likud policies was now a regular feature on many college campuses with sizable Jewish student populations. Off campus, the peace camp formed a united front with other progressive forces. In San Francisco, for instance, the Middle East Peace Network represented a coalition of two dozen organizations including New Jewish Agenda, American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, National Lawyers Guild, U.S. Peace Council, and the American Friends Service Committee.⁸⁰⁵

Resigned acceptance of an eventual PLO role in the diplomatic process characterized Peres’ speech to the UN General Assembly. He called on the PLO to drop its murky rhetoric and speak with a clear voice: “For how long can a desire for peace be treated as a secret password, as though we are living in clandestine surroundings? Commitment to peace must emerge loud and clear, for skeptics to witness, for the hopeful to respond.”⁸⁰⁶ Peres concluded:

I am convinced there are no conflicts without hope for solution—only people who have lost hope in their search for solutions. I am convinced that the real conflict today in the Middle East is not between Jew and Moslem; Arab and Israeli; Palestinian and Zionist. The conflict is between “past oriented” leadership and “future oriented” ones; between those resigned to the fatalism of belligerency and those determined to alter this fate. For the future of our children, for a better tomorrow, we must all stand up to the preachers of war..⁸⁰⁷

Peace camp efforts, of course, went beyond mobilization of grass roots opinion and extended to the quasi-diplomatic sphere. After another trip to Israel and Tunisia, Segal reiterated that the PLO accepted a two-state solution

⁸⁰⁴ *Peoples Daily World*, September 15, 1988

⁸⁰⁵ *Peoples Daily World*, September 15, 1988

⁸⁰⁶ JTA, September 29, 1988

⁸⁰⁷Text in Lukacs, op. cit., p 215

and predicted that Arafat would use his next UN appearance to declare a Palestinian state. The PLO was anxious for a positive signal from Shultz. But the State Department refused to say whether it would issue a visa allowing Arafat entry to address the UN General Assembly in New York. "He has not applied for a visa. We don't speculate on hypothetical cases," Oakley said.⁸⁰⁸ Using a CIA channel the PLO asked Shultz whether he had stopped negotiating through Quandt. But to keep the pressure on Shultz made no reply.⁸⁰⁹

A PNC session was set for November 8 or 9 to weigh the ramifications of declaring a Palestinian state. Abu Iyad said the PNC intended to act before the next Israeli elections. And *Intifada* communique #27 called on the PNC to make the declaration, then place "Palestine" under international auspices until substantive matters could be sorted out.⁸¹⁰ These prospects impelled Palestinian Arab figures to again address the PLO's phased plan. Badr Abd Al-Haq wrote in the Jordanian daily *Al-Ray*: "I am one of those who believe that, if established, the independent Palestinian state should be on the area that extends from the Mediterranean Sea to the River Jordan; that this is Palestine...it should accommodate either us, the Arabs, or them, the Jews. There could be no compromise."⁸¹¹ But others took a more realistic approach. Nimir Sirhan, a Palestinian historian, wrote in another Amman paper, *Al-Dustur*: "Let us learn a lesson from what Saladin did during the era of the Crusades, when he accepted a liberated part of Palestine, until a century later" when his successors "unleashed their swords and wiped out the remaining Crusader invasion."⁸¹²

⁸⁰⁸ JTA, October 3, 1988 and *Near East Report*, October 24, 1988

⁸⁰⁹ Shultz, *op. cit.*, p. 1036. Former NSC staffer Quandt was now a private citizen.

⁸¹⁰ JTA, October 11, 1988. This was an effort by the Arabs in the Territories to influence the Tunisia based PLO leadership.

⁸¹¹ *Near East Report*, October 24, 1988

⁸¹² *Near East Report*, October 24, 1988. PFLP-GC leader Ahmed Jibril warned that if Arafat did form a government in exile he would establish his own PLO. See, FBIS, August 31, 1988.

Peres, in a roundabout way, sought to entice Arafat to accept an accommodation which stopped short of a PLO-led state. He offered to back local elections in the Territories if the Arabs ended the *Intifada*. Voters would select a delegation to an international conference. The PLO would not be allowed to formally run a slate but the past records of individual candidates would not be audited.⁸¹³ Peres said Arafat was “losing a golden opportunity” if he did not lead the PLO in a moderate course. As a sweetener, he pledged to withdraw the IDF from Gaza and “let the Gazans run their own lives” if elected Prime Minister.⁸¹⁴

Pro-Israel Groups Fragmented

In the face of these events and challenges, the Presidents Conference was racked by extraordinary intramural political fragmentation. The dispute pitted a troika within the Presidents Conference against the one powerful organization that steadfastly opposed the internal opposition. In a letter leaked to the press, the American Jewish Congress, American Jewish Committee and Anti-Defamation League complained that AIPAC had taken actions without “the consensus of the organized Jewish community” on a number of issues. The troika opposed AIPAC’s “hardline” positions on a number of issues: arms sale to Kuwait; the closing of the PLO’s UN Observer Mission; as well as efforts to prevent Arafat from receiving a US entry visa. Silverman, of the AJCommittee tried to put the best possible face on the dispute: “It is not our intention to be competitive or negative (with AIPAC). We want to forge a new cooperative relationship that will be more consultative. We were not happy with the level of cooperation previously.” Abram attempted to paper over the quarrel by suggesting the grievances

⁸¹³ JTA, October 18, 1988

⁸¹⁴ *Near East Report*, October 24, 1988. The Labor Party had reportedly begun indirect contacts with the PLO, FBIS, October 4, 1988

involved differences over technique and “does not reflect any diminution of Jewish community support for Israel.”⁸¹⁵ In fact, the dispute was largely over Shamir’s policies.

Peres -Hussein Alliance

With Israeli elections looming, the importance of a Peres victory to an amalgamation of forces became ever more obvious. King Hussein told an American television audience that a Labor triumph would be “promising” for the peace process while a Shamir victory would be an “absolute disaster.”⁸¹⁶ Partly to bolster Labor’s chances at the polls, Jordan was backtracking on its earlier decision to cede West Bank affairs to the PLO. Hani-al-Hassan said the PLO was willing to join Jordan in a “confederation-style” government to satisfy Israeli and American objections to an independent Palestinian state.⁸¹⁷ Mubarak’s foreign policy advisor Ossama al-Baz added: “We want the Israeli voter whether Jew or Arab to understand where his specific interest lies. Let him know when he casts his vote that there is an Arab partner ready for negotiations.”⁸¹⁸

Presumably, this Arab partner included Arafat’s wing of the PLO. However, seven members of El Fatah were captured in the Israeli security zone in south Lebanon, late in October, on their way to attack Kibbutz Misgav

⁸¹⁵ JTA, October 19, 1988, and *New York Jewish Week*, October 14, 1988. See, too *New York Times*, October 18, 1988 which reports: “The letter is significant because it suggests that American Jewish opinion is more diverse and, on some issues, less hard-line than the picture presented by AIPAC...” The upcoming elections in both the U.S. and Israel may have also exacerbate tensions. AIPAC’s leadership was believed to favor a Bush victory (see *Jerusalem Post International Edition*, September 24, 1988).

⁸¹⁶ JTA, October 24, 1988. Aides to Peres helped arrange the King’s appearance on ABC TV Nightline to bolster the idea of a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation to an international peace conference. Arafat, Hussein and Mubarak met to discuss the idea in Jordan. See *Near East Report*, October 31, 1988. The PLO also urged Israeli Arabs to vote for Labor ; See *Washington Times*, October “99” 1988 ck cite

⁸¹⁷ *Washington Post*, October 16, 1988

⁸¹⁸ *Near East Report*, October 31, 1988.

Am in northern Israel. Peres complained: "I don't like people who talk about a peace bloc and then send terrorists on their way to Israel."⁸¹⁹

Whether the conflict had in fact evolved was, among other issues, precisely what Israeli voters were being asked to decide. Thomas L. Friedman of *The New York Times* analyzed the situation from the point of view of one Israeli voter, a grocer from Jerusalem:

Whenever Sasson heard Israeli doves saying that the Palestinians really wanted to live in peace with the Jews, they just couldn't come out and declare it, it sounded as improbable to him as the notion that an apple was orange. It simply ran counter to everything life in Iraq and Israel had taught him, and neither the Camp David accord with Egypt, nor any declarations by Yasir Arafat has convinced him otherwise. As far as Sasson is concerned, the problem is not that they don't understand each other, but that they do--all too well.

Sasson is not an extremist. I never had any indication that he was ideologically committed to Israel's holding the West Bank and Gaza Strip. He is a grocer and ideology does not trip easily off his tongue. Like a majority of Israelis, he views the Israeli presence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip purely in terms of security.

I believe Sasson is the key to a Palestinian-Israeli peace settlement.

Despite appearances, the Israeli Jewish public is not divided 50-50 on the question of what to do with the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Actually, it is divided into three basic parts. One segment, on the left, comprising about 10 percent of the population, is ready to allow a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip tomorrow, and sincerely believes that the Palestinians are ready to live in peace with the Jew.

A second segment, on the far right, representing maybe 25 percent of the population, will never be ready to allow a Palestinian state in the West Bank or Gaza. They are committed to holding all the Land of Israel, from the Mediterranean to the Jordan, either for nationalist reasons or for biblical-

⁸¹⁹ JTA, October 26, 1988

messianic ones.

In between these two extremes you have the Sassons: the Israeli silent majority. The more liberal Sassons side with the Labor Party, the more hardline Sassons side with the Likud, but they all share a gut feeling that they are locked in an all-or-nothing war with the Palestinians.⁸²⁰

The Sassons were indeed divided. These divisions were evident from the outcome of the November 1, 1988 Israeli elections which resulted in a virtual Likud-Labor tie. Likud garnered 39 to Labor's 38 seats in the 120 member Knesset.⁸²¹

Fifty Days of Political Paralysis

While the U.S. and PLO were secretly inching toward an open diplomatic dialogue, both Israeli decision-makers and the American Jewish establishment were distracted. Their energies were exhausted in over fifty costly days of political in-fighting over the composition of the next Israeli government. A small religious party, whose Knesset support was sought by both Labor and Likud, demanded changes in the Law of Return's definition of "who is a Jew." The American Jewish establishment feverishly lobbied the Israelis against concessions to this party.

⁸²⁰ *The New York Times Magazine*, October 30, 1988. The Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, had earlier publicized its 40-page manifesto which declared that all of Palestine belonged to the Arabs and "it is forbidden for anyone to yield or concede part or all of it." *Washington Post*, September 18, 1988.

⁸²¹ The final tally was Likud 40, Labor 39. The American Jewish Year Book comments: "The big loser in the election was Shimon Peres, and the big winner was the ultra-Orthodox parties. Peres, who was the centerpiece of Labor's election ads ...ran what amounted to a single-issue campaign on the 'peace' question...The 18 seats won by religious lists...13 of the 18 Knesset seats secured by religious lists were won by *haraedi*, or ultra-Orthodox, parties that espoused a fundamental approach to religion and a non-Zionist if not anti-Zionist world view." *AJYB 1990*, (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1990), pp.464-466.

Political jockeying in anticipation of the Presidential election monopolized the remaining energies of the Jewish leadership. Several former Chairmen of the Presidents Conference, Julius Berman, Kenneth Bialkin and Jack Stein, declared their support for Vice President Bush. Other former Presidents Conference chairmen, including Ted Mann and Howard Squadron, were aligned with Michael Dukakis.⁸²² Ultimately, on November 8th Bush received 32 percent of the Jewish vote and drew overwhelming support among traditional and Orthodox Jews.⁸²³

It was not until December 22nd -- more than a week *after* the U.S.-PLO dialogue was announced -- that Likud and Labor formed another "unity" government. Yitchak Shamir became Prime Minister; Moshe Arens, Foreign Minister; Shimon Peres, Finance Minister; and Yitchak Rabin, Defense Minister. The parties agreed that no more than eight new settlements would be created annually in Judea, Samaria and Gaza.⁸²⁴

Dancing Around the Magic Words

In the interval spanning Wednesday November 9th to Wednesday December 14/15, long years of political flirtation finally came to an end. At

⁸²² JTA, November 7, 1988

⁸²³ JTA, November 10, 1988. Wolf Blitzer, Washington bureau chief of the *Jerusalem Post* wrote that both Israelis and Arabs, for different reasons, preferred a Bush victory. On the other hand, the Israel issue did not look large for American Jews since both candidates were considered friends of Israel. *Op-Ed Page, New York Times*, September 16, 1988

⁸²⁴ *Foreign Affairs, America & The World 1988 Chronology for 1988* (Vol. 68 No.1) This was the government which would eventually collapse in March 1990 after Peres gave Shamir an ultimatum demanding that Israel accept Labor's approach to Israeli-Egyptian-Palestinian peace talks proposed by Secretary of State James Baker. President Bush's remarks terming Jerusalem "occupied territory" also contributed to the break-up of the government. Ultimately, Shamir formed a narrow conservative government without Labor in June 1990. That Government remained in power until the Israeli elections of June 1992 which were necessitated when the Techiya party bolted from the Government because it had agreed to attend the Madrid talks in November 1991. In June 1992 Labor under Rabin was returned to power in a Labor-left coalition. A little more than a year after that, the Rabin-Arafat deal, engineered by Peres, was signed at a White House ceremony.

this juncture, the foci of the quadrilateral relationship reverted to the essential question: would the PLO formalize the Arab camp's evolutionary, tacit embrace of the non-zero-sum regime?

