CONTENDING APPROACHES TO SECURITY IN ISRAEL: 1948-2000

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Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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ABSTRACT

CONTENDING APPROACHES TO ISRAELI SECURITY: 1948-2000

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This thesis provides an analysis of Israel's security conceptions, discourses and practices, in the context of the Arab–Israeli conflict in general and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict in particular, between 1948 and 2000. The purpose of the study is, to explore those processes through which particular definitions and practices of security have been produced and changed, against the background of the domestic debates and competing worldviews among key political actors; and to highlight the overall impact of these points in different periods on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and, thus, on Israel's overall security.

In this context, it is observed that the debates among the political actors, regarding the future borders and the identity of the state, have played a key role in the construction and reconstruction of Israeli security policy particularly vis-à-vis the Palestinian problem. Nevertheless, it is also observed that the extent of these differences has been limited to the objectives of the security policy, and that a zero-sum conception of security, and the primacy of military means to confront the perceived threats have prevailed as common characteristics of Israeli security understanding, informing Israel's related practices. Along these lines the thesis considers the Oslo peace process as an anomaly, and tries to assess it within the framework of the continuities and changes it has introduced to thinking and acting about security in Israel.

Keywords: Israeli Security, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, Arab-Israeli Conflict

ÖZ

İSRAİL'DE GÜVENLİĞE İLİŞKİN FARKLI YAKLAŞIMLAR: 1948-2000

BAŞER, Zeynep
Yüksek Lisans, Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü
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Bu tez 1948–2000 arası dönemde İsrail'in güvenlik kavramlarının, söylemlerinin ve pratiklerinin, Arap-İsrail çatışması genelinde ve İsrail-Filistin çatışması özelinde bir incelemesini sunmaktadır. Çalışmanın amacını, belli-başlı güvenlik tanımlamalarının ve pratiklerinin oluştuğu ve değiştiği süreçleri İsrail'deki iç tartışmalar ve siyasi aktörlerin farklı dünya görüşleri de göz önüne alarak incelemek; ve bu oluşumların farklı dönemlerde İsrail-Filistin çatışmasına ve dolayısıyla da İsrail'in güvenliğine olan etkilerini anlamak oluşturmaktadır.

Bu bağlamda, devletin gelecekteki sınırlarına ve kimliğine dair başlıca siyasi aktörler arasında gerçekleşen tartışmaların İsrail'in Filistin sorunuyla ilişkili güvenlik politikalarını oluşturmada --ve yeniden oluşturmada-- kilit bir rol oynadığı gözlemlenmiştir. Buna karşın, bu farklılıkların güvenlik politikasının amaçlarıyla sınırlı kaldığı ve 'sıfır-toplamlı' (zero-sum) güvenlik kavramıyla, algılanan tehditlere yönelik olarak askeri yöntemlere verilen önceliğin İsrail'de güvenlik anlayışını şekillendiren ortak özellikler oldukları gözlemlenmiştir. Buradan hareketle Oslo barış süreci tezde bir 'anomali' olarak ele alınmış, ve bu süreç İsrail'deki güvenlik düşüncesi ve pratiği üzerine getirmiş olduğu değişimler ve süreklilikler çerçevesinde değerlendirilmeye çalışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İsrail ve Güvenlik, İsrail–Filistin Çatışması, Arap–İsrail Çatışması.

To My Family

Annem Zeliha Tülin Başer, babam Mehmet Başer

ve kardeşim Keremcan Başer'e;

Hiç bitmeyen sevginiz, desteğiniz ve

hayatı her zaman çoğaltan yaşam enerjiniz için teşekkürler…

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims to provide an analysis of Israel's security conceptions, discourses and practices, in the context of the Arab–Israeli conflict in general and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict in particular. It sets out to explore those historical and political processes in Israel, through which particular definitions of security regarding the Palestinian conflict have been produced and changed, against the backdrop of competing worldviews, and domestic debates about how to achieve security for Israel in the long run. It further tries to highlight the overall impact of these conceptions and practices on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and on Israeli security. The historical context of the study is defined as the period between the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948 and the collapse of the Oslo peace process and the start of the Al-Aqsa Intifada in 2000.

The official historical representations of the Arab-Israeli conflict in Israel, which has been guided by the nationalist ideology of Zionism and concerns about nation building and social mobilization, has depicted the Arab-Israeli conflict as one that was started and continued by the Arab states, whose sole aim was Israel's destruction. Thus in the Zionist narrative, Israel has been historically portrayed as the ultimate victim of Arab hostility. It has been presented as a small, weak and insecure state that was surrounded by hostile enemies all the time struggling for its survival.[1] Such historical depiction of Israel and its Arab enemies have lent much power to realist conceptualizations of Israeli security and security practice. Approaches to Israeli security from a realist perspective have prioritized state security and survival above all else, have presented the Arab-Israeli conflict as a zero-sum one, and accordingly, have defined and legitimized military power as the single most rational,

[1] This conception of Israel as the victim is also consistent with the age old Jewish societal beliefs which, through experiences of persecution and discrimination and the Holocaust, have come to see Jewish society as alone in a hostile world of Gentiles and anti-Semitism (Bar-Tal & Teichman 2005: 120). This consistency proves significant, because it has enabled the Israeli-Jewish community, as well as the Jewish Diaspora, to accept this narrative without questioning, whilst simultaneously reinforcing these beliefs.

desirable and necessary means in addressing Israel's security problems that stemmed from the conflict with the Arab states and the Palestinians. It is in this context that the Israeli security policy has been portrayed as 'exceptional' and merely as a response to the regional systemic threats that stemmed from the outside, fighting only wars of "no choice". Furthermore, in line with the inside/outside dichotomy of realism, the domestic social and political processes, including the significant period of Israeli nation building, are divorced from the study of Israeli foreign policy and security behavior.

These realist (and ideological) depictions of Israeli security, despite the significant transformations in the nature of the conflict from 1970s onwards have maintained their hegemony in informing the political discourse, academic texts, the mass media, and popular beliefs, and thus remain as relevant today as they were in the past. Nevertheless, they have increasingly been challenged since the 1980s by the post-Zionist researchers: the "new historians" and the "critical sociologists".[2]

The new historians, in the light of new archival data available from 1978 onwards, refute the official Zionist version of Arab–Israeli conflict by pointing out to Israel's own roles and responsibilities in its construction and continuation. Accordingly, they counter the prevailing argument that Israeli security policy was a response to systemic threats, by revealing that it was shaped by the dominant domestic political actors and institutions which prioritized as their aims territory and military power over peace with Arabs, and which chose to realize these aims through hard power rather than diplomacy. They also draw attention to the absence of the Palestinians and their plight from the official narratives, and through including them and their sufferings in their reconstruction of the Israeli history, they further highlight the political, social, and humanitarian historical roots of the present conflict and their implications for Israeli security.

The critical sociologists, on the other hand, challenge the works by their Zionist predecessors both in substance and in theory. Guided by post-positivist thinking they seek to reveal the knowledge-power relationship inherent in prevailing representations of Israeli history and identity, and thus conceptions of security. One of the most significant contributions of the critical sociologists to the academic

[2] Some of the most prominent members of this school include Avi Shlaim, Mark Tessler Benny Morris, Tom Segev, Yoav Peled, Yoram Peri, Gershon Shafir, Ilan Pappe, Yagil Levy, Uri Ram, Uri Ben-Eliezer, Baruch Kimmerling, Joel Migdal, Ian Lustick, Ilan Peleg and Motti Golani.

debate is their introduction of the concept of militarism as a major characteristic of the Israeli-Jewish society. One aspect of militarism discussed by these scholars is its cultural form, which is also related to its influence over Israeli foreign policy/military conduct. Their analyses shows how the military mind-set and the siege mentality was reproduced by the political actors, state institutions, and official representations of the Arab-Israeli conflict among the Israeli–Jewish society from the early days of the state onwards, and how these worked to establish military force as the only available, legitimate and desirable means to promote security for Israel vis-à-vis the Arab states, rendering alternative means irrelevant and illegitimate. The second aspect of militarism examined by the critical sociologists is related to the state–society relations, and forms of domination. In this respect, their analyses reveal the instrumental and manipulative use of security considerations, in order to legitimize expansionist agendas, mobilize required societal resources, and manage social cleavages. In both respects, the introduction of the notion of militarism also highlights the formative impact of the conflict and the security conceptions on the constitution of the Israeli-Jewish identity vis-à-vis the Arab/Palestinian 'other', and the intransigence associated with the conflict.

These works by the post-Zionist scholars have stimulated a lively debate among the academia. Although, this debate still remains mostly an elitist exercise, nevertheless it has important implications for the Israeli-Jewish society. In this context, these historical and sociological analyses of the post-Zionist scholars are important for they provide invaluable sources for reconsidering Israeli security with a deeper understanding of the social, political and historical roots of the current security problems. Although these works have yet to be integrated into a comprehensive body of Israeli security analysis, still their findings reveal, in several ways, the inadequacy of realist approaches to understanding Israeli security.

First, they illustrate, in the Israeli context, that, definitions of security and security interests are not objective as realists claim, but are ultimately political; that they are products/constructions of particular historical social and political processes as well as of different understandings and worldviews about how security should be defined and practiced. Second, they reveal the importance of the domestic processes in Israel in bringing about particular conceptions and practices of security. Third, by involving the Palestinians and their plight in their reconstruction of Israeli history, the post-Zionist works reveal the structural reasons and the historical roots that underlie

the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and thus Israel's related security problems. In short, the works by the post-Zionist scholars provide the framework with which to develop alternative readings of Israeli interests, identity and, thus, security, and might help develop alternative solutions to the conflict.

Guided by the works by the post-Zionist scholars in its assessment of Israeli security, this study adopts a definition of security (and threats), as a notion historically constructed and reconstructed in reflection of different worldviews, interests and identities, and thus as an outcome of not only international, but also domestic processes. Accordingly, the thesis attempts to analyze the construction and change of particular military understandings of security in Israel in particular historical contexts. It tries to reflect on the domestic debates and different worldviews among the Israeli political actors between 1948 and 2000, regarding what Israeli security should mean, and how it must be attained, and furthermore, tries to understand the overall impact of these on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and on reproduction of new security challenges for Israel.