The day after the U.S. Presidential elections, the PLO told the UN that Arafat intended to address the General Assembly in New York. The PLO's parliament in exile voted 253-46 to accept UN Security Resolutions 242 and 338. This implied PLO accepted Israel's existence.⁸²⁵ Then on November 15th the PNC declared "Palestine" an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital. A policy statement rejecting terror and calling for the convening of an international conference under UN auspices was also adopted. PLO elements aligned with Syria did not attend the PNC session. However, Algeria became the first country to recognize "Palestine" while Egypt expressed informal support for the new state.⁸²⁶

Had the "magic words" been uttered? "A close look," writes Shultz, "revealed an attempt to trade the meeting of our conditions for a U.S. commitment to a Palestinian state. And Resolution 242 was described as no more than a basis for an international conference. The language was blurry

⁸²⁵ *Foreign Affairs*, 1988 Chronology *op. cit.* He said: "The PNC...hereby proclaims the establishment of the State of Palestine on our Palestinian territory with its capital, Jerusalem." *Near East Report*, November 21, 1988. The Declaration says: "Despite the historical injustice done to the Palestinian Arab people in its displacement and in being deprived of the right to self-determination following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 181 of 1947, which partitioned Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish State, that resolution nevertheless continues to attach conditions of international legitimacy that guarantee the Palestinian Arab people the right to sovereignty and national independence...The Palestinian Arab people asserts once more its inalienable rights and its demand to exercise those rights in its Palestinian homeland. By virtue of the natural, historical and legal right of the Palestinian Arab people to its homeland, Palestine,...pursuant to the resolutions of the Arab Summit Conferences and on the basis of the international legitimacy embodied in the resolutions of the United Nations since 1947, and through the exercise by the Palestinian Arab people of its right to self-determination...the Palestine National Council hereby declared, in the name of Allah and on behalf of the Palestinian Arab people, the establishment of the State of Palestine in the land of Palestine with its capital at Jerusalem. The State of Palestine shall be for Palestinians, wherever they may be..." cited in *Contemporary Mideast Backgrounder*, (Jerusalem) December 1988

⁸²⁶ *Washington Post*, November 11, 1988

and ambiguous.”⁸²⁷ The State Department declared Arafat’s remarks inadequate. It also deplored the symbolic meaning it found in the participation of Mohammed Abul Abbas, convicted in absentia for the murder of Leon Klinghoffer aboard the cruise ship *Achille Lauro*.⁸²⁸ Charles Redman the State Department Spokesman said:

...After reviewing the outcome of the Palestine National Council, there are signs that there are Palestinians who are trying to move the PLO in a constructive way. That’s encouraging and should continue...(But,) based against the requirements of the negotiating process, more movement on key issues will be required...(while) the reference to Resolutions 242 and 338 is an advance over previous efforts by the PNC...it is ambiguous both in its placement in the text and its meaning.” (PLO recognition of Israel’s right to exist) must be clear and unambiguous.⁸²⁹

⁸²⁷ Shultz, op. cit., p. 1037

⁸²⁸ Khalid Abdul Nasser, son of the late Egyptian president Gamal Abdul Nasser, who was on trial in absentia in Egypt, also participated in the conference. Media reports identified Nasser as a leader of “Egypt’s Revolution” which murdered two Israeli diplomats and wounded three U.S. diplomats. Comments by some well-placed participants raised questions about whether the PLO had shifted its goals. Bassam Abu Sharif, for example, explained that the current political line would help “achieve the national legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to return...” meaning to within the pre-1967 borders. Also, PNC Speaker Sheik Abd-al-Hamid al-Sa’ih told PLO radio that the PLO “must not forget those in the occupied homeland whether in the part occupied in 1948 or the part occupied in 1967.” *Near East Report*, November 28, 1988. Abu Iyad told *Al-Yom-A-Sabi* (November 28, 1988): “The decisions of the PNC...are a refinement of the Palestinian positions confirming the Phased Program adopted 14 years ago. Throughout the years this program has remained undeveloped and with no mechanism (for implementation). This session was intended to revitalize the Program and create a mechanism for implementing it.” *Contemporary Mideast Backgrounder*, (Jerusalem) December 1988.

⁸²⁹ JTA, November 17, 1988. British Prime Minister Thatcher visited Washington and urged Reagan and President-elect Bush to take a constructive view of the PNC moves as something to build on. *Washington Post*, November 17, 1988; A *New York Times* editorial re-printed excerpts of Abu Sharif’s moderate June 24, 1988 Op-Ed essay contrasted alongside excerpts of the political statement issued by the PNC at the November 14 meeting. “Why was the response in the West so lukewarm to the Algiers declarations adopted last week by the Palestine Liberation Organization? The P.L.O. did in fact move forward in endorsing U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338, thereby implicitly accepting Israel’s right to exist. But this statement and others were surrounded by gamesmanship and murkiness. It took a leap of faith to credit and trust what Yasir Arafat said he was doing. The P.L.O. knows the difference between obfuscation and clarity...” *New York Times*, November 17, 1988

Reaction

A powerful array of interests lobbied Shultz to take a softer line. Saudi Arabia, Egypt and other Arab states exhorted Shultz to have at least a single "contact" with the PLO to clarify the intent of the PNC pronouncements. French President Francois Mitterand declared the Palestinians were now entitled to a state.⁸³⁰ After meeting President-elect Bush, former Presidents Carter and Ford issued a joint statement which Carter read: "President Ford and I both agree that the recent meeting in Algiers by the PNC was significant, (although) not adequate. But it is something that should be considered to see where it can lead in the future." Later, they urged President-elect Bush to concentrate on getting Israel to "find ways to improve the economic situation of their Arabs and grant them as well a greater degree of local political independence."⁸³¹

The peace camp also mobilized to advocate a positive response.⁸³² So did the outside elite which pressed for an immediate US-PLO dialogue. The *New York Times* provided Hauser with Op-Ed space in which she urged President-elect Bush to "talk to the PLO." She wrote: "The hope is then that the next president will be able to free the United States from the absurd shackles it has placed on its ability to assist the parties toward reconciliation by opening a direct dialogue with both Israel and the PLO."⁸³³

Under pressure from the internal opposition, the Presidents Conference opted not to lobby against an Arafat entry visa. Abram had earlier urged the UN not to invite Arafat.⁸³⁴ But the Presidents Conference was united in declaring that the PNC's embrace of UN Security Resolution 242 was "meaningless" because the PLO did not explicitly renounce terror and

⁸³⁰ JTA, November 24, 1988

⁸³¹ JTA, November 22, 1988

⁸³² *Peoples Daily World*, November 16, 1988

⁸³³ *New York Times*, November 15, 1988 (check date)

⁸³⁴ JTA, November 11, 1988

accept Israel's right to exist.⁸³⁵ Abram said that "nothing positive" had emerged from the conclave. He found the declaration of Palestinian Statehood as well as the PLO's stated commitment to negotiate with Israel on the basis of UN Resolutions 242 "deeply suspicious." And he reiterated the long-standing consensus position of the American Jewish leadership: the PLO had to explicitly renounce terror, recognize Israel and unequivocally accept UN resolution 242. Abram pointed out that the PNC had accepted UN SC Res. 242 only as part of the package of other UN resolutions, many of which, the 1975 "Zionism is racism" resolution for instance, were harshly one-sided and anti-Israel.⁸³⁶

Israel scorned the PNC's declaration of a Palestinian state and dismissed its reference to UN Security Resolution 242 as "double talk aimed at obscuring the PLO's continued recourse to violence, terrorism and extremism." Israel would not accept the partition of Palestine, a Palestinian state, or a solution premised on UN General Assembly Resolution 181, of November 29, 1947, which for forty-one years had been rejected by the Arabs.

Outside Elite in Stockholm

The denouement came with a surge of determined political suasion. Swedish Foreign Minister Sten Andersson originated the idea of using American Jews as a backdrop for a reaffirmation by Arafat that the PLO

⁸³⁵ JTA, November 15, 1988

⁸³⁶ JTA, November 17, 1988

accepted Israel and renounced terror.⁸³⁷ Arafat and Andersson agreed that a Jewish imprimatur would be the best way to codify changing perceptions. This fit neatly within the strategy of the Jewish players who wanted to institutionalize the perceptual shift in Arab-Israel relations.

Shultz silently acquiesced to Andersson's plan. Peace camp Jews (Israeli and American) had been meeting with the PLO leadership for some time. However, to achieve the necessary result, a sufficiently "mainstream" assembly of Jews would have to be located. Virtually all leaders aligned with the internal opposition adhered to the Presidents Conference consensus position, embraced by Labor and Likud, on talks with the PLO. So the task would devolve to the outside elite, most of whom were expatriate members of the Jewish establishment. Success depended on secrecy so that Israel did not preemptively attempt to discredit them. The State Department directed Andersson to Stanley Sheinbaum, a board member of Eban's International Center for Peace in the Middle East.⁸³⁸ Andersson and Sheinbaum had worked together previously.

Sheinbaum, a wealthy Jewish liberal from California, had previously

⁸³⁷ Wallach & Wallsach, p. 451. According to Mohamed Rabie, who played a role in the events in Sweden, diplomats from that country had a special interest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a result of the murder on 17 September 1948 of Count Folke Bernadotte, the first UN mediator for Palestine, by the Freedom Fighters For Israel ("Stern Gang"). Shamir had been directly involved, according to Rabie. In addition, as Anderson explained in a letter he sent to Arafat after the assassination of Abu Jihad: "As many in my generation in Europe, the Nazi persecution and holocaust of millions of Jews during the second World War made a deep impression on me. In 1964, I sent my then 13 year-old son to Israel to work on a Kibbutz. He became deeply disappointed when he learnt that his Arab fellow workers were treated as second-class citizens., Finally my eyes were opened to the injustices committed against the Palestinians" "The U.S.- PLO Dialogue: The Swedish Connection," by Mohamed Rabie, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Summer 1992, p. 56.

⁸³⁸ Hauser recalls the details somewhat differently: Andersson, a "dear friend," approached her directly because he knew of her interest in promoting the peace process. Asked if she thought it was Shultz who put Andersson up to the scenerio in the first place she says simply: "That's an interesting question. I hadn't thought of it." *Personal Interview Conducted* December 17, 1991, New York City

been contacted by the Swedes “to discuss strategy for what to do after Arafat” said the magic words.⁸³⁹ Sheinbaum said the priority was to assure Arafat that if he said the magic words the U.S. would indeed begin the dialogue. Through White House contacts Sheinbaum arranged to meet in Los Angeles with Reagan’s national security advisor Colin Powell and Kenneth Duberstein, the White House Chief of Staff. After exchanges of communication about whether the U.S. would genuinely respond to an Arafat statement, Sheinbaum received a letter from Powell on White House stationery which said: “There can be no doubt that unequivocal PLO acceptance of Israel’s right to exist and United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, accompanied by a clear renunciation of violence and terrorism, would be such a step—and there can be no doubt that the United States would respond positively to it.”⁸⁴⁰

So it made sense for the Administration to put Andersson and Sheinbaum together to take advantage of the final stages of the scenario. When he received Andersson’s invitation to fly to Stockholm, Sheinbaum suggested the delegation include Israeli-born Drora Kass, ICPME’s New York director, and Rita Hauser, ICPME’s American Chair.

The Stockholm meeting brought together Hauser, Sheinbaum, and Kass, with Khaled Hassan, Afif Safieh, Eugene Makhoul and Hisham Mustafa of the PLO. They wrangled over what the PLO could and could not publicly commit to. At some point, Sheinbaum produced the Colin Powell letter. “The Palestinians, believing that their interlocutors were speaking not only for themselves but also for the U.S. administration, felt that it was important that the PLO give the American Jewish personalities satisfactory answers,” according to Mohamed Rabie.⁸⁴¹ Eventually, a document acceptable

⁸³⁹ Wallach & Wallach p458

⁸⁴⁰ Wallach & Wallach, p. 459

⁸⁴¹ Rabie, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, *op. cit.* p. 60

to the outside elite and the PLO was crafted.