Along these lines, the body of this thesis is organized into three chapters. Chapter 2 looks at the period between the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948 and the Suez War of 1956. This period of Israeli state formation and nation building proves important, since it has been in this period, and in the context of the newly emerging conflict with the Arab states, that the basic pillars of the security conceptions and strategy have been formed, and have informed Israeli security practice in the following years, towards both the Arab states and, later, the Palestinians. In this context, after providing an overview of the major components of the early Israeli national security doctrine, the chapter seeks to understand the construction of Israeli security policies and practices in the context of the early relations with the Arab states. Accordingly, first it traces the reasons for lack of lack of formal peace between Israel and the Arab states during the early years of Israel's establishment, and questions the widely promoted official Israeli position which presents Arab intransigence and hostility as the single cause of this absence. Second, the chapter explores the construction and the development of security policy and practice in Israel vis-à-vis the Arab states, both in the face of new security challenges posed by Palestinian infiltrations, and against the backdrop of the struggle among the Zionist state elites —between the hard–power oriented activist camp, and the diplomacy oriented moderate camp— in determining the Israeli grand strategy and security. It

shows that, throughout the decade, activist camp have held the upper hand in orienting Israeli security practice in solely military terms, and tries to reflect on the implications of this narrow military orientation for the future of the Arab–Israeli conflict, and consequently, for the reproduction of new security challenges for Israel.

Chapter 3 focuses on the two decades that follow the 1967 war and the occupation of the Palestinian territories. Israel's victory in the 1967 war marks a major turning point in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The war proved Israel's military strength vis-à-vis the Arab states, and established it as the militarily most powerful state in the region. Furthermore, the occupation of Jerusalem and the Palestinian territories had a major impact in changing the perceptions and objectives of the Israelis regarding Israel's future borders. Accordingly, and with the subsequent re–emergence of the Palestinian national movement and the Greater Israel ideology, it also resulted in shifting the focus of the conflict from an inter–state one between Israel and the Arab states, to an inter–communal one between the Israeli Jews and the Palestinians. Along these lines, the chapter seeks to explore the transformative effects of the war and the occupation on Israel's security perceptions, conceptualizations and practices, against the backdrop of increasing Arab moderation, and the gradual transformation of the conflict. Accordingly it also analyzes the role of competing ideologies and discourses (of successive Labor and Likud governments) regarding Israel's future borders and identity in the construction and change of security discourse and practice regarding the Palestinians and the Palestinian territories, and tries to assess the impact of those on the overall conflict and on the reproduction of new and unconventional security threats for Israel.

Chapter 4 focuses solely on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and examines the period between the two Palestinian Intifadas of 1987 and 2000. The late 1980s and the early 1990s witnessed drastic developments that had major implications for the Israeli-Palestinians conflict. The national Palestinian uprising (Intifada) of 1987 was followed by a change in the international and regional status quo brought by the end of the Cold War and the 1991 Gulf War. All of these developments significantly affected Israel's security assessments, and for the first time since the 1967 War, stimulated a reorientation in Israel of the security policies regarding the territories. The historic Oslo Accords signed in 1993 between Israel and the PLO was a product of this reorientation. The Accords were yet another major turning point in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, for, after decades of mutual denial and

delegitimation, the two sides finally recognized the existence and the legitimacy of the other, and agreed, in principle, on giving up violence to resolve the conflict in favor of political means and dialogue. Along these lines, this chapter seeks to explore the shifts in the Israeli security policy regarding the Palestinian question between 1987 and 2000, in the context of the transforming nature of the Israeli–Palestinian relations, and with a focus on the continuities and changes of security conceptualizations and practices by consecutive Israeli policy makers with different worldviews. To this end, after reflecting on the root causes and consequences of the first Palestinian Intifada and the international and regional developments that left its mark on the early 1990s, the chapter proceeds with an examination of the period of the Oslo peace process, and its implications for reconceptualizing Israeli security. Here, it explores those factors and processes that have enabled the peace process, as well as those that rendered it fragile and led to its breakdown in 2000, and tries to assess the peace process in terms of its implications for Israeli security.

CHAPTER 2

A STATE IN THE MAKING:
ISRAELI SECURITY BETWEEN 1948 AND 1956

In 1949, the newly established state of Israel emerged victorious from its war with the Arab states. The end of the war was followed by the signing of the armistice agreements with Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria in the first half of 1949, and accordingly witnessed the emergence of a new status quo in the region. The two most important aspects of this newly established status quo were territorial and demographic. On the one hand, the Jewish state had expanded its borders well beyond those laid off by the UN partition resolution 181 of 1947 to also include large territories in Negev. On the other hand, due to the exodus of approximately 700,000 Palestinian refugees during the war, and as a result of the Israeli rejection, after the war, to allow them back in, the Jewish state had been able to maintain a clear Jewish majority within the armistice lines. Thus, during the early years of its establishment, preservation and improvement of the territorial and demographic status quo, against the backdrop of Arab attempts to alter it and in the lack of formal international recognition, became the main goal of foreign policy-making for the founding fathers of the state, while the issues of borders and refugees became major issues of contestation between Israel and the Arab states.

This chapter seeks to explore the construction of the Israeli security discourses, policies, and practices in the context of the conflict with the Arab states particularly in the period between the establishment of the state in 1948 and the 1956 Suez War ––the years of the Israeli state and nation building. To this end after providing a brief overview of the Israeli national security doctrine constructed in these early years, the chapter will focus on two major themes. First is the widely promoted and held, yet recently contested view among the Israeli and the world public opinion that lack of formal peace with Arab states during the first years of Israel's establishment was a direct result of Arab intransigence and hostility. Second is the struggle between the perspectives of the activist (headed by Ben-Gurion) and moderate camps (headed by Moshe Sharett) in determining the Israeli grand strategy and security in the context of

the Arab-Israeli conflict, and particularly with regards to Israeli retaliation policy between 1949 and 1956. Accordingly, the aim in this chapter will be to explore the competition of alternative and conflicting notions of promoting Israel's long-term security and survival during the early years, and the constitutive impact of the hard-power-oriented notions that arose dominant in this competition, on the conflict and the Arab-Israeli relations at the time and for the future.

2.1. Conceptualization of Security and Construction of the Israeli National Security Doctrine

The end of the 1948 war and the conclusion of the armistice agreements with Arab states presented the Zionist leadership with the immediate task of constructing a comprehensive national security doctrine that would address both the existential and the current military challenges to Israel's security and survival (Lissak 1995: 575). In the context of the conflict with the Arab states, the Israeli leadership believed that the Jewish state suffered from three main weaknesses. These were lack of geographical strategic depth, shortage of manpower against the demographic advantage posed by the Arab states, and the need for the extensive mobilization of societal resources to meet the state's needs for survival against its adversaries (Lissak 1995: 579). Consequently, the Israeli national security doctrine constructed from 1949 onwards was shaped to meet to the state's dual commitments to its both foreign and domestic security challenges.

The basic pillars of the security strategy against foreign threats were formed mainly by the activist wing within the Zionist leadership headed by David Ben-Gurion, and, arguably, to this day have proved to be enduring. The leadership —as was the case with all the nation states at the time— defined security from a realist, statist perspective; that is strictly in military terms of national security and in terms of survival. In this vein, the threat of a full-scale combined attack by the regular armies of the Arab states, which might imperil Israel's very existence, became the defining feature of Israeli security policy and strategy which was shaped around the policy of the iron wall.

Initially developed by Zeev Jabotinsky during the 1920s, this policy of *realpolitik* called for the construction and defense, at all costs, of an impenetrable iron wall against the Arabs, with the aim of persuading them into acceptance of the Israeli

state. It was an existential strategy, designed for a relatively weak Israel (in terms of geo-strategic depth, man power and weaponry) in the face of relatively stronger Arabs. Advocates of this policy believed that the Arabs, whose sole aim was Israel's destruction, understood only the language of force, and not that of diplomacy or goodwill. In such an environment losing even one war against them would mean the total destruction of the state. In order to deter the Arab states for good, and to ensure its own survival, Israel had to build an iron wall of Jewish military strength. This meant that, it had repeatedly to demonstrate its military superiority through rendering Arabs humiliating and costly defeats in all wars, as a result of which they would finally give up on their ideals of destroying Israel and finally recognize its existence. Only then, after Israeli existence was accepted and recognized, and after moderate elements among the Arabs became dominant over the radicals, mutual negotiations with Arabs could take place and the process of normalization could begin. But that would be a very long and painful process, which could never arrive and until then, Israel had to rely solely on its military power (Shlaim 2001: 19, 87; Lustick 1996: 208-213). In this sense the Arab-Israeli and later the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts were defined in negative and extreme terms as a zero-sum game, and thus armament, military means of war and punishment were given decisive priority over diplomatic means of negotiation and compromise.

In accordance with the policy of iron wall, Israel's national security doctrine defined two major strategies to deal with its existential and current security problems: deterrent strategy, and defensive-offensive strategy, also known as 'aggressive defense'. The former mainly evolved around idea of deterrence by punishment. It involved exceedingly disproportional responses, sometimes even to the extent of collective-punishment, by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) against hostile acts along the borders, and minor incursions into Israeli territory by Palestinian Arab civilians and irregular forces. In the later years this strategy became the major means of action by Israel against terrorism, and has been maintained to this day (Inbar 1996: 42-45). Its purpose has been to illustrate Israeli military power and to deter Israel's adversaries by communicating them the message of "if you harm us we will harm you even more and in extreme terms". Arguably, this approach has come to characterize what might be referred to as "confronting the symptoms rather than the causes" of terrorism and other violent acts. Israel seems to have been less interested in exploring and addressing the (social, political and economic) root causes of

Palestinian and Arab resort to violence, than crushing it through its advanced military capabilities.

The second major strategy of national security doctrine has been the 'aggressive defense' strategy, which had been formed during the 1948 War. Here, as its name implies, the strategy dictated that if circumstances require, Israel will go on to the offensive, for purposes of defense. There have been two proponents of the offensive-defensive strategy: preventive war and preemptive war. The former is based on the assumption by the state's policy makers that the state's adversaries are planning and preparing for an offensive against it in the near future. The aim of preventive war, therefore, is to prevent this threat, which is not necessarily immediate, by attacking first and by restoring the balance of power in favor of the state through destruction of the adversaries' military capabilities (Kober 1996: 199-200). Preemptive war, on the other hand, is launched in response to an immediate threat of attack by the enemy. "It is an operational initiative", in the words of Yigal Allon, "against concentrations of enemy forces and the capture of vital strategic targets on enemy territories at a time that such enemy is preparing to attack you, before he has succeeded in actually launching such an attack" (cited in, Kober 1996: 200). In this vein, the 1956 Suez war is defined as a preventive war, whereas the 1967 war is defined as a preemptive war. Accordingly both wars have been discussed in the context of Israel's offensive–defensive strategy, and thus have been portrayed as defensive wars, although in both Israel were the initiator.

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The security project of the state, however, was not confined to the foreign dimension. As stated earlier, from the very beginning the Zionist leaders realized that the ability of the new state to efficiently apply its national security doctrine was dependent on its methods and capacity to extensively mobilize its domestic societal resources (Lissak 1995: 579). This required establishing and legitimizing the authority of the new state and mobilizing the people on its behalf, while making the necessary changes in the prevalent social and political structures; the latter so as to gradually abolish all particularistic identities and ensure the supremacy of the state as the central foci of loyalty and authority within the new political community. Along these lines, the state formation and nation-building processes that took place in the initial years also reflected leadership's concerns with regards to the security and

survival of the state, and thus, the wholesale political construction of the society, to a great extent, embedded with what Lissak (1995) referred to as the 'civilian components of the national security doctrine'.

By 1949, Ben-Gurion had identified the major civilian components of security. These included rapid immigration and absorption of Jews from the Diaspora; settlement and population dispersal across the country, in the captured territories, and maintenance of a democratic regime and culture, while spreading the values of patriotism, volunteerism and commitment to the collectivity among the Israelis (Lissak 1995: 580-581). These civilian components were designed to reinforce the military ones in addressing, respectively, the security challenges associated with negative demographic balance/shortage of manpower; lack of strategic depth and preservation of a high level of mobilization among the society. Consequently, the construction of a unified Israeli-Jewish political community, and institutionalization of a system where the relationship of this community with the military sectors would be efficiently adapted to the conditions of prolonged conflict became two of the immediate aims of the statist policy making (Lissak 1995: 579).

Throughout this process the Israeli military assumed the role of the key agent. It maintained close links with the community-in-the-making via both universal conscription and its involvement in education, information dissemination and settlement activities, and obtained a preferred status among the other state institutions. Seen in this light, the military played a pivotal role in the very construction of the Israeli-Jewish community into a nation-in-arms. As argued by the Israeli critical sociologists Baruch Kimmerling (1993), Yagil Levy (1993) and Uri Ben-Eliezer (1998), in the process of state and nation building in Israel, through which the status of the state and the military as the defender of individual and community existence were strengthened, military gradually but rapidly attained the status of a central cultural symbol.

Meanwhile, through the existential security argument, war and constant preparation for war with the Arab states came to be taken for granted as a natural, 'normal' and reasonable phenomenon among the society at the cognitive level. In other words, as the relation between civilian and military sectors blurred, the conflict and the military mind set diffused into the society and its civil institutions, becoming a part of the every-day culture, and, in the words of Ben-Eliezer "the idea of

implementing a military solution to Israel's national problems was not only enshrined as a value in its own right but was also considered legitimate, desirable, and indeed the best option" (Ben-Eliezer 1998: x). Accordingly, both military and war became the major sources of the collective experience and identity of the society, defining the collective goals of the community. In this vein, these processes helped the establishment and reification among the community of what Kimmerling identifies to be a 'cultural militarism' where military concerns defined in terms of 'national security' were prioritized over other non-military considerations, such as those of politics, economy or ideology (Kimmerling 1993: 127-129).

2.2. The Post-1948 Status Quo and the Lack of Formal Peace Agreements

The armistice agreements between Israel and the individual Arab states were signed in the first half of 1949, and were expected to serve as the first step for on the way to formal peace, yet the conflict between the two sides persisted in their aftermath. At the core of the conflict with the Arab states, during the post-war period, were the issues of borders and refugees, both being results of different interpretations by each side of the 1949 armistice agreements. The Jewish state's interpretation of the agreements was that they provided Israel with right to an absolute cease-fire, international borders and full sovereignty within the armistice lines, the latter meaning that the state preserved the right to settle Jews in all corners of the country––without any commitment to the rights of its previous Palestinian owners who were now refugees in neighboring Arab states. Accordingly, claiming that the Arab states alone were responsible for the Palestinian refugee problem—they had initiated the war in the first place—Israel refused to accept the UN resolutions which accorded the refugees with right of return, or alternately the right to compensation.

The Arab states, on the other hand, did not consider the armistice agreements as the final end of the war, nor did they consider the armistice lines as the final international borders. This meant that from the point of view of the Arab states, despite its claims Israel was restricted in its right to develop the demilitarized zones and to exploit water resources. Moreover, the Arabs advocated that the armistice lines did not abolish the rights of displaced Palestinians to their lands, and hence Israel's use of those lands were illegitimate. Finally, on the issue of refugees, the Arab view was that the responsibility belonged fully to Israel, and the matter should be solved along the lines drawn by UN resolutions, in recognition of the basic rights

of the refugees. It should also be noted that although the Arab leaders enjoyed relative freedom of action in terms of determining their policies with regards to the border matters with Israel, with respect to the refugee problem they were restrained both by the Pan-Arab position and the Arab public opinion which was very sensitive to the issue at the time. Consequently, the issues of borders and refugees seriously hindered the conclusion of final peace agreements between Israel and the Arab states in the early years (Shlaim 2001: 49, 56-57).

Before moving into an assessment of the reasons that lie behind the lack of formal peace between Israel and the Arab states in the early years, it should be noted that this issue constitutes one of the most contentious debates in the recent Israeli history scholarship. As also addressed earlier, the official Zionist historiography, which dominated the academic field up until the early 1980s—as well as the perceptions and expectations of both the domestic and the international community—attributes the responsibility for the absence of a permanent Arab-Israeli political settlement to Arab intransigence and adamant Arab refusal to recognize Israel's existence. The new history scholarship, however, demonstrates that, contrary to the widely held beliefs sustained by the official history, the Arab states have relatively been more open and flexible in seeking the possibilities of fair compromise settlements following the war, whereas it has been Israeli inflexibility that has more or less negated the prospects for peace (Shlaim 2001; Morris 1997, 2001; Pappe 2004).

The new historians reveal that, despite the acute differences of opinion with Israel with regards to the key issues, individual Arab states/leaders recognized the strength of the new Jewish state and had their own practical reasons to make peace with it, in the immediate aftermath of the war. In this context they were open to negotiations and compromise settlements with Israel on both issues, and indeed there had been a number of noteworthy opportunities for the achievement of peace between Israel and the Arab states during the period of 1948–1952. Furthermore, these opportunities arose at a suitable point in history of the conflict when the Arab-Israel relations were yet to attain a dramatically intractable nature. As Benny Morris explains,

> The conflict had not yet hardened into the patterns of border clash and retaliatory strike, terrorism and war, charge and counter-charge that came to characterize the following years and decades. On both sides

> there was, among at least some of the leaders, a will to make peace and (and admittedly more limited) readiness and ability to make the necessary concessions to achieve it. A will and efforts to achieve peace featured in Israeli–Jordanian, Israeli–Syrian and Israeli–Egyptian relations during these years (Morris 1997: 13).

So, why did all the peace initiatives that took place in these very early years fail? Why did the formalization of a peace understanding between the two sides prove to be so unachievable? As far as the Arab side is concerned, the findings by the recent historiography seem to suggest that the failure was a function of the weakness of the Arab leaders against the Arab public opinion and the pan-Arab position. Although very much willing, the Arab leaders were incapable of concluding separate peace treaties with Israel in the absence of at least some Israeli concessions that they could defend and render legitimate in front of their publics and the regional Arab states (Shlaim 2001: 50, 67).

As for the Israel side, the failure was mostly a function of the rigid Israeli position that would not agree to any concessions from the status quo, or only to minor territorial concessions, provided that they were reciprocal. For Ben-Gurion, whose views dominated the high politics and defense matters of the country, achieving peace with Arab states at this stage of the conflict was not an urgent matter (Morris 1997: 17, Shlaim 2001: 49-53). Indeed, as early as 1936 he had made it clear that he saw peace with Arabs only as a means, and not as an end in itself:

> Peace indeed is a vital matter for us. It is impossible to build a country in a permanent state of war, but peace for us is a means. The end is the complete and full realization of Zionism. Only for that do we need an agreement (cited in, Shlaim 2001: 18)

Following the conclusion of the armistice agreements, once again he made it clear that although desirable, formal peace with Arab states was not among Israel's top priorities;

> [The Arabs and the Arab problem can wait.] I am prepared to get up in the middle of the night in order to sign a peace agreement—but I am not in a hurry and I can wait ten years. We are under no pressure whatsoever (Ben-Gurion 1949, cited in, Morris 1997: 15).

Ben-Gurion's main concerns in this period immediately following the war were state and nation-building, immigration, economic development, improving relations with the Diaspora, and consolidation of the state's newly won independence (Shlaim 2001: 51; Morris 1997: 15; Bialer 2002: 9). He was aware that formal peace with

Arabs was not possible without some concessions regarding territories and the refugee problem, concessions which in his view, would endanger the very survival and the Jewish character of the state. Moreover, he was concerned that Israeli eagerness for peace and concessions could be considered as a sign of weakness by the Arabs. He believed that on all matters time was on Israel's side and, both the international actors and the Arab states, as well as the people, would sooner or later get used to the new regional status quo. With the passage of time as it built up deterrent military strength, Israel's bargaining position would improve and only then would it be able to make peace with the Arab states, from a position of strength and by imposing its own conditions. In short, Ben-Gurion was willing to achieve peace, but only in his own terms, and believed that, for the time being, the armistice lines provided Israel with what it needed the most: external recognition, security and stability (Shlaim 2001: 51-53, Shalom 2002: 91-92, Morris 1997: 15). His view was shared among the broader Zionist leadership, including the moderate foreign minister Moshe Sharett (Shalom 2002: 85).