Visa Rejection

Andersson sent the paper to Shultz by courier. Shultz recalls: "I regarded their statement as an improvement on what had come out of the PNC conference, I told the Swedes, but it was not yet even close to meeting the U.S. conditions for a dialogue with the PLO."⁸⁴² Without referring to these clandestine meetings, on November 26, Shultz announced that Arafat would not be granted an entry visa. He said: "The PLO through certain of its elements has employed terrorism against Americans. Arafat, as chairman of the PLO, knows of, condones, and lends support to such acts; he is therefore an accessory to terrorism."⁸⁴³

Shultz came under a fusillade of criticism from a variety of circles. The Arab League asked the General Assembly to move the annual UN debate on the "Palestine question" to Geneva. Jordan and Egypt spearheaded the effort on the General Assembly floor, whose membership voted 154-2 to relocate the session to Geneva. Salah Khalaf warned that, "If the United States continues to ignore the Palestinian peace initiative, this will force the Palestinian leadership to reconsider all our positions, particularly those which were declared at the conclusion of the Algiers meeting of the PNC."⁸⁴⁴ The State Department let it be known that Shultz did not consult with the Jewish leadership before deciding to deny Arafat the entry visa.⁸⁴⁵ There was, of course, no Presidents Conference position on the visa issue. The attention of the leadership were riveted on the still raging "Who is a Jew" debate in

⁸⁴² Shultz, op. cit., p. 1038

⁸⁴³ *Near East Report*, December 5, 1988. Some elements within the State Department dissatisfied with the Shultz decision (as many were) revealed that there had not been a single Fatah terrorist attack against a U.S. target from June 1985 through March 1988. *Washington Post*, December 1, 1988

⁸⁴⁴ *Near East Report*, December 5, 1988

⁸⁴⁵ JTA, November 29, 1988

Jerusalem.⁸⁴⁶

Andersson sent Swedish ambassador Count Wilhelm Wachtmeister to tell Shultz that Arafat would be going to Stockholm for the next round of talks with the Sheinbaum group. Shultz provided the Swedes with precise wording Arafat was to use to fulfill American requirements for a dialogue. He explains:

I told Wachtmeister I would not negotiate any change in our position--not with the PLO or the Swedes or anybody else. I thought that my resolve to hang tough on Arafat's visa request should be convincing evidence that the U.S. position would not change. To open a dialogue with us, the PLO, not the United States, would have to do the changing. To make sure that the Swedes knew the U.S. position was unalterable, I gave them a copy of my speech at Wye Plantation in September and said that if any questions arose, that speech expressed the authorized U.S. position.⁸⁴⁷

Seeking to widen the circle, Hauser invited Seymour Martin Lipset (a mentor of Drora Kass) and Arthur Hertzberg to join the delegation. Both begged off. She was able to recruit Professor Abraham Udovitch of Princeton and Menachem Rosensaft, head of the U.S. affiliate of the Israeli Labor Party. Gaining Rosensaft's participation was a significant coup because he represented a constituent member of the Presidents Conference. They agreed to constitute themselves under the loose rubric of the International Center for Peace in the Middle East (ICPME) in order to obtain a degree of political legitimacy.⁸⁴⁸

The American Jews knew nothing of the Shultz-Andersson correspondence until Andersson told them in general terms. Now, Arafat was

⁸⁴⁶ JTA, November 29, 1988

⁸⁴⁷ Shultz, op. cit., p. 1040

⁸⁴⁸ JTA, December 6, 1988

expected to endorse both the Stockholm agreement previously worked out between the Jewish group and the PLO representatives as well as to issue a document containing the wording Shultz had indicated.⁸⁴⁹

Though Shultz had made it clear that he did not intend to haggle over language-- privately and unbeknownst to the Jewish delegation-- Shultz and Arafat continued to exchange revised drafts, through Andersson, even as Arafat simultaneously met with the Hauser-Sheinbaum group.⁸⁵⁰ Agreement was reached regarding what the the PLO would say and how the U.S. would respond.⁸⁵¹ (The American Jewish delegation never did get to see a copy of the secret Shultz blueprint for a dialogue.) Arafat was to "pronounce the magic words" at the same time he issued the Stockholm joint statement with the Hauser-Sheinbaum group.

In this situation of cross-cutting political suasion, the fact that the parties accepted an almost identical agenda is notable. Conspicuously missing from the agenda (as it always had been) was revocation of the PLO Covenant. It was, of course, the Covenant that so precisely embodied the total nature of the conflict. Circumventing the Covenant issue, the parties concentrated exclusively on prompting the correct sequence of "magic words."⁸⁵²

On December 6, Shultz reviewed and approved the statement Arafat was to make the following day. But Arafat reneged, explaining in a letter to the Swedes (for Shultz's consumption) that he wanted to obtain the PLO

⁸⁴⁹ Wallach & Wallach, p. 469

⁸⁵⁰ Wallach & Wallach, p.471

⁸⁵¹ Wallach & Wallach p. 471

⁸⁵² Ahmed Sadki al-Dejani, a high ranking PNC deputy and member of the PLO's Educational and Cultural Council stated on November 22, 1988: "We in the PLO draw a clear distinction between the charter and political programs, since the charter contains the permanent strategic policy, while the political programs contain the phased policy." Leaflet, *PLO--What They Say in Plain Arabic*, Information Department. Consulate General of Israel, New York, December 1988

Executive Committee's consent to the "magic words."⁸⁵³ Rabie, who had negotiated an agreement along a separate track with Quandt, explains the complicated situation:

Upon receiving the documents, (Shultz's letter via Andersson) Arafat instructed his aides to obtain a copy of the document Quandt and I had negotiated with both the State Department and the PLO a few months earlier.

By comparing the original document with the new one given to Arafat by Andersson, the Palestinians delegation discovered that the portion that dealt with what the PLO was supposed to say was almost the same. The wording of the introductory statement was identical in the two documents, with no changes whatsoever. This stated that "as its contribution to the search for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, the Executive Committee of the Palestine liberation Organization wishes to issue the following statement." However, whereas the original document prepared by Quandt and myself contained five points, the new one proposed by Shultz contained only four. Point two in the original document, which dealt with the need to convene an international peace conference to facilitate negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, was omitted in its entirety.

But while the Palestinians portion of the document was little changed, that dealing with the proposed U.S. statement was very different from the original one. This section contained little substance and omitted almost all the points designed to address Palestinian concerns. While it did contain reference to UN resolutions 242 and 338 as the bases for a political settlement, it failed to mention such issues as the convening of an international peace conference, the exchange of land-for-peace, and recognition of the Palestinian right of self-determination. However, the U.S. document stated that "the United States recognizes that the representatives of the Palestinian people have the right to bring to those negotiations whatever positions they wish."

Arafat felt that he could neither reject Shultz's proposed statement nor comply with the request not to submit counter-drafts...⁸⁵⁴

⁸⁵³ Wallach & Wallach p. 476

⁸⁵⁴ Rabie, op. cit., p. 62

So, Arafat and the Sheinbaum-Hauser group issued a joint statement, in Stockholm on December 6/7, reinterpreting the outcome of the Algiers PNC session along non-zero-sum terms.⁸⁵⁵

On December 7th, Rosensaft addressed the absence of any reference, in the joint statement, to amending the Covenant: "Arafat said several times that the PLO charter had been abrogated or nullified—he used both words."⁸⁵⁶

Reaction

Presumably, most of the Jewish leadership associated with the Presidents Conference remained unaware of the behind the scenes indirect negotiations between Shultz and Arafat. Jewish reaction to Arafat's meeting

⁸⁵⁵ JTA, December 6, 1988. The text of the statement between Hauser, Kass, Rosensaft, Sheinbaum Udovitch and Arafat reads: "The Palestine National Council met in Algiers from November 12 to 15, 1988, and announced the declaration of independence which proclaimed the state of Palestine and issued a political statement.

The following explanation was given by the representatives of the PLO of certain important points in the Palestinian declaration of independence and the political statement adopted by the PNC in Algiers.

Affirming the principle incorporated in those UN resolutions which call for a two-state solution of Israel and Palestine, the PNC:

1. Agreed to enter into peace negotiations at an international conference under the auspices of the UN with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, on an equal footing with the other parties to the conflict; such an international conference is to be held on the basis of UN Resolutions 242 and 338 and the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, without external interference, as provided in the UN Charter, including the right to an independent state, which conference should resolve the Palestinian problem in all its aspects;
2. Established the independent state of Palestine and accepted the existence of Israel as a state in the region;
3. Declared its rejection and condemnation of terrorism in all its forms, including state terrorism;
4. Called for a solution to the Palestinian refugee problem in accordance with international law and practices and relevant UN resolutions (including right of return or compensation).

The American personalities strongly supported and applauded the Palestinian declaration of independence and the political statement adopted in Algiers and felt there was no further impediment to a direct dialogue between the United States government and the PLO." Lukacs, op. cit., p.34

⁸⁵⁶ JTA, December 8, 1988

with the Hauser-Sheinbaum group was mixed. The internal opposition analyzed the news in guarded but positive terms. Schindler viewed the Stockholm statement as a “step in the right direction” but regretted “that it was offered as an interpretation of the PNC statement adopted in Algiers, which was filled with so many ambiguities.”⁸⁵⁷ Schindler also revealed that he had declined an invitation to participate in the meeting. Siegman, of the AJCongress, welcomed the “new willingness of the PLO to seek political solutions to the Arab-Israel conflict.” But he noted that the statement “falls far short of the kind of reassurance” required.⁸⁵⁸ Abram reacted to the parley by assailing “the role of the five American Jews who gave aid and comfort to Arafat.” They had “branded themselves willing dupes of the PLO and permitted themselves to be exploited for purposes of PLO propaganda.”⁸⁵⁹ Because of her previous well-publicized connection with the American Jewish Committee that organization felt compelled to disavow any part in the Hauser mission.⁸⁶⁰

The United States announced that it was still waiting for an unambiguous statement from the PLO recognizing Israel’s right to exist.⁸⁶¹ But Shultz informed the Israelis that he now expected such a statement from Arafat on December 13 in Geneva before the General Assembly.⁸⁶²

Meantime, Eban addressed a New York dinner-meeting sponsored by the United Jewish Appeal. Without reference to his own ties with ICPME, he said: “I do not believe the U.S. government should be attacked if they explore the ground by talking to people. Many Israelis will trust the United States to

⁸⁵⁷ JTA, December 8, 1988

⁸⁵⁸ JTA, December 8, 1988

⁸⁵⁹ JTA, December 8, 1988

⁸⁶⁰ Wallach & Wallach p. 469. Expressions of support for the Hauser-Shienbaum group were received from: Kenneth Arrow, Nathan Glazer, Seymour Lipset, Rabbi Leonard Beerman, Philip Klutznik, John Ruskey and Leon Wieseltier. See, *Rabie, op. cit.*, p. 63

⁸⁶¹ JTA, December 9, 1988

⁸⁶² Shultz, *op. cit.*, p. 1043

hold that discussion (with the PLO) without sacrificing our interests. Israel without the U.S. is not going to go anywhere in negotiations." Eban concluded his remarks by saying the world would soon know if Arafat was sincere.⁸⁶³

Geneva

At this stage, worldwide attention from Middle East watchers focused on Geneva where the UN General Assembly was about to hear Arafat speak. The Israeli delegation walked out as the head of the PLO took the podium. But in Washington Shultz fully expected him to read the promised statement.

Arafat spoke for more than one hour in Arabic. He proclaimed the establishment of a Palestinian-Arab state but did not make an explicit declaration recognizing the right of the Jewish State to exist. There was also no renunciation of terrorism. He did address Israel directly, offering: "Come, let us make peace."⁸⁶⁴ Arafat had scattered the three paragraph agreement carefully worked out through Andersson with Shultz in various parts of his speech, re-phrasing it so that the content of the agreement was lost. After the speech Andersson complained to Arafat: "You changed all the words." Arafat replied that it was a matter of Arab honor that the United States could not dictate what he would say.⁸⁶⁵

The American Jewish right felt vindicated. Joseph Puder of Americans for A Safe Israel, Richard Hellman of the Christian Israel Public Affairs Committee and Rabbi Avi Weiss of the Coalition for Concern were in Geneva with a small contingent of activists to protest Arafat's appearance. In contrast, mainstream Jewish groups took a wait-and-see posture. The peace camp was

⁸⁶³ JTA, December 13, 1988

⁸⁶⁴ JTA, December 14, 1988

⁸⁶⁵ Wallach&Wallach p 478

nominally represented by Abie Nathan.⁸⁶⁶

With the behind-the-scene maneuvering still secret, official public reaction was cautious. The State Department said it was disappointed that Arafat did not meet its stated conditions for a US-PLO dialogue, adding, "the speech contained some interesting and positive elements." Abram, speaking for the Presidents Conference, said: "Yasir Arafat had an opportunity to break with the past and launch a new peace initiative. He blew it." And, Schindler pronounced himself "bitterly disappointed." Other mainstream groups took similar positions.⁸⁶⁷ Hauser was particularly disappointed that, despite written assurances from the United States, Arafat did not utter the "magic words."

Nevertheless, the political momentum for ending the U.S. boycott of the PLO was inexorable. Mubarak tried to convince Shultz to read between the lines of Arafat's speech. Other Arab diplomats suggested Shultz accept a Swedish interpretation of the speech which would later be confirmed by Arafat. Shultz rejected these and other entreaties. Meanwhile, Arafat was under substantial pressure--from Western and Arab leaders--to explicitly meet U.S. demands.