Ben-Gurion's pessimism with regards to the possibility of a formal peace with the Arab states also stemmed from his views about the deep-rooted character of the conflict between the two sides, a legacy of the war and the pre-state struggles. He saw the conflict as a zero-sum game between the Arabs and the Jews, and this characterized his position with regards to the concessions wanted of Israel. He further believed that the gap between Arabs and Israelis were unbridgeable, thus prospects for peace were almost non-existent (Shalom 2002: 31). This was also evident in the speech he gave in his cabinet following the assassination of King Abdullah: "Today designers of Arab policy are willing to make peace with us [only] if we transfer to Madagascar or elsewhere and forfeit the land. This is the inescapable problem" (cited in, Bialer 2002: 8).

The low opinion he held about the Arabs, made him suspicious of their 'original' intents of their initiatives for peace, yet he was not even willing to test their sincerity via exploring the opportunities further (Morris 1997: 20). Finally, he thought that Arab regimes were unstable and thus maintained doubts about the persistence of peace treaties even if they were signed. In one statement he said:

> Even after the final peace agreement we will still need the army. As long as the danger of a world war had not passed and nation lifts up sword against nation we will have to guarantee the state's security by

> military means… we strive for perpetual peace, but there is great concern that even in the best of circumstances it will only be an armed peace. As long as nations embark on war, Israel will be in danger of a renewed attack and invasion by Arab countries, thus perpetual state of alert is demanded of us (cited in, Shalom 2002: 88).

In these circumstances the only realistic option available to Israel, in Ben-Gurion's view, was to build up its military power as both to deter the Arab states from launching a Second Round of attacks and to cope with challenges to its every day security. Finally it should also be noted that the Israeli awareness of the UN's impotency at the time and the unwillingness of the US to get deeply involved in the matters of the Middle East also contributed to its stance (Pappe 1992: 273).

What has been stated so far is not to suggest that Ben-Gurion was totally indifferent to peace with Arabs, nor to suggest that the Arab states were peace seekers while Israel was the antagonist. Without doubt, the emergence of Israel was met with a significant degree of hostility by the Arab states. By the decision of the Arab League the Arab states imposed an economic boycott on Israel, closed the Suez Canal and the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, they initiated an intense propaganda campaign against the Jewish state both at home and abroad, and in their public discourses they threatened Israel with a Second Round of fighting where they would avenge their defeat in the 1948 war. Despite this hostile attitude however, the individual Arab leaders, although constrained by the pan-Arab position and Arab public opinion, and despite acute differences with Israel on certain policy options, were nevertheless willing and open to negotiations with Israel for peace. As Shlaim puts it:

> After the sobering experience of military defeat at the hands of the infant Jewish state, [the Arab states] were prepared to recognize Israel, to negotiate directly with it, even to make peace with it. Each of these rulers had his territorial price for making peace with Israel, but none of them refused to talk (Shlaim 2001: 50).

Moreover, as we will see shortly, between 1949 and 1955, despite growing problems, the Arab states mostly refrained from hostilities along the borders, in order not to provoke Israeli offensive, which they feared would threaten their own territorial integrity.

Israel on the other hand, although desired peace, desired it in its own terms only and thus, displayed a significant level of inflexibility in the negotiations with the

individual Arab states. In other words, it *chose* to postpone the settlement of the conflict to a more favorable time in the future. In this context, the official Zionist argument which –for purposes of legitimacy and propaganda– portrayed the Arabs as adamant rejectionists of peace in the face of repeated peace attempts by Israeli leaders was an intentional erroneous portrayal of reality. This is all the more so when we take into consideration how, from 1953 onwards, Israel led a policy of escalation along the borders, in order to provoke a premature war with the Arab states as a remedy to its basic security problems. This last issue is going to be dealt with in the coming pages.

The argument here is that, representations of Arabs as the 'intransigent others' were mainly used by Israeli policy makers as instruments of propaganda and as a component of the nation-building process. Their function was both to legitimize and hide Israeli governments' responsibility with regards to the absence of peaceful settlement with Arabs, and to prepare the political community, and ensure its effective mobilization for what Ben-Gurion referred to as the "perpetual state of alert". The image of "intransigent, rejectionist Arab" hid the choices that were available to the policy-makers at the time from the gaze of the public, presented decisions which were fruits of a hard-line, militarism oriented, pessimist world view as the only choices available (as common sense) and accordingly, along with other factors, had a considerate impact in molding the perceptions and expectations of the Israeli-Jewish political community with regards to their state's and their own security in the years to come.

Meanwhile, lack of progress in the peace talks, and especially failures to bring about a solution to the plight of the displaced Palestinian refugees through diplomacy, lead to the deterioration of the situation at the borders from 1949 onwards, especially with the emergence of Palestinian infiltration activity.

2.3. Israeli Security Policies and the Conflict with the Arab States

2.3.1. Israel Follows an Activist Security Policy: Border Disputes and Policy of Retaliations

A significant security challenge that threatened both the state and the community in Israel between 1949 and 1956 were the Palestinian infiltrations into Israel. In fact, the infiltration activity was a direct result of the Palestinian refugee problem created

by the 1948 War and of the absence of a solution to this problem in the post-war period. By the end of the war approximately 700,000 Palestinians had left their lands —the majority were driven out by the Israeli forces for demographic concerns,[3]— had lost all their property and way of life, and had to take refuge in the refugee camps in the neighboring Arab states, under very difficult and despairing social, economic and political conditions (Pappe 2004: 148). Israel's strict insistence on not recognizing its own role in the plight of the Palestinian refugees, and its consequent refusal of dealing with the refugee problem through diplomacy and in accordance with UN resolutions which accorded the refugees with the right of return or alternately with compensation, exacerbated their situation.

Thus starting with 1949, increasing infiltration activity by thousands of displaced Palestinian refugees into Israel, where they "made nightly attempts to return to their fields and regain a hold of them either permanently or through a brief, purloined visit" became the major security challenge to the young Jewish state (Bar-On 2000: 114). As evidenced by Benny Morris (1997), the bulk of these infiltrations —90 percent or more— were motivated by economic and social concerns, although there also were those cases where the infiltrators were motivated by 'political' reasons, or were organized by Arab political organizations and took part in acts of terror. The unnatural, barely inhabited, and thinly patrolled borders of the new state, especially along Egyptian and Jordanian borders, made infiltrations all the more easy. In time, and also as a result of IDF's free-fire policy, the nature of 'civil' infiltrations also achieved to some extent an armed and systematic nature (Morris 1997: 28-68).

The infiltrations were met with apprehension by the Israeli leadership. In Morris's words, "[i]n a sense, the country's territorial integrity, as defined in the armistice agreements, was at stake, as was Israel's image as a firm, no-nonsense political entity, an important component of its deterrent posture" (Morris 1997: 427). Moreover, the infiltration constituted a direct threat to the immigration–settlement project of the state—also referred to at the time as 'the conquest of the wasteland'— the purpose of which was to consolidate Israeli hold and control of the captured

[3] Ever until today, official Israeli position has denied Israel's role and responsibility in creating the Palestinian refugee problem, in order to avoid compromises (Palestinian right of return, or compensation), instead attributing the blame on the Arab states. However the Israeli new historians' work refutes the Israeli position. Although there are disagreements among these historians as to whether the refugee problem was a consequence of war (see Benny Morris 2001), or was an intentional act operated with a clear Israeli agenda (see Norman G. Finkelstein 2003), the new historians all agree on the Israeli responsibility in the creation of the refugee problem.

territories by creating irreversible facts on the ground (Bar-On 2000: 113-114). Infiltration both physically and psychologically hit the residents of the border settlements, who had to constantly live with a sense of insecurity due to acts of theft, murder and sabotage by the previous owners of the land. Some of the settlers fled to center of the country, while new immigrants were discouraged from settling in the border areas (Morris 1997: 110-117). In sum, the infiltrations posed a strategic, economic and demographic threat to Israel, and challenged both its day-to-day security and territorial integrity. They had to be prevented.

From the beginning Israel approached the problem as one of military security that could only be solved through deterrence by military means, and ignored the root causes that underlay infiltration, as well as non-military means (such as paying compensation, and/or granting right of return to a specific number of refugees) through which it could be addressed. Accordingly, between 1949 and 1956 Israel developed a series of defensive measures to fight infiltrations, such as establishing new settlements along the borders, patrolling the borders, setting up ambushes and mines and organizing civilian guards to protect the settlements. A free-fire policy towards infiltrators was adopted, which was gradually abused by the security forces and ended up killing a significant number of unarmed Arab civilians at the borders.[4] Nevertheless, the most significant measure that was adopted by Israel against infiltrations in this period was the policy of military retaliations. Unlike the defensive measures, retaliation was of a deterrent and offensive nature, and was directed at those states that were seen as the sources of infiltrations, especially Egypt and Jordan. Accordingly from its introduction onwards, the retaliation policy had a considerable effect on shaping the Arab-Israeli relations and mutual perceptions of the two sides—both at governmental and public level—with regards to nature of the conflict.

Between 1951 and 1953, the retaliations were carried out in the context of day-to-day security, meaning their aim was limited to preventing infiltration from West Bank and Gaza Strip. Their targets were mainly Arab civilians, including women and children, living across the borders and Arab villages; in other words, most of the time those who had no direct connection with the infiltrations but were suspected of aiding the infiltrators. The aim of these retaliations was to discourage the Arab border

[4] Morris notes the brutalizing effects of this policy on the IDF where soldiers also carried out some barbaric acts against the infiltrating Arabs/Palestinians. He reports that these acts awakened serious antagonism among the residents of the West Bank and Gaza (Morris 1997: 432).

villages in assisting the infiltrators, and to force the Arab governments—which were blamed by Israel to be directly supporting infiltration activity to weaken Israel—in taking direct and effective measures against infiltrations. In other words within this period the retaliations were constructed as a collective punishment against the Arabs and both in terms of the scale and losses rendered to the other side and in terms of their intensity, they by far exceeded those acts that had provoked them in the first place (Shlaim 2001: 83; Morris 1997: 436).

Despite their intensity, the retaliations within this period failed to achieve their objectives, and the number of infiltrations increased. Moreover they resulted in intensified Arab hatred towards Israel, and the civilian casualties they caused were met with harsh criticism from the Western powers and the UN. Indeed in this period Israel refrained from taking full responsibility of the retaliations and in order to hold off Western criticism, blamed the actions on angry settlers (Shlaim 2001: 83).

Following the Qibya massacre in early 1953, Israeli retaliation policy underwent a significant change due to both its inefficiency and its destructive impact on Israel's international image.[5] Thereafter, the targets of the IDF reprisals were shifted from civilians to Arab military targets. The architect of this policy change was Moshe Dayan, an ardent activist and the IDF Chief of Staff between 1953 and 1958. The retaliations from 1953 onwards, until the 1956 Sinai War had multiple objectives. First, in similar lines to the previous policy, they were meant to exert pressure on the Arab states to curb infiltrations, in the context of day-to-day security. Second, the retaliations were also designed to enhance Israeli basic security vis-à-vis the Arab states. Their objective was to demonstrate Israeli military superiority against the Arabs, discourage and demoralize their armies via inflicting upon them humiliating defeats, and thus to prevent the outbreak of an *Arab-initiated* Second Round. Third, and somewhat paradoxically as Morris also notes, from mid-1954 onwards proponents of the activist line, and Dayan himself in particular, invoked severe retaliations with the aim of provoking a premature war with the Arab states (Morris 1997: 185-191).

[5] The Qibya massacre, which took place in January 1953 was ordered by Pinhas Lavon, the defense minister at the time, and was a retaliation against the murder of an Israeli mother and her two children by the infiltrators. The operation was commanded by Ariel Sharon and resulted in brutal murder of sixty-nine civilians in the village of Qibya, two-thirds of them being women and children, by blowing up their houses while they were kept inside by heavy fire (Shlaim 2001: 91).

Apart from these major aims, the retaliation policy also served as an instrument of certain domestic ends and concerns in Israel, such as, boosting the morale of the Israeli-Jewish community and particularly of the border settlers', ensuring the community's loyalty and trust to the state, and helping the leading Mapam (later Labor) party retain its power against the more militant Zionist Revisionist right. Moreover the retaliations were also meant to boost the morale of the IDF via victories, and train it in real combat in order to prepare the army for the Second Round with the Arabs, which was believed to be inevitable (Morris 1997: 191-194).

To complete the big picture, a final point has to be made in relation to the Arab responsibility and position with regards to infiltrations. Throughout the whole period (1949-1956), the official Israeli line maintained —for purposes of domestic and international legitimacy— that retaliations were justified and legitimate acts of self-defense against growing Arab hostility. This was because, the Arab states were constantly aiding and organizing the infiltration activity into Israel, in order to weaken and finally destroy the infant Jewish state. These accusations were widely accepted by the Israeli-Jewish political community, who, through effective use by governments of propaganda and media, as well as through the personal experiences of the border settlers, were convinced that the Arab states sought the termination of the Jewish state and as well as its people. In this sense the retaliation policy and discourses associated with it helped shape the perceptions of the community with regards to their own and their country's (in)security in the face of a 'common enemy' and hence served as one of the instruments of uniting the heterogeneous community of settlers into a 'nation' (Benny Morris 1997: 194, Pappe 2004: 162).

However, Morris explains that the evidence available from the Israeli archives contradicts and refutes the Israeli version of Arab stance. He asserts that following their defeat in the 1948 war the Arab states recognized Israel's military superiority, and "[t]hrough most of the period, the Arab governments and armies opposed infiltration into Israel and attacks by infiltrators against Israel, primarily because they feared IDF reprisals" (Morris 1997: 430).[6] He also draws attention that the change in

[6] In this vein Syria and Lebanon mostly prevented infiltration, the former via strict policies across the borders, and the latter via settling the refugees in the northern part of the country away from the border. As for Egypt and Jordan, until 1955 they also maintained a policy of infiltration prevention, and the infiltration from these countries in this period happened contrary to the governments' policies, and as a result of long borders, inefficient manpower to patrol them, and local sympathy for the infiltrators (Morris 1997: 430).

Arab attitudes towards infiltration only came in the aftermath of 1955 as the Arab-Israeli relations deteriorated following the Gaza Raid —doubtlessly the biggest Israeli retaliation campaign ever.

It should be noted that, the aims of the retaliation policy were not confined to the sphere of infiltration; during the 1950s —and also during the 1960s— they were also used instrumentally by Israel with the aim of unilaterally changing the status quo in the demilitarized zones (DMZs) in its favor, and at the expense of Syrian rights over the area, by securing full control of the zones (Shalev 1993: 49; Slater 2002: 88). [7] Furthermore, from 1955 onwards, Israel's policy of escalating the conflict with Syria —as was with the policy of retaliations— also gained another specific dimension under Ben-Gurion and Dayan's lead: to provoke a war with Egypt which had recently signed a mutual defense pact with Syria. Operation Kinneret, which took place in the December of that year without any Syrian provocation, and killed fifty Syrians, was one major example to this line of policy making (Shlaim 2001: 149-150).

Nevertheless, similar to the overall retaliation policy, the acts of aggression by Israel along the Syrian border were reflected to the political community at home as defensive retaliations against continuous Syrian provocations and hostilities. This view dominated the Israeli public perceptions regarding the Syrians throughout the 1950s and the 1960s, when the conflict over the issues of DMZs and water issues escalated, and, moreover, became one of the most convincing arguments of legitimacy for the occupation of Golan Heights during the 1967 War. However, in a 1976 interview, that was published sixteen years after his death, Moshe Dayan, himself one of the architects of this policy, revealed how more than 80 percent of the time clashes with Syria were provoked by Israel:

> It went like this: We would send a tractor to plow someplace… in the demilitarized area, and knew in advance that the Syrians would start to shoot. If they didn't shoot we would tell the tractor to advance farther,

[7] The reason of the conflict between Israel and Syria was the question of sovereignty in the DMZs. The DMZs were created by the Israeli-Syrian armistice agreement of 1949, as a result of lack of settlement regarding the contested area of water resources between Syria and Israel prior to the armistice agreements. In the following years the question of sovereignty in the DMZs became a constant source of friction and confrontation among the two states. The Syrian position maintained that the status of the DMZs was to be determined by final peace agreements and until that time these areas must remain under UN supervision. Israel on the other hand insisted that it held the sovereignty rights of the DMZs, and that the only restriction it was entitled to was introduction of arms into them. Here it should also be noted that in the official Israeli-Syrian talks that took place in 1952-53, it had been Israeli inflexibility and adamancy in agreeing to partition of the DMZs that had prevented a political solution to the matter.

> until in the end the Syrians would get annoyed and shoot. And then we would use artillery and then the air force also, and that's how it was (cited in Shlaim 2002: 236; also in Reinhart 2002).

In the same interview Dayan also explained the logic behind the escalation policy: "to grab a piece of land and keep it, until the enemy will get tired and give it to us", and he added, some what ironically, that, "this might have been naïve on [Israel's] part, … but at that time [Israel] did not have much experience in diplomacy among sovereign states" (cited in, Shlaim 2001: 237).

This latter statement by Dayan is important for, although vaguely, it still points out to the lost opportunity in tackling the issue of DMZs through diplomacy and non-military means, as had been proposed by Zaim and later Shishakli, before the issue eventually became extremely militarized and intractable, mainly as a result of Israeli insistence on the use of military means and the 'language of force'. The statement is all the more interesting, taking into consideration first, Dayan's own very significant role in the escalation and militarization of the Arab-Israeli conflict –an issue that will be the subject of the next section– and second, the role the conflict with Syria played throughout the 1960s, in bringing about the 1967 War.

Overall, retaliation as a measure of basic security (1953-1955) was more successful then the previous policy, but its success was still limited. The number of infiltrations was reduced during this period, but they could not be fully eliminated. But the main significance of the retaliation policy lay in the processes it triggered which in the end molded the future orientation of the young Israel in its conflict with the Arabs. To begin with, the retaliation policy and the military mind-set that shaped it, bypassed the root causes that underlay infiltrations; the plight of the Palestinian refugees. In the absence of any solution to the refugee problem and in the face of growing despair among the Palestinian population, infiltration activities set the beginnings for the Palestinian guerilla activity against Israel that would become institutionalized starting with the establishment of Fatah in the late 1950s. In this vein, although they had a certain impact on urging the Arab states to curb infiltration activity, retaliations, did not prove to be an efficient means of deterrence as far as the Palestinians were concerned. It did, however, provide a serious source of insecurity for the Palestinian refugee population, intensified their hostility towards Israel, and gradually legitimized the means of armed resistance against it among the Palestinian community.

Second, retaliation policy had an immense effect in transforming Israel's relations with the Arab states. It stirred counter strikes from Arab states and particularly from Egypt, caused a growing hostility among both Arab public and policy makers, accelerated Arab efforts of armament and increasingly confined the solution of the conflict to military means. Finally, the retaliation policy also triggered intense debates and struggles among the Mapai leadership's activists and moderates, in the context of determining the country's overall strategy and future orientation in its dealings with the Arab world. In short, it played a key role in transforming the Arab-Israeli conflict into one of an intractable nature, while reproducing new military insecurities and increasingly rendering peaceful settlement of disputes first invisible, then obsolete.