So, once again with strong editorial assistance from the Swedish Foreign Minister, indirect input from the U.S. State Department and in consultation with Hauser, Arafat prepared to deliver the momentous

⁸⁶⁶ JTA , December 13, 1988 CIPAC maintained close ties with AFSI and in all likelihood paid for the trip to Geneva. Weiss maintained a loose affiliation with AFSI but had also started his own group called Coalition of Concern. He traveled to Geneva with Glen Richter a veteran activist from Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry. Afterwards he said: "We came to Geneva to express support as Americans and proud Jews for Secretary Shultz's courageous stand in denying Arafat entry into the U.S. We are shocked that a man whom we respect has suddenly taken on the coloration of Neville Chamberlain, in effect capitulating to murders and thugs." See also *New York Times*, December 16, 1988. At the same time, two Israeli-Arab Knesset members, Muhammad Mi'ari and Abd al-Wahab Darawshah, were also in Geneva to express support for Arafat. FBIS, December 14, 1988

⁸⁶⁷ JTA, December 14, 1988

pronouncement.⁸⁶⁸ On December 14 at a Geneva news conference, Arafat read aloud a statement in English. Addressing the zero-sum issue first he said: "Our desire for peace is a strategy and not an interim tactic. We are bent on peace come what may."⁸⁶⁹ He continued: "As for terrorism, I renounced it yesterday in no uncertain terms and yet I repeat for the record that we totally and absolutely renounce all forms of terrorism, including individual, group and state terrorism." Regarding recognition of Israel, he affirmed "the right of all parties concerned in the Middle East conflict to exist in peace and security, and, as I have mentioned, including the state of Palestine and Israel and other neighbors."⁸⁷⁰ Referring to his earlier UN speech, Arafat said: "I referred to our acceptance of Resolutions 242 and 338 as a basis for negotiations with Israel within the framework of the international conference..." He responded to the question, whether his acceptance of 242 was unconditional by saying: "Of course. Enough is enough. What do you want? Do you want me to do a striptease?"⁸⁷¹

Arguably, what Arafat did was to accept Israel's right to exist in conjunction with the existence of Palestine; renounce terrorism in conjunction with a denunciation of Israeli "state terrorism," and embrace UN Resolution 242 and 338 in conjunction with PLO participation in an international conference.⁸⁷²

Initial reaction was positive. Michael H. Armacost, Under Secretary of

⁸⁶⁸ Rabie says that the Swedes "spent more than ten hours with Arafat and his aides, going over every word and every comma of the statement the PLO was to make." *op. cit.*, p. 65

⁸⁶⁹ Rabie, *op. cit.*, p. 65

⁸⁷⁰ "The Secret Effort on Arafat: Go Between Seize Moment," *The New York Times*, December 16, 1988

⁸⁷¹ Wallach & Wallach, p. 482

⁸⁷² Hauser analysis is quite contrary. "When I look back at it, Shultz was holding them to the standards of exactitude you would expect of an established state with a foreign ministry and a governing apparatus. It finally dawned on me how unsophisticated these guys are. They're a handful of guys and they meet in these endless debates with Arafat trying to hold the whole thing together." Wallach & Wallach p. 484

State for Political Affairs, viewed Arafat's comments as a "vindication" of American policy on the Middle East."⁸⁷³ Later, in his remarks to the General Assembly, Ambassador Vernon Walters, the American representative to the UN, said: "We must tell the parties that their dispute is resolvable." Walters continued: "For Israel, the choice is clear, albeit difficult. In order to achieve the security it deserves and requires, Israel must face up to the need for withdrawal from occupied territories and the need to accommodate legitimate Palestinian political rights...In order to achieve the legitimate political rights they deserve and require, Palestinian demands will have to accommodate the reality of Israel's existence and security needs, and they will have to commit themselves to negotiations with Israel."⁸⁷⁴

Hauser reflected on how events in Geneva unfolded:

The decisive moment for me came early Wednesday morning. I had just appeared on ABC's "Nightline" with PLO spokesman Bassam Abu Sharif and urged him, on the air, to recognize Israel more explicitly than Yasser Arafat had done in his speech that day to the United Nations. At 1 a.m., after the show, Abu Sharif called me from Geneva and said that Arafat wanted to be sure that if he said the magic words, Secretary of State George Shultz would indeed begin a dialogue with the PLO.

"Are you really sure, Rita?" asked Abu Sharif. "Are you absolutely sure? Or will it be one more time and then Shultz will ask for something else?"

Absolutely not, I said. "This is it, and you have known for a long time that this is it. I swear to you it will happen if you say the words." I felt confident in making this promise, because I had spoken that day to Richard Murphy, the assistant secretary of state for the Middle East, and he had made clear to me that if they said it, it would happen. President Reagan had said the same thing publicly.⁸⁷⁵

⁸⁷³ NYT, December 16, 1988

⁸⁷⁴ JTA, December 15, 1988

⁸⁷⁵ "Behind Our Breakthrough with the PLO," Rita E. Hauser, *The Washington Post, Outlook*, December 18, 1988

End Game

In an almost anti-climatic announcement, which came on Wednesday, December 14, 1988, Secretary of State George Schultz told a 6:30PM news conference at the State Department that the United States was now ready to open face-to-face negotiations with the Palestine Liberation Organization. Schultz said: "The Palestine Liberation Organization today issued a statement in which it accepted UN Resolutions 242 and 338, recognized Israel's right to exist in peace and security, and renounced terrorism. As a result, the United States is prepared for a substantive dialogue with PLO representatives. I am designating our ambassador to Tunisia as the only authorized channel for that dialogue."⁸⁷⁶

It had been agreed, the PLO thought, that Schultz would respond to the planted question: "Does your statement mean that the Palestinians can put on the negotiating table their position on a Palestinian state?" And Schultz would answer: "Yes. The Palestinians, as far as we are concerned, have the right to pursue an independent state through negotiations. It is through the process of negotiations and direct exchange between the concerned parties that a lasting result may be achieved."⁸⁷⁷ But, to the PLO's disappointment, according to Rabie, Schultz said close to the opposite:

Nothing here may be taken to imply an acceptance or recognition by the United States of an independent Palestinian state. The position of the United States is (that) the status of the West Bank and Gaza cannot be determined by unilateral acts of either side, but only through a process of negotiations. The United States does not recognize the declaration of an independent Palestinian state.⁸⁷⁸

⁸⁷⁶ Lukacs, p. 119

⁸⁷⁷ Wallach & Wallach, p. 473

⁸⁷⁸ Rabie, op. cit., p. 66

Israeli Reaction

Shultz remarks that "The Israelis launched into their familiar tactic, when something went against their perceived interests, of 'damage magnification,' blowing out of all proportion the negative side of this development and ignoring the positive possibilities."⁸⁷⁹ But as Schiff and Ya'ari explain, they had been caught off guard:

...The Israelis had no idea that Shultz had been directly involved in prompting the PLO's acceptance of Resolution 242 and its renunciation of terror. (It was not until months after the fact that the details of what had transpired began to reach Jerusalem and the Israelis understood, for example, that Mrs. Hauser and her friends had only been the backdrop to the real drama that had unfolded in Stockholm.) Two days before the Geneva press conference, as the PLO Executive Committee met to discuss the statement that Arafat would make to satisfy the American demands, Israel was informed that if the PLO accepted the wording proposed by the State Department, the United States would engage with it. ...⁸⁸⁰

The divided "unity" Government reacted by emphasizing their respective long-standing positions. Shamir insisted that the nature of the struggle with the PLO had not changed. He called the PLO's announcement "an act of monumental deception." Peres said Israel was prepared to talk to Palestinians and that words could not replace deeds. "It is not enough to declare that shooting will be stopped. There must be an immediate end to phenomena such as the stone and gasoline bomb attacks," in Judea, Samaria and Gaza.⁸⁸¹

The *Jerusalem Post* reported:

⁸⁷⁹ Shultz, op. cit., p. 1045

⁸⁸⁰ Schiff & Ya'ari, p.305

⁸⁸¹ JTA, December 15, 1988

Jewish leaders, in confirming the deep disappointment conveyed to them by Likud leaders, have maintained that an all-out confrontation with a lame-duck administration was now pointless. The American Jewish leaders also confirm that they have been receiving a clearly different signal from the Labour Party leadership in Israel. Labour leaders, they say, were urging caution.⁸⁸²

U.S. Jewish Non-Reaction

"As surprises go, the real eye-opener was not the United States' recognition of the PLO but the muted reaction to it," argue Schiff and Ya'ari. They suggest that Shultz fully expected the American Jewish leadership to be up in arms. Instead, top American Jewish leaders, entangled in the "Who is a Jew?" controversy, were immediately reconciled to the decision.⁸⁸³ Presidents Conference chairman Morris Abram said: "Secretary Shultz is a man of honor and integrity, and I have no desire nor intention to engage in criticisms of the Secretary. I believe that he will continue to act as one who understands deeply the importance of the U.S.-Israel alliance, and who will instruct the American representative who meets with the PLO to make very clear the U.S. insistence that the PLO charter must be revoked...(the) first piece of business...(should be to) demand that Yasir Arafat translate his words into deeds through repeal of the Palestine National Covenant, which calls for the destruction of Israel...Unless and until the covenant is repealed, Arafat is only mouthing words, not taking actions."⁸⁸⁴

Later, at a farewell news conference Abram took a slightly different tack. He complained that Shultz's decision was "hasty and regrettable" and that the 'magic words' "had to be squeezed out of Arafat." "Our position is consistent," Hoenlein added, "even if the emphasis has changed."⁸⁸⁵ The U.S.

⁸⁸² *Jerusalem Post*, December 18, 1988

⁸⁸³ Schiff & Ya'ari, p.307

⁸⁸⁴ JTA, December 15, 1988

⁸⁸⁵ JTA, January 6, 1989

decision was a fait accompli.⁸⁸⁶

For the the internal opposition the decision represented potential opportunities. Schindler called the US decision a “victory” for Schultz.⁸⁸⁷ And Rabbi Marc Tenenbaum of the American Jewish Committee called Reagan and Shultz, “The greatest friends of the Jewish people and of the State of Israel.”⁸⁸⁸ The peace camp viewed the Shultz announcement as a milestone toward direct Israel-PLO negotiations. Lerner, whose *Tikkun* magazine had fought the communal battle on behalf of the Palestinian Arab cause, said the announcement was “a very hopeful and positive development.”⁸⁸⁹

Of Presidents Conference groups, only the World Zionist Organization-American Section and the more visible Zionist Organization of America expressed public discomfiture.⁸⁹⁰ The most vigorous denunciation came from outside the Presidents Conference. Americans For A Safe Israel placed a full-page condemnatory advertisement in *The Washington Times*.⁸⁹¹

⁸⁸⁶ Moreover, a Harris Poll found 59% agreed with Shultz's decision. Another poll found a 62% approval level. At the same time 67% of those polled viewed the PLO as hostile toward the US. *Near East Report*, December 19, 1988. A *Washington Post* Herblock cartoon showed Shultz in the Groucho Marx-like role hosting “We Bet Their Lives.” Arafat has just said “Israel Exists,” The bird drops with a sign around its neck: Israel Exists. Shultz says: “You have just said the magic words--You are a winner!” *Near East Report*, December 26, 1988

⁸⁸⁷ JTA, December 16, 1988

⁸⁸⁸ *Jerusalem Post*, December 18, 1988

⁸⁸⁹ *New York Times*, December 16, 1988

⁸⁹⁰ JTA, December 16, 1988. Individual ZOA leaders such as Dr. Kenneth Kelner of the Manhattan Region were more emphatic: “The U.S. has now embarked on a premature, naive policy by agreeing to negotiate with terrorists.” Avi Weiss said the U.S. was, “in effect, capitulating to murderers and thugs.” *New York Times*, December 16, 1988

⁸⁹¹ *Washington Times*, January 30, 1989. The ad was published with the support of the U.S. Branch of the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem. It read in part: “Maybe America Can Afford the mistake of ‘talking’ to Arafat...A similar ‘mistake’ force upon Israel could prove fatal.” The Simon Weisenthal Center in California also criticized the dialogue decision.

Damage Control

Having adopted a muted response, the centrist Jewish leadership's goal was to contain the Shultz decision and avoid a runaway triumph for the PLO. A "talking points" paper issued by the New York Jewish Community Relations Council said:

- The Administration acted to engage in dialogue with the PLO because Arafat's change in language was believed to have met US conditions for talking with the organization...However, uttering the right words does not necessarily constitute a true change in attitude. This can only be demonstrated by a change in action.
- The US decision does not and should not represent US recognition of the PLO or recognition of an independent Palestinian state as recently proclaimed unilaterally at the Palestine National Committee meeting in Algiers.
- The US must act firmly and cautiously in dealing with the PLO. The true intentions of the PLO must be made crystal clear... The PLO seeks international legitimization of a Palestinian state and pressure on Israel to accept conditions beneficial to the PLO but possibly detrimental to Israel's security.
- To date, there remains a large gap between Arafat's rhetoric and the reality of the PLO as an organization which continues to support violence...the US must actively seek to press the PLO to match its words with deeds...⁸⁹²

Shultz assured incoming Presidents Conference chairman, Seymour Reich of B'nai B'rith, that the U.S. would not pressure Israel to negotiate with the PLO. In response, Reich declared: "While many do not believe that Arafat had uttered the magic words, even after his fourth time at bat, the response of

⁸⁹² *Memo to the Jewish Leadership, "JCRC Talking Points on the US-PLO Dialogue," January 4, 1989*

the community reflected a belief in Shultz's sincerity and his support for Israel."⁸⁹³

Thus the emphasis of centrist Jewish groups was on setting parameters for the new reality. Anti-Defamation League leaders Burton Levinson and Abraham Foxman wrote that words alone would not rehabilitate the PLO. They urged Washington to insist that the PLO explicitly renounce its covenant and quell the violence on the West Bank. At the same time, they urged the U.S. not to pressure Israel to deal with the PLO.⁸⁹⁴ AIPAC suggested that the United States be held to three cardinal points: it should not pressure Israel to return to the 1967 borders; it should demand the PLO renounce its covenant, and it should not support the establishment of a Palestinian-Arab state on the West Bank and Gaza.⁸⁹⁵

In one of his last official contacts with the organized Jewish community, Shultz told the Presidents Conference that the US-PLO dialogue was being conducted at a very low level. He assured the Jewish leaders that the U.S. still opposed the creation of a Palestinian state because "it would be unstable."⁸⁹⁶

The reaction of the Arabs in the Territories was measured. The United National Command of the Uprising attributed the US-PLO dialogue to the *Intifada* and urged additional actions to "force more retreats from the

⁸⁹³ *Jerusalem Post*, December 28, 1988; "There's no way we're going to throw stones at Shultz," the *Jerusalem Post* quoted one pro-Israel insider on December 18, 1988.

⁸⁹⁴ *Jerusalem Post*, December 25, 1988

⁸⁹⁵ Schiff & Ya'ari, p. 308.