2.3.2. Crystallization of the Activist and Moderate Division

Against the backdrop of the construction of the Israeli retaliation policy, the first half of the 1950s also witnessed the emergence of two conflicting schools of thought among the Zionist Mapai leadership; the activist school, headed by David Ben-Gurion (prime minister and defense minister between 1948-1953 and 1955-1963) and the moderate school headed by Moshe Sharett (foreign minister between 1948-1956 and prime minister between 1954-1955). Although the debate between the two schools mostly took place in the context of the scope, nature and future consequences of the retaliation policy, in essence the struggle reflected the contestation of two different existential worldviews with regards to determining the overall Israeli strategy in its dealings with the Arab world. In Morris's words, the struggle was one "between hardliners and softliners, security-centeredness and diplomacy, intractability and conciliation, the certainty of war and a chance for peace" (Morris 1997: 240). [8] This internal division was mainly hidden from the Israeli public during its course, and it was only after the 1980s and via the works by the new historians that they were explored further and were revealed.

On the broad terms of a peace settlement with the Arab states, the two schools maintained similar positions; both believed that security of Israel depended on preservation of the status quo, and accordingly both were against significant

[8] Accordingly other issues of the debate between the activists and moderates included the status of Israeli Palestinians, Palestinian refugees, water concerns, international diplomacy, and military spending (Sheffer 1996: 156; Isacoff 2002: 46).

territorial concessions and repatriation of Palestinian refugees (Shalom 2002, Shlaim 2001: 97). The real differences lay elsewhere, in the words of Sheffer, in their "almost diametrically opposed historical and philosophical assumptions, as well as complex evaluations about the position of Israel's opponents" (Sheffer 1995: 159).

Ben-Gurion and his followers, especially Moshe Dayan (IDF Chief of Staff, 1953–1958) and Pinhas Lavon (defense minister; 1954–1955) were firm believers in the policy of the iron wall, and they advocated implementation of a hard-line military and aggressive approach in foreign and defense issues. According to this activist line, the Arabs, fanatical enemies whose sole aim was Israel's destruction, understood only the 'language of force'. Therefore, in order to survive, the state of Israel had to constantly demonstrate its strength and military superiority, in most cruel and humiliating ways if need be. Diplomatic means were dismissed by the activist worldview, for diplomacy could be interpreted as a sign of Israeli weakness by the Arabs. Thus, peace with them could be attainable only in the long-run, and only in the face of complete Arab despair, yet even that was doubtful (Shlaim 2001: 87). In a similar vein, the activists embraced the notion 'all the world is against us', and accordingly viewed issues of international legitimacy and law as "serious impediments to the ability of Israel to secure its existence" (Isacoff 2002: 45).

Moshe Sharett and his followers—most notably Abba Eban (ambassador to the UN and the US), and to a lesser extent Levi Eshkol (prime minister 1963-1969)—however, rejected the view that Arabs only understood the language of force, nor did they believe that the military means were the only means that the Arabs could be dealt with. To the contrary, they favored the use of non-military means in Israel's dealings with the Arab world, thus, displayed significant commitment to diplomacy and negotiation as primary means of resolving fundamental foreign policy and defense matters. They were more sensitive to Arab feelings and world public opinion, and advocated restraint in use of military means against the Arab states, in order not to hamper the future possibilities of Israel's peaceful coexistence with its neighbors in the region. As Sheffer explains, "Sharett insisted that Israel should do its utmost to reduce the levels of violence, animosity, as well as tension in its relations with the Arabs, and particularly to avoid provocative acts which might have pushed the region to wars" (Sheffer 1995: 159). In this vein, Sharett line rejected the view held by the activists that diplomatic efforts and attempts to achieve peace with Arabs were detrimental to Israel's security interests and tough image. To the contrary, he saw

peace —and efforts for peace— as a vital component of Israel's long security and survival: "[N]ot even for one moment must the matter of peace vanish from our calculations. This is not only a political calculation; in the long run this is a decisive security consideration [as well]" (Sharett 1957, cited in, Morris 1997: 241).

Despite his commitment to pursue peace, Sharett himself was skeptical and pessimistic about the chances of an overall solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict in the short term, if ever. As Sheffer explains, he was aware of the growing nationalism within the Palestinian Arab community, and the organic links they maintained with the Arab states and peoples, which lead to high levels of hostility and aggressiveness toward the Jews. Meanwhile he was also cognizant of the role of Israel's own actions and policies in nurturing hostility among the Palestinians and the Arab states (Sheffer 1995: 154-155; Shlaim 2001: 97-98).

In the light of these observations, and notwithstanding the fact that he believed Israel should prepare itself in meeting all the challenges that would be brought about by the Arab-Israeli dispute, Sharett nevertheless maintained that the achievement of these aims should not solely rely on military power, and political calculations with regards to the consequences of all but especially military acts should be attributed prime importance. Sharett's alternative political orientation, that focused on inventing non-military, political solutions to the Arab-Israeli conflict "such as implementing solutions to the refugee problem —a courageous concrete proposal to pay compensation, mending fences with the powers, and continuing efforts to reach an agreement with Egypt" was rooted in this worldview that maintained no matter how far away and how difficult to attain it seemed, peace as an end should always be present in all policy calculations (Sheffer 1996: 690; also Shlaim 2001: 97-98).

The opposing world views between Ben-Gurion and Sharett had been apparent from the pre-state days onwards. Nevertheless, despite the prominent differences in their worldviews, and despite Sharett's criticism of Ben-Gurion line of policy making at times, the two men worked quite effectively for long years. It was from 1953 onwards, and in the context of scope and wider activist aims of the Israeli retaliation policy, that their divergent positions sharpened (Shlaim 2001: 96)

With regards to the scope of retaliations, Ben-Gurion was in favor of hard-hitting ones. In his view, the Arabs, who constantly and intentionally caused problems along Israel's borders, had to be answered in the severest ways possible. Only by force and

in the face of Israeli determination and strength, and only in the face of their own inferiority they could be deterred. Sharett thought otherwise. Although not against retaliation in principle, he maintained that they should be used more carefully and selectively, with careful consideration of the possible political consequences. He "did not wish to add any secondary causes to the basic cause of the conflict between the Arabs and Israel" (Shlaim 2001: 97), and feared that, fierce Israeli responses would inflame more Arab hatred, pushing them to the offensive and setting back the prospects for reconciliation (Shlaim 2001: 98).

Yet the activist approach to the retaliation policy involved more than a commitment of Arab deterrence. The increase in their intensity especially from 1954 onwards was related to the activist aim of provoking a pre-mature war with the Arab states (Golani 1998). In the course of 1953, Ben-Gurion was convinced that the Arabs would be ready for a second round in 1956, so he maintained Israel should provoke the 'inevitable' war before the Arabs bolstered their defenses, and as Israel held the military advantage (Shlaim 2001: 93, 107; Sheffer 1996: 690). Dayan shared his view. A victory in the second round would prove Israel's permanent presence in the region, enable Israel to enter peace talks from a position of strength, and enable it to achieve peace in its own terms (Golani 1998: viii). From 1953 onwards, the defense policy of the country was shaped along this assumption of an approaching war.

Moreover, unlike Sharett who was committed to the borders drawn by the 1949 armistice lines, Ben-Gurion and Dayan were in agreement that the current borders of the state did not match Israel's security needs; Israel needed defensible borders and therefore the current borders had to be extended (Shlaim 2001: 99-100). Dayan had been a committed proponent of Israeli expansionism from the very beginning, and his views were largely shared among the broader defense establishment and the army. Indeed, during the 1950s, Dayan himself as well as army officers had pressured the government to use infiltrations as a pretext of conquering Arab territories, including West Bank, Gaza, and the Syrian DMZs (Morris 1997: 242).[9] Especially problematic

[9] As early as 1950, preceding Jordan's annexation of West Bank, Dayan made the proposals of capturing this territory up to the Jordan River. Sharett's reply was firm: "The State of Israel will not be embroiled in military adventurism by taking the initiative to capture territories and expand. Israel would not do that both because we cannot afford to be accused by the world of aggression and because we cannot, for security and social reasons, absorb into our midst a substantial Arab population.... We cannot sacrifice Jewish fighters, nor can we harm others in an arbitrary fashion

for Dayan, was the unnatural border with Jordan; he maintained that, sooner or later, it had to be replaced by the natural border along the Jordan River, with the capture of West Bank (Shlaim 2001: 66). Nevertheless, being the strongest and the most important Arab country, the primary target of his war aim was Egypt (Golani 2000: 25). Israel could not openly start a war, however, for it could not take the risk of being labeled as the aggressor, the international costs of which would be too great to bear. Instead a policy of escalating the conflict via reprisals in order to provoke an 'Arab initiated' war was adopted.

Thereby starting from sometime in 1954 until the 1956 Sinai War, the conflict along Israel's borders gradually intensified and witnessed reprisals and counter reprisals between Israel and the Arab states. Sharett, meanwhile tried hard to prevent the activists from putting their plan into action, but his efforts eventually failed against the coalition of Ben-Gurion, activist politicians, the army and the Israeli public at large —which had been poorly informed about the country's conduct of foreign and defense policy and had increasingly become militarized in the course of time.

2.3.3. A Twist in the History of the Conflict: 1955 Gaza Raid and the 1956 Sinai Campaign

The activist Ben-Gurion line eventually won over the moderate Sharett line of policy making, and the two years that preceded the 1956 Sinai War witnessed an escalation of the Arab-Israeli conflict, as the prospects for an alternate, political and non-military understanding between the two sides, and particularly between Egypt and Israel, gradually faded.

The first event, among a chain of events that escalated the Arab-Israeli conflict during this period, was the Jewish spy ring affair in Egypt, also known as the Lavon affair, in the summer of 1954. In the background of the affair lay different conceptions between the military and the Foreign Ministry as to the probable impact of the then negotiated British withdrawal from Suez Canal Zone on Israel's security. Ben-Gurion and the military, viewed the prospects for the British withdrawal as contrary to Israeli national interests. They believed that British presence in the area

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merely in order to satisfy appetite for expansion" (cited in, Shlaim 2001: 66). Accordingly the proposal was dismissed.

was a major setback to Egyptian adventurism in the region, and hence decided to take action in order to prevent an Anglo-Egyptian agreement about British withdrawal. In July 1954, Israeli military intelligence organized and directed a local Jewish spy ring to perform series of acts of sabotage inside Egypt, to fake anti-British and anti-American incidents. The operation failed, and proved scandalous however, when the perpetrators were captured by Egyptian authorities and put on a military trial in late 1954—also known as the Cairo Trial (Shlaim 2001: 112; Morris 1997: 333-334).