⁸⁹⁶ JTA, December 22, 1988

American-Israeli positions.⁸⁹⁷ Syria insisted that the conflict could only be resolved by force. Palestinian elements aligned with Syria recommended that a new PLO, which would honor the PNC Charter, should be organized.⁸⁹⁸ Iran said it would have ties with the State of Palestine but did not agree to the existence of Israel.⁸⁹⁹ PFLP leader Dr. George Habash and DFLP head Nayif Hawatimah issued a joint communique saying that Arafat's non-zero-sum statement did not represent official PLO policy.⁹⁰⁰

Ambassador Robert Pelletreau, Jr. commenced formal negotiations with the PLO leadership in Carthage, Tunisia on December 16.⁹⁰¹ The meeting was a symbolic triumph for American strategic mindedness. The US had forced strategic choices upon the parties, taken advantage of situational opportunities, divided the opposition, set and controlled the agenda, capitalized on crises, withheld information, engaged in insinuation and applied skillful incrementalism ("salami tactics"). These political suasion efforts benefited from parallel ventures by elements within the American Jewish community.

⁸⁹⁷ FBIS, December 19, 1988

⁸⁹⁸ *New York Times*, December 17, 1988

⁸⁹⁹ FBIS, December 23, 1988

⁹⁰⁰ FBIS, December 29, 1988

⁹⁰¹ JTA, December 16, 1988. Contacts were adjourned until the new Administration took office. The formal dialogue was suspended on June 20, 1990 by President Bush after the PLO launched a terrorist operation in Tel Aviv in violation of the Arafat pledge. Formal US-PLO talks eventually resumed after the Rabin-Arafat agreement of September 1993.

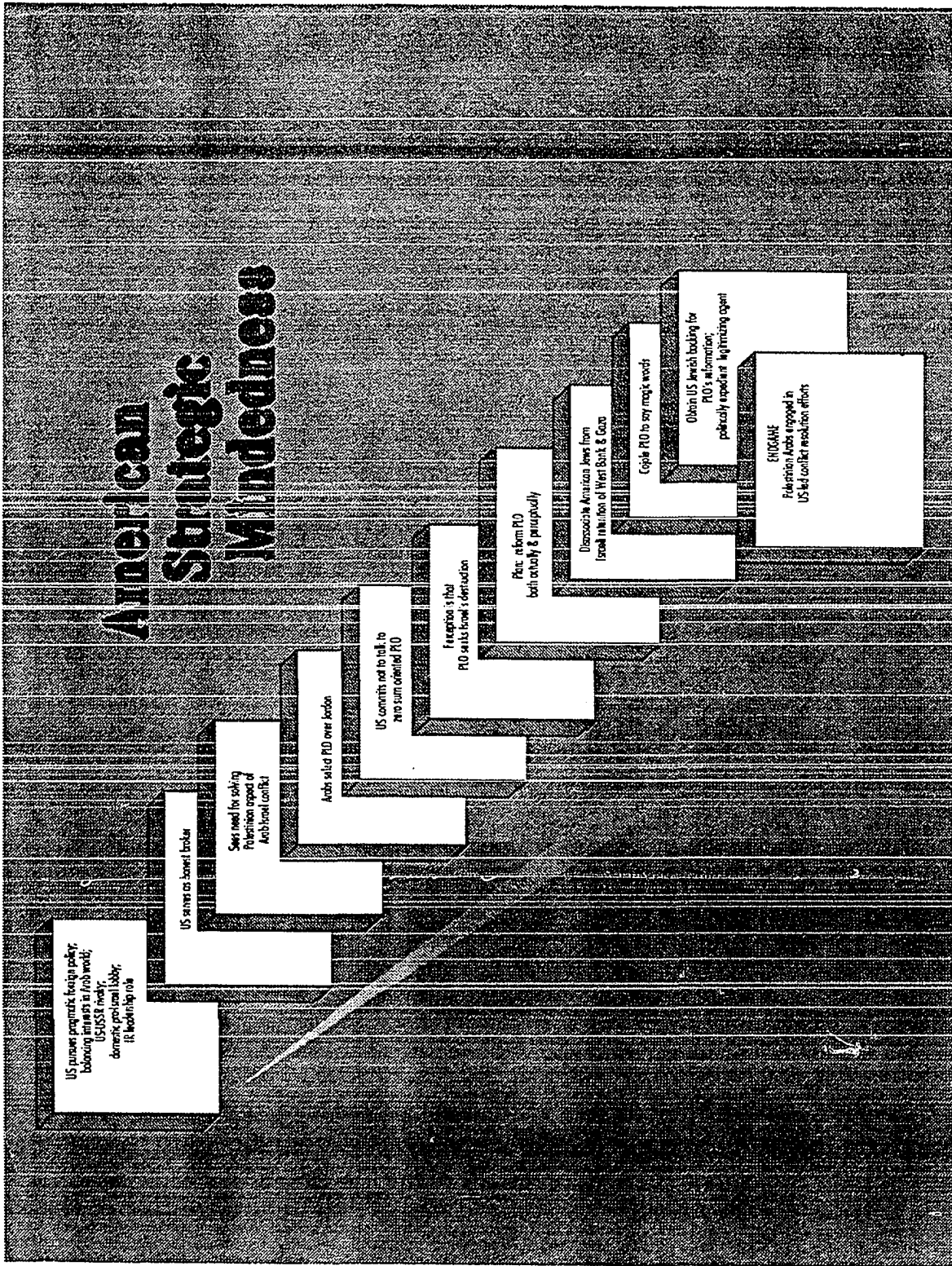


FIGURE NO. 6

Chapter 9

CONCLUSION

It was, as *Pravda* was fond of saying, "no accident" that so many in the American Jewish leadership were invited to witness the signing of the Rabin-Arafat accord on the White House lawn September 14, 1993. They had served an important adjunct role which made the day possible. This case study has shown that America's decision to "talk" to the PLO was facilitated, sanctioned and legitimized by key Jewish leadership elements in the United States. It has also shown that, by the late 1970s, even those elements that, at the time, opposed PLO participation nevertheless supported the tenor of the U.S stance toward the Palestinian Arabs.

Pragmatism and remarkable consistency marked the US approach toward resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict. US policy makers found it politically expedient to seek the support of the American Jewish leadership for their policies which were predicated upon a re-evaluation of the nature of the struggle. This support translated into American Jewish pressure in advancing policies antithetical to the Likud line. The American Jewish role was an important and by no means incidental sideshow. The 1988 end game-- in which Arafat recited the magic words-- was orchestrated by Secretary of State Shultz, who in the words of Abba Eban, "had worked skillfully with the Swedish foreign minister and with a group of Jewish leaders headed by Rita Hauser..."¹

This study calls attention to the fundamental reason for Israeli and American Jewish opposition to PLO participation in efforts to address Palestinian Arab grievances. The PLO was opposed not because it was a terrorist organization or because it exploded civilian airliners or killed Diaspora Jews. The PLO was excluded because it was perceived as pursuing total conflict with Israel. There was nothing to negotiate about so long as the PLO was dedicated to the elimination of the Zionist enterprise. By 1988,

¹ Eban, op. cit., p. 629

those who held fast to this view came to be portrayed as being mired in the past.

Having determined early on that the PLO would not go away, the US purposefully worked to coax the Palestinian movement away from its maximalist all-or-nothing mission. In the interim, the various Administrations sought Jewish leadership support for their nuanced handling of the Palestinian problem. Initially, there was a wide gulf between Administration and Jewish perceptions about the nature of the conflict, the centrality of the Palestinian issue and, thorniest of all, PLO intentions. This study acknowledged that Jewish perceptions changed as a result of a variety of factors but calls particular attention to the role of political suasion.

This case study demonstrates that it was only after the Jewish leadership came to subscribe, more or less, to the Administration's assessment of the conflict that the leadership acquiesced to a Palestinian-Arab, and later, PLO role. Moreover, this study found that various Administrations aggressively sought American Jewish support.

Ideological cleavages between the liberal Jewish establishment and the conservative Likud combined with Israel's failure to successfully articulate a legal, historical and religious case for retaining Judea, Samaria and Gaza also contributed to the ultimate outcome. In the final analysis, the future of the West Bank hinged on whether the PLO would enunciate the "magic words." There was no fall back position once an ostensibly reformed PLO came forth ready to make peace.

Conflict resolution, as the US understood it, was possible only because of the belated political maturation of the Palestinian Arab polity. The PLO established its "monopoly on Palestinian national identity." Their movement became relatively independent of exogenous control. This set the stage for a

perceptual shift of the Arab-Israel conflict. Aaron David Miller, an American Jewish Arabist, persuasively argues that these changes allowed Arab goals to shift from what was desirable (the destruction of Israel) to what was possible.²

Research Hypothesis 1

The Jewish Role

By tracing the activities of the Jewish leadership, their contacts with various Administrations and Israeli Governments, this case study establishes the extent to which American Jews were part and parcel of the US foreign policy equation as Administration decision makers approached the PLO dialogue issue.

The case study provides evidence that:

1.1 Through meetings with Administration figures, Arab heads of state, PLO representatives and others, the American Jewish leadership was an intrinsic component in the process leading up to the US decision to “talk” to the PLO. The process was achieved using “salami” tactics with Jewish leaders reassured, at each milestone, that “US policy remained unchanged.”

1.2 The Hauser-Sheinbaum group of outside elites (using the International Center for Peace in the Middle East as a vehicle) and the peace camp activists exemplified by Jerome Segal played a substantive adjunct role in promoting a US-PLO dialogue.

1.3 The activities of Bassam Abu Sharif and others demonstrate that the PLO aimed part of its “peace offensive” at US Jews. Obviously, the PLO

² Aaron David Miller, “The Arab-Israel Conflict 1967-1987: A Retrospective,” *Middle East Journal*, Summer 1987. Miller was one of several American Jewish Arabists within the State Department prominent in implementing US Middle policy. Others include Daniel Kurtzner and Dennis Ross.

believed there was something to gain by convincing American Jews that it no longer sought Israel's demise.

Research Hypothesis 2 Perceptions

The alpha and omega of US conflict resolution efforts, culminating in a PLO peace process role, required confronting the psychological element of Arab-Israel relations. First and foremost it was vital that Israel and its American Jewish supporters perceive PLO intentions from the Administration's vantage point. Equally important, they needed to accept the centrality of the Palestinian problem.

2.1 Using the words of State Department and White House officials, this study provides ample evidence that various Administrations portrayed the struggle in non zero sum terms.

2.2. Based on the statements of various Jewish leaders cited in this study, it is plainly evident that they came to accept that the struggle had indeed shifted in nature. Having become convinced of this, the evidence presented shows that they called for concomitant Israeli concessions.

2.3 In the post-1977 period, the evidence presented shows that an internal opposition within the Presidents Conference developed as a result of shifting perceptions. It lobbied for addressing the Palestinian problem. An outside elite and peace camp developed which actively lobbied for PLO participation in the diplomatic process and the establishment of a PLO-led state in territories abandoned by Israel.

Research Hypothesis Number 3
Suasion and Agenda Setting

This study has shown how suasion and agenda setting were used to impede support within the American Jewish community for Likud policies and that various Administrations, together with elements of the Jewish leadership, engaged in this tactic. Strategically, “disassociation” was especially important to suasion and agenda setting. Consequently, “pro-Israelism” was redefined and divorced from backing Israel’s claims to Judea, Samaria and Gaza.

3.1 This study establishes that a policy of “disassociation” articulated during the Carter Administration was de facto US policy (at least) until December 1988.

3.2 State Department pronouncements cited make it clear that various Administrations endeavored to block Israeli efforts to solidify control of the West Bank and Gaza so as to keep the “land-for-peace” option available on the Palestinian front. In criticizing Israeli activities in the Territories they were abetted by elements in the Jewish leadership.

3.3 Neither US policy makers nor the American Jewish leadership demanded that the PLO abandon its sacred covenant calling for the elimination of the “Zionist entity.” This was a foremost agenda setting success.

3.4 Even as the Presidents Conference was immobilized, the internal opposition, outside elite and peace camp lobbied vigorously against Likud Government policy regarding Judea, Samaria and Gaza and in support of Palestinian Arab aspirations.

3.5 Jewish critics of the Likud-led Government consulted with and counseled the PLO on its image and other aspects of public diplomacy.

3.6 The internal opposition was largely responsible for immobilizing the Presidents Conference by its refusal to work within a consensus framework. Moreover, critics of Likud were encouraged to "speak out" by the Labor party.

This paper posed a number of research questions which can now be answered.

1. The mechanism through which political choices facing the American Jewish leadership were recast, so as to be unfavorable to the Likud, involved political suasion by the Administration and key Jewish leadership elements. These suasion efforts were predicated upon (and contributed to) shifting perceptions about Arab intentions.

2. This study has identified shifts over time in the perceptual framework and tied these changes to turnabouts in leadership behavior. I make no claim to having demonstrated a causal relationship between perceptions and policy. Still, the correlation is obvious enough and does not require a leap of faith.

3. As to the "generalizability" of this case study: A focus on the inner dynamics of an important foreign policy interest group (looking at perception and suasion) can enrich our overall understanding of how the political system deals with complex foreign policy dilemmas which have delicate domestic implications.

Possible applications that come to mind include the foreign policy role

of African-Americans (inter alia, regarding famine relief, regime disintegration, democratization); The Hispanic community (with regard to Latin and South America); Haitian Americans (on Haiti), and Asian Americans (on US policy in the Pacific, human rights policy toward the PRC, etc.) and Americans of East European heritage (on US policy toward former satellites of the Soviet Empire). This is not an off-the-shelf approach by any means. In some instances the time may not yet be ripe for application. Still, there is reason to expect that, as these groups continue to mature politically and serve a linkage role to their ancestral homelands, they may find themselves in conflict with American foreign policy pragmatism. At that point, a focus on inner group dynamics will prove worthwhile.

4. Evidence cited in the case study establishes that the executive branch exploited personality and policy differences within the Jewish leadership to drive a wedge between it and the Likud-led government of Israel. Often, this was accomplished by circumventing the Presidents Conference.

5. Similarly, this case study found that Likud's American Jewish critics often took their cues from the Labor party (this was especially true in the post 1985 period).