The Israeli Foreign Ministry, on the other hand, in complete contrast with the perceptions of the military, had viewed the British withdrawal as a very positive development for Israel. They had maintained that "once Nasser achieved his central goal of freeing his country from the presence of foreign troops, he would adopt an 'Egypt first' policy and become more amenable to a settlement with Israel" (Shlaim 2001: 111). Accordingly Israeli diplomats, under the direction of Sharett, had started conveying messages to Egypt prior to the spy-ring affair, for a peaceful resolution of bilateral outstanding problems. The Israeli plot to discredit the free-officer's regime angered Nasser, yet due to his trust in Sharett's good intentions, the secret peace talks between the two men through their representatives, nevertheless, continued until January 1955. They were short-lived however, and despite significant progress made, when the defendants of the Cairo Trial were executed in Egypt, the talks were unilaterally suspended by Sharett.

The spy-ring affair and the final verdict of the Cairo Trial had a significant impact on strengthening the activist/militarist line of Israeli policy making with regards to Egypt. Inside Israel, strict military censorship on the media had ensured that the public did not learn that the plot was in fact an official Israeli operation. Accordingly, the Israeli community was made to believe that the defendants were innocent and that they had been victims of false accusations by hostile and anti-Semitist Egyptian authorities. Thus, the execution of the sentences caused a public uproar in Israel, strengthened the negative psychological attitude towards the Arabs among the community and strengthened their support for military means for dealing with the 'Arab problem' (Shlaim 2001: 118; Morris 1997: 336). Consequently, the public mood also undermined the influence of Sharett and the moderate line on Israeli policy making, and it became increasingly difficult on Sharett's part to resist activists' demands for reprisals against Egypt (Morris 1997: 336).

A month later came the Gaza Raid, which put an end to all prospects for a political solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. An infiltration by Egyptian intelligence from Gaza strip had provided the pretext for the IDF reprisal. A week before the raid, Ben-Gurion —with a tough new defense policy, and being convinced that Nasser was a dangerous and adamant enemy that needed to be toppled— had resumed his position in the cabinet as defense minister. Meanwhile, Sharett continued his prime ministry, but had now little influence over defense matters. The Gaza raid, code named 'Operation Black Arrow', took place in February 1955, when the IDF attacked and destroyed an Egyptian army base in Gaza, killing thirty-seven Egyptian soldiers and wounding thirty-one. It was the bloodiest and the most serious clash between Israel and Egypt since 1948. It shocked Egypt, as well as the international community who condemned the action.

The Gaza Raid was a turning point for the Israeli-Egyptian relations —and according to Morris also in the history of the Middle East (1997: 350). Until the Gaza Raid, Egypt had no policy of confrontation with Israel along the borders, be it in the form of guerilla warfare or border harassment. To the contrary, it tried to curb infiltration into Israel as much as possible in order not to provoke Israel, and Egyptian infiltration in this period were limited to local initiatives and intelligence gathering (Shlaim 2001: 129; Morris 1997: 350, 443). [10] The Gaza Raid resulted in a complete shift in Egyptian policy towards Israel. The raid had been a shock to Egypt and a blow to the military regime's prestige which was in the process of consolidating itself. According to Shlaim, Nasser himself had repeatedly described the Gaza Raid as a turning point, and had claimed that, "it destroyed his faith in the possibility of a peaceful resolution of the conflict with Israel, exposed the weakness of his army, and forced a change in national priorities from social and economic development to defense" (Shlaim 2001: 126). Accordingly, from March 1955 onwards, Egyptian foreign and defense policy increasingly focused on Israel, and Nasser adopted a policy of Palestinian *fedayeen* recruitment and activation from

[10] Prior to raid —as had been rightly observed by the Israeli foreign ministry— the one major foreign policy goal Nasser and the new revolutionary regime had been to oust the British presence from Egypt. The accomplishment of this aim was planned to be followed by domestic social and economic reconstruction. In this context, Nasser was willing to discuss peace with Israel to concentrate the energies and resources of the state on domestic reconstruction, and, moreover, any serious clash with Israel was feared and avoided by the Egyptians, for such clashes could have provided the British with an excuse not to evacuate the Canal Zone (Morris 1997: 443; Tessler 2006: 178).

Gaza, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. During the same year, he concluded a major arms deal with Czechoslovakia, in order to offset Israeli military superiority (Shlaim 2001: 126-127; Morris 1997: 345, 443).

The following months were characterized by an escalation of the conflict, as attacks and counter-attacks took place between the two states. Against IDF reprisals, Egypt answered with raids and fedayeen attacks; clearly Nasser had adopted an 'eye for an eye strategy', thinking —somewhat ironically— that this was the only language that Ben-Gurion would understand (Shlaim 2002: 160). The possibility of capturing Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula, as well as of West Bank, was now frequently debated in the Israeli cabinet; in the words of Benny Morris "[t]here was no more vague toying with expansionist proposals; the question was only when and in what circumstances" (Morris 1997: 443). Moreover clashes with Syria and Jordan also increased during this period; the increase in the number of terrorist infiltration from these countries was one factor in this escalation, and Israeli aim of provoking Egypt's interference in Israeli-Syrian clashes, under the terms of Egyptian-Syrian defense pact, was the other (Slater 2002: 89).

The 'inevitable' war started on October 29, 1956 with Israel's launch of Sinai Campaign, and ended on November 7. Sinai Campaign was part of a war plot that had been arranged between Israel, France and Britain, each having their own reasons for taking action against Nasser.[11] Israel for its part had both military and political objectives in starting a war with Egypt. Its military objectives were to defeat the Egyptian Army, to open up the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, and to put an end to fedayeen attacks across the Egyptian border. Israel mostly achieved these objectives at the end of the war; Israeli army won a clear victory which resulted in a raise of morale in the army and the public; the Straits of Tiran were opened up to Israeli shipping, with an American insurance; and Sinai peninsula was demilitarized and fedayeen bases in Gaza were destroyed, which provided Israel with relative security and stability until the 1967 War (Shlaim 2001: 183).

[11] The plot was planned and realized like this: On October 29 Israel attacked Egypt advanced in the Sinai Peninsula; then Britain and France interfered and called on the two sides to withdraw their forces from either side of the canal. Israel accepted the ultimatum as had been planned, and as had been expected, Egypt refused since this would mean withdrawing from Egypt's own territory in Sinai. Britain and France then interfered and began an aerial bombardment of Egyptian forces. In a few days Israel managed to occupy Gaza Strip and the whole Sinai Peninsula. However pressure from the US halted the attacks

Israel's political objectives were toppling the Nasser regime, expanding the Israeli southern border, and establishment of a new political order, favorable to Israel, in the Middle East.[12] All these political objectives failed. Instead of toppling Nasser, the campaign strengthened his power and influence over the Arab world, and helped him become its undisputed, heroic leader. Moreover, the war also deepened Nasser's involvement in the Palestinian question, and gradually gave the problem a Pan-Arab dimension that would culminate in the establishment of the PLO in 1964. Israel's expansionist plans on the Sinai Peninsula also failed, as it was forced to withdraw from all the territories that had been conquered during the war, and contrary to the Israeli plans since 1953, the campaign worked to confirm the territorial status quo that had been established at the end of 1948.

In the traditional Zionist narrative, the 1956 war has been portrayed as a defensive war that was forced upon Israel, as the culmination of an unrecognized war which had already been going on for sometime between Israel and the Arab states. Jonathan Isacoff, in a brief but concise evaluation, reflects upon the matter. He observes, how the fedayeen attacks from the Arab states, and especially from Egypt, and the blockade in the Straits of Tiran have been presented by the dominant Zionist discourse, as an already going on war waged against Israel by the Arab states — without any focus on the context of fighting however, such as the Palestinian refugee problem. For example, Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Allon wrote: "The infiltration of armed gangs from the Arab states into Israel began as early as 1949… before long it became clear that this harassment … essentially constituted the first stage of a small and unrecognized war" (1970: 230, cited in, Isacoff: 2005: 74). Isacoff explains that the Sinai war had been justified on these grounds, both internationally and domestically, as "merely a response to the violence of ongoing war rather than as the start of the war" (2005: 74). In this vein, the traditional view portrays the Sinai war as a 'war of no choice'. As asserted by Abba Eban: "As one looks back there was not a wide area of choice… In the absence of some sharp change of fortune, Israel's eruption from siege could at most have been postponed. By October 1956, Israel's

[12] The establishment of the new political order was Ben-Gurion's "grand design". Shlaim defined the plan as follows: "Israel's expansion to the Suez Canal and Sharm al-Sheikh in the south, to the Jordan River in the east, and to the Litani River in the north. … a [future] Christian Lebanon would of its own accord make peace with Israel, … Iraq would be allowed to take over the east bank of the Jordan on condition that it made peace with Israel, and … a defeated, humiliated and occupied Egypt would be compelled to make peace on Israel's terms. This was all pie in the sky" (2001: 184-185).

foes and Israel's friends converged to destroy all other possibilities" (1972: 141, cited in, Isacoff 2005: 74)

This version of events has also shaped the popular perceptions of the Israeli community regarding the war as a just and defensive one, through propaganda, media and education (Shlaim 2001: 185; Orr 1994). Accordingly, for purposes of legitimacy and representation, the Israeli connection with the British and the French has also been publicly denied by the leaders until the early 1980s. [13]

In contrast to the traditional narrative, the works by new historiographers have illustrated that the 1956 war had been a "war of choice", a war which has been sought deliberately by Israel as a means to advance its interests against the Arab states, and, as we outlined previously, had been on the planning from as early as late 1953 (Shlaim 2001; Morris 1997; Sheffer 1996; Golani 1998). Motti Golani, one of the younger generation of new historians whose research traces the background of the 1956 War in the light of new archival data, asserts: "my research led me to conclude that Israel had been in search of a war before the onset of Suez Crisis and without any connection to it" (1998: viii). Furthermore, both Shlaim (2001) and Golani (1998) refute the claim by traditional views that present the conclusion of the Egyptian-Czech arms deal in September 1955 as a significant factor that provoked Israel to war, for the deal would tilt the regional balance of power in Egypt's favor. They draw attention to the fact that, although this reasoning might have been correct in 1955, by October 1956 the balance had already been restored by Israel's acquisition of arms from France, and the Czech arms deal no longer constituted an imminent threat to the Israeli basic security.