6. To the extent that "normal informational and propaganda programs conducted in an overall atmosphere of relatively peaceful relationships" may be termed "psychological warfare," US and American Jewish suasion efforts against Israel's Likud Government certainly contained elements of "psychological warfare." The study points to any number of psychological instruments (propaganda, political measures, strategic statements, and advertisements) which were employed to influence, confuse or otherwise

undermine Likud morale, standing and policies.³

This study found that the intervening variable of American Jewish suasion efforts in conjunction with the independent variable of changing perceptions (itself connected to suasion) did impact on the dependent variable (the ability of the US to open a dialogue with the PLO).

In talking about the power game in Washington, George Shultz reminds us that: "Nothing ever gets settled in this town. It's not like running a company or even a university. It's a seething debating society in which the debate never stops, in which people never give up..."⁴ Only time will tell whether the actions of the PLO and Hamas will yet cause American Jews to re-evaluate their analysis of Arab intentions.

³ Definition of psychological warfare drawn from Cecil V. Crabb, Jr., *American Foreign Policy in the Nuclear Age*, 4th Edition, (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), p. 149-150 and the *New World Dictionary of the American Language*, Second College Edition, (New York: William Collins + World Publishing, 1978).

⁴ Hendrick Smith, *The Power Game*, op. cit., p. 558

APPENDIX (A)

The Palestinian National Covenant, 1968

This Covenant will be called The Palestinian National Covenant (*al-mithaq al-watani al-filastini*).

Article 1: Palestine is the homeland of the Palestinian Arab people and an integral part of the great Arab homeland, and the people of Palestine is a part of the Arab nation.

Article 2: Palestine with its boundaries that existed at the time of the British mandate is an integral regional unit.

Article 3: The Palestinian Arab people possesses the legal right to its homeland, and when the liberation of its homeland is completed it will exercise self-determination solely according to its own will and choice.

Article 4: The Palestinian personality is an innate, persistent characteristic that does not disappear, and it is transferred from fathers to sons. The Zionist occupation, and the dispersal of the Palestinian Arab people as a result of the disasters which came over it, do not deprive it of its Palestinian personality and affiliation and do not nullify them.

Article 5: The Palestinians are the Arab citizens who were living permanently in Palestine until 1947, whether they were expelled from there or remained. Whoever is born to a Palestinian Arab father after this date, within Palestine or outside it, is a Palestinian.

Article 6: Jews who were living permanently in Palestine until the beginning of the Zionist invasion will be considered Palestinians. [For the dating of the Zionist invasion, considered to have begun in 1917.]

Article 7: The Palestinian affiliation and the material, spiritual and historical tie with Palestine are permanent realities. The upbringing of the Palestinian individual in an Arab and revolutionary fashion, the undertaking of all means of forging consciousness and training the Palestinian, in order to acquaint him profoundly with his homeland, spiritually and materially, and preparing him for the conflict and the armed struggle, as well as for the sacrifice of his property and his life to restore his homeland, until the liberation of all this is a national duty.

Article 8: The phase in which the people of Palestine is living is that of national (*watani*) struggle for the liberation of Palestine. Therefore, the contradictions among the Palestinian national forces are of secondary order which must be suspended in the interest of the fundamental contradiction between Zionism and colonialism on the one side and the Palestinian Arab people on the other. On this basis, the Palestinian masses, whether in the homeland or in places of exile (*mahajiri*), organizations and individuals, comprise one national front which acts to restore Palestine and liberate it through armed struggle.

Article 9: Armed struggle is the only way to liberate Palestine and is therefore a strategy and not tactics. The Palestinian Arab people affirms its absolute resolution and abiding determination to pursue the armed struggle and to march forward towards the armed popular revolution, to liberate its homeland and return to it [to maintain] its right to a natural life in it, and to exercise its right of self-determination in it and sovereignty over it.

Article 10: Fedayeen action forms the nucleus of the popular Palestinian war of liberation. This demands its promotion, extension and protection, and the mobilization of all the masses and scientific capacities of the Palestinians, their organization and involvement in the armed Palestinian revolution and cohesion in the national (*watani*) struggle among the various groups of the people of Palestine, and between them and the Arab masses, to guarantee the continuation of the revolution, its advancement and victory.

Article 11: The Palestinians will have three mottoes: national (*wataniyya*) unity; national (*qawmiyya*) mobilization and liberation.

Article 12: The Palestinian Arab people believes in Arab unity. In order to fulfill its role in realizing this, it must preserve, in this phase of its national (*watani*) struggle, its Palestinian personality and the constituents thereof, increase consciousness of its existence and resist any plan that tends to disintegrate or weaken it.

Article 13: Arab unity and the liberation of Palestine are two complementary aims. Each one paves the way for realization of the other. Arab unity leads to the liberation of Palestine, and the liberation of Palestine leads to Arab unity. Working for both goes hand in hand.

Article 14: The destiny of the Arab nation, indeed the very Arab existence, depends upon the destiny of the Palestine issue. The endeavour and effort of the Arab nation to liberate Palestine follows from this connection. The people of Palestine assumes its vanguard role in realizing this sacred national (*qawmi*) aim.

Article 15: The liberation of Palestine, from an Arab viewpoint, is a national (*qawmi*) duty to repulse the Zionist, Imperialist invasion from the great Arab homeland and to purge the Zionist presence from Palestine. Its full responsibility falls upon the Arab nation, peoples and governments, with the Palestinian Arab people at their head. For this purpose, the Arab nation must mobilize all its military, human, material and spiritual capacities to participate actively with the people of Palestine in the liberation of Palestine. They must especially in the present stage of armed Palestinian revolution, grant and offer the people of Palestine all possible help and every material and human support, and afford it every sure means and opportunity enabling it to continue to assume its vanguard role in pursuing its armed revolution until the liberation of its homeland.

Article 16: The liberation of Palestine, from a spiritual viewpoint, will prepare an atmosphere of tranquillity and peace for the Holy Land in the shade of which all the Holy Places will be safeguarded, and freedom of worship and visitation to all will be guaranteed, without distinction or discrimination of race, colour, language or religion. For this reason, the people of Palestine looks to the support of all the spiritual forces in the world.

Article 17: The liberation of Palestine, from a human viewpoint, will restore to the Palestinian man his dignity, glory and freedom. For this, the Palestinian

Arab people looks to the support of those in the world who believe in the dignity and freedom of man.

Article 18: The liberation of Palestine, from an international viewpoint is a defensive act necessitated by the requirements of self-defence. For this reason the Arab people of Palestine, desiring to befriend all peoples, looks to the support of the states which love freedom, justice and peace in restoring the legal situation to Palestine, establishing security and peace in its territory, and enabling its people to exercise national (*wataniyya*) sovereignty and national (*qawmiyya*) freedom.

Article 19: The partitioning of Palestine in 1947 and the establishment of Israel is fundamentally null and void, whatever time has elapsed, because it was contrary to the wish of the people of Palestine and its natural right to its homeland, and contradicts the principles embodied in the Charter of the UN, the first of which is the right of self-determination.

Article 20: The Balfour Declaration, the Mandate document, and what has been based upon them are considered null and void. The claim of a historical or spiritual tie between Jews and Palestine does not tally with historical realities nor with the constituents of statehood in their true sense. Judaism, in its character as a religion of revelation, is not a nationality with an independent existence. Likewise, the Jews are not one people with an independent personality. They are rather citizens of the states to which they belong.

Article 21: The Palestinian Arab people, in expressing itself through the armed Palestinian revolution, rejects every solution that is a substitute for a complete liberation of Palestine, and rejects all plans that aim at the settlement of the Palestine issue or its internationalization.

Article 22: Zionism is a political movement organically related to world imperialism and hostile to all movements of liberation and progress in the world. It is a racist and fanatical movement in its formation; aggressive, expansionist and colonialist in its aims; and fascist and Nazi in its means. Israel is the tool of the Zionist movement and a human and geographical base for world imperialism. It is a concentration and jumping-off point for imperialism in the heart of the Arab homeland, to strike at the hopes of the Arab nation for liberation, unity and progress.

Article 23: The demands of security and peace and the requirements of truth and justice oblige all states that preserve friendly relations among peoples and maintain the loyalty of citizens to their homelands to consider Zionism an illegitimate movement and to prohibit its existence and activity.

Article 24: The Palestinian Arab people believes in the principles of justice, freedom, sovereignty, self-determination, human dignity and the right of peoples to exercise them.

Article 25: To realize the aims of this covenant and its principles the Palestine Liberation Organization will undertake its full role in liberating Palestine.

Article 26: The Palestine Liberation Organization, which represents the forces of the Palestinian revolution, is responsible for the movement of the Palestinian Arab people in its struggle to restore its homeland, liberate it, return to it and exercise the right of self-determination in it. This responsibility extends to all military, political and financial matters, and all else that the Palestine issue requires in the Arab and international spheres.

Article 27: The Palestine Liberation Organization will cooperate with all Arab States, each according to its capacities, and will maintain neutrality in their mutual relations in the light of and on the basis of, the requirements of the battle of liberation and will not interfere in the internal affairs of any Arab State.

Article 28: The Palestinian Arab people insists upon the originality and independence of its national (*wataniyya*) revolution and rejects every manner of interference, guardianship and subordination.

Article 29: The Palestinian Arab people possesses the prior and original right in liberating and restoring its homeland and will define its position with reference to all states and powers on the basis of their positions with reference to the issue [of Palestine] and the extent of their support for [the Palestinian Arab people] in its revolution to realize its aims.

Article 30: The fighters and bearers of arms in the battle of liberation are the nucleus of the popular army, which will be the protecting arm of the gains of the Palestinian Arab people.

Article 31: This organization shall have a flag, oath and anthem, all of which will be determined in accordance with a special system.

Article 32: To this covenant is attached a law known as the fundamental law of the Palestine Liberation Organization, in which is determined the manner of the organization's formation, its committees, institutions, the special functions of every one of them and all the requisite duties associated with them in accordance with this covenant.

Article 33: This covenant cannot be amended except by a two-thirds majority of all the members of the National Assembly of the Palestine Liberation Organization in a special session called for this purpose.

**Memorandum of Agreement Between the Governments of Israel
and the United States, September 1975**

The Geneva Peace Conference

1. The Geneva Peace Conference will be reconvened at a time coordinated between the United States and Israel.

2. The United States will continue to adhere to its present policy with respect to the Palestine Liberation Organization, whereby it will not recognize or negotiate with the Palestine Liberation Organization so long as the Palestine Liberation Organization does not recognize Israel's right to exist and does not accept Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. The United States Government will consult fully and seek to concert its position and strategy at the Geneva Peace Conference on this issue with the Government of Israel. Similarly, the United States will consult fully and seek to concert its position and strategy with Israel with regard to the participation of any other additional states. It is understood that the participation at a subsequent phase of the Conference of any possible additional state, group or organization will require the agreement of all the initial participants.

3. The United States will make every effort to ensure at the Conference that all the substantive negotiations will be on a bilateral basis.

4. The United States will oppose and, if necessary, vote against any initiative in the Security Council to alter adversely the terms of reference of the Geneva Peace Conference or to change Resolutions 242 and 338 in ways which are incompatible with their original purpose.

5. The United States will seek to ensure that the role of the co-sponsors will be consistent with what was agreed in the Memorandum of Understanding between the United States Government and the Government of Israel of December 20, 1973.

6. The United States and Israel will concert action to assure that the Conference will be conducted in a manner consonant with the objectives of this document and with the declared purpose of the Conference, namely the advancement of a negotiated peace between Israel and each one of its neighbors.

Henry A. Kissinger
Secretary of State
for the Government of
the United States

Yigal Allon
Deputy Prime Minister &
Minister of Foreign Affairs
For the Government of Israel

**August 1985 Law
Codifying American Policy Toward PLO**

“...No officer or employee of the United States Government and no agent or other individual acting on behalf of the United States Government shall negotiate with the Palestine Liberation Organization or any representative thereof (except in emergency or humanitarian situations) unless and until the P.L.O. recognizes Israel’s right to exist, accepts United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 and 338 and renounces the use of terrorism...”

source: New York Times, November 13, 1988

**Joint Statement by Yasser Arafat and a Group of Five
American Jews, Stockholm, 7 December, 1988**

The group of American Jews who are associated with the International Center for Peace in the Middle East were: Ms. Rita Hauser, Ms. Drora Kass, Mr. Menachem Rosensaft, Mr. Stanley Sheinbaum, and Prof. Abraham Udovitch

The Palestinian National Council met in Algiers from November 12 to 15, 1988, and announced the declaration of independence which proclaimed the state of Palestine and issued a political statement.

The following explanation was given by the representatives of the PLO of certain important points in the Palestinian declaration of independence and the political statement adopted by the PNC in Algiers.

Affirming the principle incorporated in those UN resolutions which call for a two-state solution of Israel and Palestine, the PNC:

1. Agreed to enter into peace negotiations at an international conference under the auspices of the UN with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, on an equal footing with the other parties to the conflict; such an international conference is to be held on the basis of UN Resolutions 242 and 338 and the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, without external interference, as provided in the UN Charter, including the right to an independent state, which conference should resolve the Palestinian problem in all its aspects;
2. Established the independent state of Palestine and accepted the existence of Israel as a state in the region;
3. Declared its rejection and condemnation of terrorism in all its forms, including state terrorism;
4. Called for a solution to the Palestinian refugee problem in accordance with international law and practices and relevant UN resolutions (including right of return or compensation).

The American personalities strongly supported and applauded the Palestinian declaration of independence and the political statement adopted in Algiers and felt there was no further impediment to a direct dialogue between the United States government and the PLO.

Yasser Arafat's Geneva Press Statement, 15 December, 1988

Allow me to explain my viewpoints before you. Our desire for peace is strategic and not a temporary tactic. We work for peace regardless of whatever may happen.

Our state provides salvation for the Palestinians and peace for both the Palestinians and Israelis. The right to self-determination means the existence of the Palestinians and our existence does not destroy the existence of the Israelis, as their rulers claim.

In my speech yesterday, I referred to UN Resolution No. 181 as a basis for Palestinian independence. I also referred to our acceptance of Resolutions 242 and 338 as a basis for negotiations with Israel within the framework of the international conference.

Our PNC accepted these three resolutions at the Algiers session. Also in my speech yesterday, it was clear that we mean our people's rights to freedom and national independence in accordance with Resolution No. 181 as well as the right of all parties concerned with the Middle East conflict to exist in peace and security, including—as I said—the State of Palestine, Israel, and other neighbors in accordance with Resolutions 242 and 338.

Regarding terrorism, yesterday I announced beyond doubt—and nevertheless I repeat for the sake of recording stands, that we totally and categorically reject all forms of terrorism, including individual, group, and state terrorism.

We explained our stand in Geneva and Algiers. Any talk to the effect that the Palestinians must offer more—do you remember this slogan—or that what was offered is insufficient or that the Palestinians are playing propaganda games or public relations maneuvers will be harmful and unfruitful. That is enough.

All outstanding issues should be discussed on the table and at the international conference. Let it be perfectly clear that neither 'Arafat nor anyone else can stop the uprising.

The uprising will stop only when practical and tangible steps are taken toward the attainment of its national goals and establishment of its Palestinian state.

Within this framework, I expect the EEC states to play a more effective role in consolidating peace in our region. They assume a political and moral responsibility and they can deal with this.

Finally, I announce before you and ask you to convey these words on my behalf. We want peace, we are committed to peace, and we want to live in our Palestinian state and let others live.

Thank you.

**Statement by Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir on Yasser Arafat's Speech to the UN, Jerusalem, 13 December, 1988
[Excerpts]**

The following is a response by Prime Minister Shamir to Yasser Arafat's speech at UN General Assembly session in Geneva.

Ladies and gentlemen: We are witnessing a deceitful PLO act of momentary proportions in Algiers, Stockholm, Strasbourg, and now in Geneva, aimed at misleading and creating the impression of growing moderation. At each of these events, particularly the convention of terrorist organizations in Algiers, the PLO reiterated its basic stand, the phrasing of which is altered each time, and which is a rejection of Israel's existence, the continuation of terrorism, and the encouragement of violent acts.

It is a well known fact that as far back as 1975 the United States promised Israel that it would not recognize the PLO and would not negotiate with it unless the PLO recognizes Israel's right to exist, accepts UN Resolutions 242 and 338, and renounces violence and terror. As far as we know the PLO did not accept these conditions. In his speech in Geneva, Arafat did not announce that he recognizes Israel's right of existence. He condemned terror, at the same time praising and encouraging what he termed the war of liberation.

In our view, the PLO is incapable of accepting the American conditions, which contradict the organization's very essence and its *raison d'être*. I hope that for the sake of promoting the chance of peace and ending terror and violence, the United States will never form any official contacts with the PLO, since such a move will encourage extremists and violence and submerge the voices of those who are genuinely interested in promoting co-existence, negotiations, and peace between Israel and its neighbors.

Israel's policy is clear, and it is based on the guidelines of its governments since 1973. We have no conditions for negotiations or recognition of the PLO. From our point of view, the PLO is not a partner for any peace process. The PLO is a terrorist organization, or a group of terrorist organizations whose goal is to harm Israelis, undermine the existence of the State of Israel, and bring about its destruction.

Israel desires peace with all its might. We call again on our neighbors, including the Arabs of Eretz Israel, and propose true negotiations between equals without pre-conditions, breaks, or diversions, until a peace settlement is reached. Anyone who truly desires peace will find us willing and faithful partners in an effort toward the supreme goal....

I see no recognition of Israel's right to exist in Arafat's speech. There is no explicit statement to that effect. There is what they call in English double talk, various formulations aimed at camouflage, and the alleged call on Israel to come to Geneva is in fact an invitation to Israel to come to an international conference, rather than direct negotiations with anyone.

Statement by President George Bush on Suspension of the Dialogue Between the US and the PLO, 20 June, 1990 [Excerpts]

Based on the recommendation of the Secretary of State, I have decided to suspend the dialogue between the United States and the PLO pending a satisfactory response from the PLO of steps it is taking to resolve problems associated with the recent acts of terrorism, in particular that May 30 [1990] terrorist attack on Israel by the Palestinian Liberation Front—a constituent group of the PLO.

By the way of background, on December 14, 1988, Yasser Arafat, speaking on behalf of the PLO Executive Committee, recognized Israel's right to exist. He accepted the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and he renounced terrorism.

Now, subsequently, the United States announced that because the PLO had met our longstanding conditions for dialogue, we would begin a substantive dialogue with the PLO. And at the time we applauded Chairman Arafat for taking these essential steps and we have conducted such a dialogue with the PLO through our embassy in Tunis.

Over the past 18 months, representatives of the United States and the PLO regularly exchanged views about the political and security situation in the region.

On balance, we believed that these exchanges contributed to progress in the peace process.

On May 30, 1990, the Palestinian Liberation Front attempted a seaborne terrorist infiltration into Israel. Palestinian Liberation Front leader Abu Abbas represents the PLO [sic] on the Executive Committee of the PLO. The size of the force and the geographical target area strongly indicates that civilians would have been the target.

That day we issued a statement deploring this attempted terrorist attack. On May 31 we raised this incident with the PLO in Tunis. We told them that it could not avoid responsibility for an attempted terrorist action by one of its constituent groups and needed to take steps to deal with the matter by condemning the operation, disassociating itself from it and by also beginning to take steps to discipline Abu Abbas, the perpetrator.

We've given the PLO ample time to deal with this issue. To date, the PLO has not provided a credible accounting of this incident or undertaken the actions outlined above.

The US does take note of the fact that the PLO has disassociated itself from this attack and issued a statement condemning attacks against civilians in principle. But as we previously indicated, this is not sufficient. This alone is not sufficient.

Viewpoint of US

The US-PLO dialogue has demonstrated that it can advance the Arab-Israeli peace process. And at the same time, the dialogue is based on the assumption that the PLO is willing to abide by the conditions it accepted in December 1988, including renunciation of terror.

At any time that the PLO is prepared to take the necessary steps, we are prepared to promptly resume the dialogue.

In the meantime, we would hope and expect, the peace process would proceed as intended and without delay.

We remain committed to the pursuit of a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and to a just and lasting peace. And as we've often stated, it is our view that such a peace must be based on those two resolutions—UN Resolution 242 and 338 and the principle implicit therein as territory for peace and provide for Israel's security and Palestinian political rights.

We believe that Palestinian participation is vital to any successful process and that there are real opportunities for Palestinians in this process. We strongly hope that Israelis, Palestinians and the Arab states will recognize these opportunities and take the necessary steps to create an environment in which a viable peace process can thrive. We denounce violence in the area and call upon all parties to eschew violence and terror and opt instead for dialogue and negotiation. We're prepared to continue working with the parties toward this end.

APPENDIX (H)

Presidents Conference Chairmen

Yehuda Hellman served as Exec Director/Executive Vice Chairman from the inception of the President's Conference until his death in May 1986. Malcolm Hoenlein replaced Hellman in June 1986.

<u>CHAIRMAN</u>	<u>YEARS OF TENURE</u>	<u>ADMINISTRATION</u>
Nahum Goldman	1955-1959	Eisenhower
Philip M. Klutznik	1959-1960	Eisenhower
Label A. Katz	1960-1961	JFK
Rabbi Irving Miller	1961-1963	JFK
Lewis H. Weinstein	1963-1965	JFK/LBJ
Rabbi Joachim Prinz	1965-1967	LBJ
Rabbi Herschel Shacter	1967-1969	Nixon
Dr. William Wexler	1969-1972	Nixon
Jacob Stein	1972-1974	Nixon
Rabbi Israel Miller	1974-1975	Nixon/Ford
Alexander Schindler	1976-1978	Ford
Theodore R. Mann	1978-1980	Carter
Howard Squadron	1980-1982	Carter/Reagan
Julius Berman	1982-1984	Reagan
Kenneth Bialkin	1984-1986	Reagan
Morris Abram	1986-1988	Reagan

Subsequent to the events of the study:

Seymour Reich	1989-1990	Bush
Shoshana Cardin	1990-1992	Bush
Lester Pollack	1993-1994	Clinton

APPENDIX (I)

CONFERENCE OF PRESIDENTS OF MAJOR AMERICAN JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS

110 East 59 Street, New York, NY 10022

(212) 318-6111 Fax# (212) 644-4135

Lestor Pollack, Chairman

Malcolm Hoenlein, Executive Vice Chairman

- | | |
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- A comprehensive peace settlement in the Middle East**
- Full solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through mutual recognition, self-determination and coexistence**
- Extrication of the Middle East from Superpower rivalries and the arms race, both conventional and nuclear**
- Co-operation between the Jewish people and the Arab world**
- Freedom of conscience and religious tolerance**
- Equality of social, cultural and political rights — individual and collective — for religious and national minorities**
- Regional co-operation aimed at developing the areas for the benefit of all its peoples**

APPENDIX (K)

PLO TERRORISM -- KEY EXAMPLESPLO Airline Hijackings and BombingsHijackings:

23 July 1968	El Al plane, en route from Rome to Israel, hijacked by three terrorists and forced to land in Algeria.	PFLP
29 Aug. 1969	TWA plane, en route from Rome to Israel, hijacked by two terrorists and forced to land in Damascus.	PFLP
22 July 1970	Olympic airways plane, en route from Beirut to Athens, hijacked by six terrorists and forced to land in Athens.	PSF
6 Sep. 1970	Three planes (BOAC, TWA, Pan Am) hijacked with total of 400 passengers. One of the planes is blown up in Egypt; two are then forced to fly to Jordan, where another hijacked plane joins them in Jordan. The planes are blown up by the terrorists.	PFLP
Aug. 1971	Jordanian plane hijacked by two terrorists to Algeria.	FATAH
22 Feb. 1972	Lufthansa plane on flight from Far East hijacked by five terrorists.	PFLP
29 Oct. 1972	Lufthansa plane hijacked by two terrorists who demand West Germany release of three terrorists held for Munich massacre. Hijackers find refuge in Libya.	PFLP
20 July 1973	JAL jumbo jet, en route from Paris to Tokyo, hijacked to Libya by five terrorists. Plane blown up in Libya on 24 July.	PFLP & Japanese Red Army
4 Sep. 1976	KLM plane with 84 passengers, en route from Madrid to Amsterdam, hijacked by three terrorists to Cyprus. Hijackers later find refuge in Libya.	PFLP-GC

Bombings:

21 Feb. 1970	Swissair plane with 38 passengers and 9 crew members, en route from Zurich to Israel explodes in mid-air, killing everyone on board.	PFLP-GC
1 Apr. 1986	Explosion on board TWA plane, en route from U.S. to Egypt via Rome and Athens. Four people killed, including a mother and her infant daughter who were sucked out of the plane by the explosion.	FATAH (Hawari Apparatus)

From 1971 through 1973 several attempts were made to smuggle explosives aboard El Al planes in order to blow them up in flight (28 July 1971, Rome, PFLP-GC; 1 Sep. 1971, London, PFLP-GC; 16 Aug. 1972, Rome, PFLP-GC; 4 Apr. 1973, Rome, PFLP). All these attempts failed.

Gun-and-Grenade Attacks

26 Dec. 1968	Two terrorists attack El Al plane in Athens: one passenger killed, two stewardesses wounded.	PFLP
18 Feb. 1969	Four terrorists attack El Al plane in Zurich: co-pilot killed, 5 passengers wounded.	PFLP
30 May 1972	Three terrorists kill 26 civilians and wound 76 at Ben-Gurion Airport.	Japanese Red Army (on behalf of PFLP)
20 May 1978	Three terrorists attack passengers at El Al terminal at Orly Airport in Paris: two people killed, two wounded.	PFLP
22 June 1981	Terrorists attack Greek travel agency in Piraeus: two people killed, 70 wounded.	PFLP

Taking of Hostages (resulting in casualties)

5 Sep. 1972	Eight terrorists take 11 Israeli athletes hostage at the Olympic Village in Munich. The hostages are later all murdered.	FATAH (Black September)
11 Apr. 1974	Three terrorists seize an apartment building: 16 civilians, including 8 children, and two soldiers are killed; 16 civilians are wounded.	PFLP-GC
19 Nov. 1974	Three terrorists seize an apartment building: 4 people are killed; 18 are wounded.	DFLP
5 May 1975	Eight terrorists seize the Savoy Hotel in Tel Aviv: 8 civilians and 3 soldiers are killed; 6 civilians and 5 soldiers are wounded.	FATAH
21 Dec. 1975	Six terrorists seize OPEC building in Vienna during meeting of oil ministers, taking more than 20 hostages: 4 civilians killed, one injured.	PFLP & Carlos network

Embassy Seizures

28 Dec. 1972	Four terrorists seize the Israeli embassy in Bangkok and hold 6 hostages.	FATAH (Black September)
1 Mar. 1973	Eight terrorists seize the Saudi Arabian embassy in Khartoum: three Western diplomats, including the U.S. and Belgian ambassadors, are killed.	FATAH (Black September)
5 Sep. 1973	Five terrorists seize the Saudi Arabian embassy in Paris and hold 11 hostages.	FATAH (Black September)
6 Feb. 1974	Five terrorists seize the Japanese embassy in Kuwait.	PFLP & Japanese Red Army

15 Sep. 1975 Four terrorists seize the Egyptian embassy in Madrid and hold hostage 6 diplomats, whom they threaten to kill unless Egypt withdraws from Geneva talks and condemns interim agreement with Israel. FATAH

13 July 1979 Four terrorists seize the Egyptian embassy in Ankara and hold 20 hostages: 2 Turkish policemen and one embassy employee are killed; 2 Egyptian security guards are wounded. SAIKA

Terrorism Against Children

22 May 1970 Using bazookas, terrorists attack a school bus from Moshav Avivim: 9 children and 3 teachers are killed; 19 children are wounded. PFLP-GC

15 May 1974 Three terrorists hold pupils hostage in a school building in Ma'alot: 24 civilians, mostly youngsters, and one soldier are killed; 62 civilians and 4 soldiers are wounded. DFLP

6 Apr. 1980 Five terrorists seize the children's dorm at Kibbutz Misgav Am: 3 civilians, including a two-year-old boy, and one soldier are killed; 5 civilians, including 4 children, and 11 soldiers are wounded. ALF

Hijackings of Public Transportation and Shipping

11 Mar. 1978 After killing a young woman nature photographer, terrorists seize two buses along the Tel Aviv - Haifa coastal road: 33 people are killed; 82 are wounded. FATAH

25 Sep. 1985 Three terrorists seize an Israeli yacht at the Larnaca marina in Cyprus: the three Israeli hostages are killed. FATAH (Force 17)

7 Oct. 1985 Four terrorists seize the Achille Lauro cruise ship: Leon Klinghoffer, an invalid American Jew is killed. PLF (Abu Abbas)

(APPENDIX L)

ISRAEL'S DEPENDENCY ON US

One of the unintended consequences of American Jewish lobbying on behalf of Israel was to foster economic and military dependency by Israel on the United States. Some Jewish critics of Israel urged a reduction in aid (made overt only by the Bush/Baker team) unless Israel abandoned Judea, Samaria and Gaza.

Prior to 1962	US aid to Israel consists mostly of small arms
1962	US sells HAWK anti-aircraft missiles to Israel
1965	US becomes Israel's main arms supplier

1946 through 1990 Total US military and economic assistance to Israel equals \$50 billion.

More than 80% of military assistance is spent in the United States. The Arabs states have received a similar amount of aid in addition to the support they received from the Soviet bloc. (source: *Near East Reports-Myths and Facts: A Concise Record of the Arab-Israel Conflict, 1992 Edition*).

Jewish Calls for Aid Cut-Back

Edward Tivnan argued that US aid to Israel "hurts" the Jewish State by keeping it from being forced to make concessions advocated by Likud opponents. He identifies \$28 billion in US economic and military aid to Israel between 1948 and 1984. Of this, he says, \$14.6 billion was in outright grants (including, presumably, funds associated with relocating Israel's military infrastructure from Sinai to the Negev as part of the peace agreement with Egypt). Tivnan also says that US friends of Israel provide the Jewish state with \$1.4 billion annually in non-US government aid.

To that end, Tivnan says that Begin's Israeli political enemies: "Sent their message to the Reagan Administration and American Jews via The New York Times.

After a visit to Israel. Times editorial page editor Max Frankel reported that Begin's opposition was 'reduced to begging America to break Mr. Begin's political power. And it now advocates means that would have been unthinkable even a few weeks ago. The startling plea of many leading Israelis is that the United States reduce its economic aid to their nation.'" (source; Edward Tivnan, *The Lobby: Jewish Political Power and American Foreign Policy*, (New York: Touchtone: 1988), p. 234-235.

APPENDIX (M)

The Problem of Jewish Public Opinion ¹

Having raised the issue earlier in the study, the purpose of this section is to amplify the problems associated with assessing trends and shifts in Jewish public opinion. I have argued that changing Jewish perceptions about the Arab-Israel conflict help explain why some leadership elements stopped lobbying on Israel's behalf-- on the Palestinian Arab issue-- and lobbied, instead, against the policies espoused by Likud Governments. Was there support for this approach at the grass roots level?

Manipulation of Polls

Thomas R. Dye reminds us that, "A survey can only measure opinions at the time it is taken." ² It is well beyond the ken of this study to delve too deeply into the nether world of polling or to evaluate which polls truly captured the universe of Jewish opinion. Public opinion surveys, especially when conducted by freelance pollsters on retainer with Likud critics, likely encountered serious survey research problems. When it comes to American Jewish public opinion, there were no elections to "confirm" the polling data.

Given what we now know about political suasion efforts directed against Likud policies, we should approach polls conducted, especially in the post 1977 era, with a healthy dose of skepticism. As noted earlier, "the wording or phrasing of public opinion questions can often determine the outcome of a poll. Indeed, 'loaded' or 'leading' questions are often asked by

¹ For a survey of general American attitudes from an Arabist perspective see, Richard H. Curtiss, *A Changing Image: American Perceptions of the Arab-Israeli Dispute*, (Washington, D.C.: American Educational Trust, 1982). For a shorter general survey from a Zionist perspective see, Eytan Gilboa, "The Palestinian Uprising: Has It Turned American Public Opinion?" ORBIS, (Winter 1989). For a synopsis of overall American opinion through the 1984 period see Steven J. Rosen and Yosef I. Abramowitz, *How Americans Feel About Israel*, (Washington, D.C.: AIPAC Papers on US-Israel Relations).

² Thomas R. Dye, *Power and Society: An Introduction to the Social Sciences*, Sixth Edition, (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing, 1993), p. 26.

unprofessional pollsters simply to produce results favorable to their side of an argument."³

People can only answer the questions they are asked. Eytan Gilboa points out:

...From the 1967 Six-Day War until 1977, survey questions dealt with the "occupied territories" in terms of whether these territories should be returned or retained by Israel...Since 1977, however, pollsters--probably following Carter's statement favoring a "national home" for the Palestinians and the return of the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt--have employed questions implying that the return of the territories is a moot point and that the only remaining issues are to whom they should be returned (Jordan or the PLO), for which purpose (autonomous Palestinian state or Jordanian entity), and under what circumstances.⁴

Given the motivations behind some polling, Gilboa found that, "when a particular score is incompatible with the essence of an article in a magazine or newspaper, it is simply omitted."⁵

Support for Retention of Gaza, Judea & Samaria

Writing in 1972, five years before Likud's victory, Ralph L. Savage found that "the official Israeli position that the West Bank of Jordan and most of the Sinai Peninsula may be returned to the Arabs for the sake of a peace settlement is in substantial disagreement with the sentiment expressed in American Jewish magazines. Indeed, these magazines view the retention of Sinai and the West Bank as necessary for Israel's ultimate security."⁶

³ Dye, op. cit., p. 26. Moreover, Dye points out, "Even the most scientific surveys are not error-free," for a variety of reasons.

⁴ Eytan Gilboa, *American Public Opinion toward Israel and the Arab-Israel Conflict*, (Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books, D.C. Heath and Company, 1987), p. 315

⁵ Gilboa, p. 316. He specifically cites *Newsweek* as a recent example.

⁶ Ralph Lee Savage, *Israeli And American Jewish Attitudes in 1971 on the Future of Israel's Conquered Territories: A Comparative Analysis*, Ph.D Dissertation, University of Southern Mississippi, 1972. Emphasis added. He raised these questions precisely because he was concerned US Jews would use their influence against a conciliatory policy.

Savage compared material in several American Jewish publications with the political line disseminated by the Israeli Government. He concluded that the American Jewish periodicals were *more hawkish*. A fundamental disagreement over the future of the Territories existed between American Jewish leaders and the Labor Government of Israel. Even after allowing for the possibility that conciliatory Israeli statements were insincere, Savage found that the American Jewish leadership was:

More overtly distrustful of the Arabs...than are official Israeli statements. They also seem to be more pessimistic as to the likelihood of peace, while the official Israeli position is that there is hope of eventually reaching an agreement. American Jews lean toward the attitude that Israel would be better off if it retained the Sinai Peninsula for security reasons, and to a lesser extent the retention of the West Bank is looked upon in favorable terms.⁷

Asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: "If the alternatives are permanent Israeli annexation of the West Bank or an independent Palestinian state, then an independent Palestinian State is preferable," Gilboa says: "On two different occasions, American Jews preferred Israeli annexation--in 1980, by a substantial ratio."⁸

Opposition to PLO Mission

What really mattered were Jewish perceptions of Arab intentions:

So long as the PLO adhered to the goals stated in its National Covenant and employed terrorism, American Jewry overwhelmingly supported the Israeli refusal to negotiate with PLO representatives. However, ...if the PLO had recognized Israel and renounced terrorism, a sizable majority of American Jews and Jewish leaders would have been ready to support PLO-Israeli talks.⁹

⁷ Savage, p. 196

⁸ Gilboa, p. 252

⁹ Gilboa, p. 252.

...When the issue of an independent Palestinian state was presented in a general context with a strong pro-Palestinian bias, ("The Palestinian people are now homeless and deserve their own independent state, just as the Jews deserved a homeland after World War II"), almost half of the respondents supported the idea. However, the addition of the PLO and information about Israel's security needs yielded a totally different outcome. The introduction of Arafat and the PLO created enormous opposition to a Palestinian state (86 to 6 percent).¹⁰

Once the American Jewish Committee and other elements of the internal opposition perceived the PLO as capable of transformation, they instituted a series of polls intended, apparently, to show that there was a blend of leadership and grass roots support for their stance. Invariably, Steven M. Cohen's polls did not raise the fate of the PLO Covenant and premised the questions on a non zero sum analysis of the conflict.

A survey entitled "Attitudes of American Jews toward Israel and Israelis" conducted in 1983 found 70 per cent of the public and 73 per cent of the leaders holding that "Israel should talk with the PLO if the PLO recognizes Israel and renounces terrorism." Fifty-one per cent of the leaders supported a "homeland on the West Bank and Gaza, so long as it does not threaten Israel."¹¹ The fickleness of public opinion can be shown in a 1989 poll (after Arafat's 'magic words') which asked: "Do you favor or oppose the creation of an independent Palestinian country in the Middle East?" Fifty-nine per cent of US Jews said they opposed such a state.¹²

¹⁰ Gilboa, p. 252

¹¹ See *Jerusalem Post*, September 16, 1983 and *New York Jewish Week*, September 23, 1983. Cohen was back in October 1993 with a n AJCommittee poll showing that 90% of US Jews supported the Rabin-Arafat accord and 57% supporting a PLO-led state in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, *Jerusalem Post International Edition*, October 9, 1993

¹² *New York Observer*, May 29, 1989

Impact of Disassociation

Vilification of Begin and Likud policies left an impact. By 1982 a substantial majority of American Jews felt "Begin's policies are hurting support for Israel in the United States."¹³ Yet, remarkably, 61 percent of American Jews supported Begin's policies. Gilboa explains:

Many American Jews thought that Begin damaged support for Israel in the United States, yet they have continued to back most of his policies--presumably, the same policies that were described as harmful to Israel in the United States. Earl Raab provided an explanation for this finding by arguing that American Jews were not primarily uneasy about the substance of Begin's policies or actions but were more concerned with the effects of the policies on the image of Israel in America...¹⁴

But neither Begin's election nor even Sadat's Jerusalem trip undercut basic pro-Israel attitudes among the Jewish population in the United States.¹⁵

The Liberal Faith

"Israeldoltry" may have temporarily displaced liberalism as the defining credo of Jewish identity. But by 1988 liberalism recovered with a vengeance. As Dennis Prager recently observed: "Few American Jews take Judaism seriously because they already have a deep and passionate commitment to another religion--liberalism."¹⁶ In this connection, a poll conducted by the *Los Angeles Times* is particularly trenchant. Large numbers of Jews equate liberalism with being Jewish. By 1988, fifty percent said that a "commitment to social equality" is fundamental to their Jewish identity; 17

¹³ Gilboa, p. 256

¹⁴ Gilboa, p. 257

¹⁵ Gilboa, p. 263

¹⁶ *Moment*, (February 1994)

per cent cited Israel and another 17 percent cited religion.¹⁷

In this context, what follows is not particularly surprising:

- US Jews overwhelmingly supported the US-led peace process
- 41% saw an "element of racism" in Israel's policies toward the Arabs
- Eight months *before* Arafat uttered the 'magic words'
 - 29% favored a a US-PLO dialogue (though this still contrasted sharply with the population at-large where 52% favored a dialogue)
- Sixty-seven percent favored accommodating Palestinian Arab aspirations

Despite the foregoing, 43% of US Jews opposed the "land for peace" formula while 31% supported it and the rest were not sure. Finally, asked to characterize how the media covered the "the Palestinian resistance," most Jews chose "distorted."¹⁸

Because of the perennial "chicken or egg" dilemma, there is a limit to what retroactive analysis of the polling data can possibly tell us about the connection between key milestone events described in this study and shifts in Jewish public opinion. In the final analysis, it seems to me, leadership elements opposed to Likud policies helped to shape Jewish grass roots opinion. This task was made infinitely easier by Jewish political culture (i.e. liberalism) and the overall political environment.

¹⁷ *Los Angeles Times*, April 2, 1988

¹⁸ *Los Angeles Times*, April 2, 1988. The emotions attached to these poll results are illustrated in "A Tale of Three Cities: How the Palestinian uprising has divided Jews," by Sheldon Teitelbaum, Richard Chaim Schneider and Ernesto Tenenbaum, *Present Tense*, (November/December 1988)

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