The new historians view the Suez War was as the culmination, in society and politics, of the activist, militarist approaches over those of moderation and diplomacy. The hardliners, Ben-Gurion, Dayan and the IDF senior staff in particular, who strongly maintained that solutions to Israel's problems only lay in use military force, had already been convinced of the need to use the war option with Egypt in order to advance Israel's political and territorial interests, but they were waiting for

[13] Akiva Orr's own observations in the aftermath of the war, reflects the power of discourses in shaping public perceptions, sometimes even contrary to the public's own experiences: "[T]he problem is not the leaders but the led. I was amazed to see many Israelis genuinely outraged by the Soviet accusations [about collusion with Britain and France] despite seeing the French tanks in Haifa and the planes in Lod [a week before the war]. It was a clear case of 'my mind is made up, don't confuse me with facts' " (Orr 1994: 76).

the right time. In 1956, when the circumstances arose, they exercised this option (Golani 1998: ix).

As for the moderate school, not long before the war Ben-Gurion had wanted Sharett's resignation from cabinet, being aware of the limitations Sharett's presence would put on his overall war strategy. Sharett's resignation and defeat sealed the fate of alternative, moderate conceptions of security towards the Arab-Israeli conflict, until the early 1990s.

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The Suez War had far reaching implications for the Arab-Israeli conflict for the next eleven years, as it deepened the conflict even further. The military results of the war established Israel as a major military power in the region, and thus, enhanced its deterrent power vis-à-vis the Arab states. On the other hand, the self confidence brought by Israel's military victory in the war, combined with its political failures, and convinced the Israeli leadership that they did not need more territory for security but an improvement of the already existing capabilities. Thus from 1956 onwards, Israeli leaders accepted the 1949 borders as Israel's final borders, and instead of policies of expansionism for strategic depth that characterized the first half of the 1950s, the subsequent governments during the 1960s (first headed by Ben-Gurion and later by Levi Eshkol) adopted the twin strategies of building up Israel's military capabilities, and seeking external (military, financial, and political) support from the US, to maintain Israeli security within the existing borders.

This change in strategy, along with other factors, led to a decrease of the tension along the borders of Israel. During the 1960s almost what might be called a de facto peace was established between Jordan and Israel through dialogue and limited cooperation in water issues, and both the infiltrations by Palestinian irregulars from the border, and the Israeli retaliations against them remained limited. The Egyptian border was also quiet. From early days onwards Nasser was aware that Israeli military capabilities exceeded those of the Arab states. Furthermore, from 1962 onwards Egypt became increasingly involved in the war in Yemen, and thus he took all means necessary to avoid a military confrontation with Israel, including curbing of fedayeen infiltrations from Gaza Strip that could have provoked Israeli retaliation (Shlaim 2001: 226-228). In this vein, the quiet in the Israeli-Egyptian border was far

from being a 'peace border' but a result of pragmatic and tactical calculations on both sides.

Indeed, during this period the conflict between Israel and the Arab world continued to deepen. As the military results of the 1956 war had served Israel, its political results had worked in favor of its Arab adversaries. Contrary to Israel's pre-war aims, the war strengthened the position and influence of Nasser among the Arab world and against the conservative and pro-Western Arab states (i.e. Jordan and Iraq), while also giving rise to a pan-Arab national security discourse, that would be a powerful inspiration for many Arabs until the 1967 War. Meanwhile the Israeli plot behind the war also hardened both his attitude and his discourse against Israel as the 'enemy', led him to adopt (and to call to the Arab states for) a policy of arms race with Israel, and deepened his involvement in the Palestinian question. From 1956 onwards the Palestinian problem gradually became one of the main features and instruments of the pan-Arab national security discourse —which maintained a powerful influence on the Arab street— the culmination of which would be the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in the 1964 Arab Summit. Moreover, representation of Israel in the new Pan-Arab security discourse also became fierce. One of the most prominent manifestations of this was the 1964 Arab Summit declaration, where the Arab states declared that the presence and practices of Israel constituted a threat against Arab security, and for the first time since the start of the conflict called for destruction of Israel (Shaim 2001: 229-230).

Behind the Arab summit declaration, and subsequently the intensification of the conflict between Israel and the Arab states at the discursive level from 1964 onwards, was Israel's policy of escalation of the conflict at the Syrian border, over the demilitarized zones and the waters of the Jordan River. This policy of escalation was mostly a continuation of previous policy of unilaterally changing the status quo in the DMZs in Israel's favor by force, but after 1966 it was also meant as a means of retaliating against the radical Baath regime which sponsored Palestinian guerilla attacks into Israel, in response to its provocations, in a vicious cycle of violence. In the period that followed, the conflict between Israel and Syria would intensify, and constitute the backdrop to the June 1967 War (Shlaim 2001: 228-235; Slater 2002: 90-92)

CHAPTER 3

OCCUPATION, IDEOLOGY AND CHANGE: ISRAELI SECURITY BETWEEN 1967 AND 1987

The previous chapter dealt with the processes whereby a purely military and zero-sum conceptualization of security with regards to the Arab–Israeli conflict were conceptualized and consolidated among the ruling state-elites and the Israeli-Jewish community upon the establishment of the Israeli state, and reflected on the overall implications of these processes on the Arab-Israeli conflict. In this chapter, I focus on the evolution of Israel's security discourses and practices in the period between the 1967 war and the 1987 Palestinian Intifada, particularly in the context of the new international status-quo and the territorial, political and social realities created by Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories of West Bank and Gaza.

The Six-Day War of 1967 marks a turning point in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The establishment of Israel and the subsequent war of 1948 had transformed what had previously been an ethnic communal conflict between Jews and Arabs during the British mandate period into an international conflict between Israel and the Arab states for the next two decades. In the aftermath of the 1967 War, however, starting with Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories of West Bank and Gaza, and followed by a series of significant domestic and international developments in the following twenty years, the conflict was increasingly internalized and gradually re-transformed into a communal conflict between Israeli Jews and the Palestinians — those residing both inside the territories and outside in the refugee camps (Kimmerling and Migdal 2003 : 241; Barzilai and Peleg 1994 : 63-64; Bar-Tal and Teichman 2005: 99). [14]

[14] Here, what is referred to as communal conflict is those conflicts of identity where the national identity of the opposing communities clash and are seen to be threatened by the actions and national objectives of the other (Jamal 2000: 37). According to Jamal, the clash of identities are especially severe in colonial contexts —like that of Israel and Palestine— "where the elements of domination, expressed at all levels of life, plays a pivotal role in the relationship between the ruler and the ruled" (Jamal 2000: 37-38)

This transformation was related to a number of simultaneous and mutually constitutive processes that took place at the domestic, international and communal levels in the aftermath of the war. First, at the inter-state level, Israel's smashing victory resulted in a shift in the policies of the Arab states from the pre-war radicalism that had characterized the previous decade, towards moderation and pragmatism. This shift revealed itself by a willingness by the Arab states to recognize Israel within the 1948 borders and to resolve the conflict through diplomatic means. On the Israeli side there was also a shift, both among public and politicians, though in an opposite direction. The Israeli policies in the aftermath of the war were characterized by a rigid refusal to withdraw to the pre-June 5 borders on security grounds—after 1977 also on ideological grounds— and an insistence on peace agreements with the Arab states on its own terms. The emergence of US in the post-1967 period as Israel's protector and loyal ally also facilitated the Israeli stance. In the years that followed, the Likud electoral victory of 1977 and the subsequent ascendance of powerful ideological claims to the West Bank and Gaza, the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war and the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, and finally, the signing of a peace agreement with the largest and strongest Arab state, Egypt, in 1979, constituted some of the landmarks that contributed to the transformation of the conflict (Barzilai and Peleg 1994: 63-64).

The second factor that contributed to the shift towards communal conflict was the re-emergence of Palestinian nationalism in the territories –and also among the larger Palestinian populations– after the war, the ascendance of the PLO in Palestinian politics, and the subsequent evolution of the Palestinian problem, in the international arena during the early 1970s, from a basic refugee issue that had to be handled among Israel and the Arab states, into one of Palestinian *statelessness* and right to self determination for the Palestinian people (Tessler 1994: 433-444; Morris 2001: 343-344). Moreover, the PLO's adoption of the armed struggle in the form of guerilla activity to fight against Israeli occupation, as well as the development of Israeli-Arab diplomatic relations following the 1973 War, also contributed to the communal character of the conflict, where the concept of Israeli national security with regards to the Palestinian issue was gradually transformed into one of personal security for the Israeli-Jewish political community who suffered from the PLO attacks (Naor 1999: 151). The previously mentioned shift among the Arab states from the broader, pre-war pan-Arab national security conceptualization, to a more moderate, pragmatic and

a state-centric one in the post–war period also influenced this process, where the Arab states gradually retreated from the Palestinian issue—definitely in practice, if not always so in their discourses (Bilgin 2005: 106-108; Lustick 1996a: 207).

Finally, Israeli policies with regards to the occupied territories also played a vital role in this transformation. Israeli policies in the fields of administration, economy and Jewish settlements, all of which were meant to strengthen Israel's hold on to the territories, resulted in an increasing blurring of the Green Line —as the 1949 armistice lines have come to be called— between Israel and the occupied territories, and became continuous sources of insecurity (in a broader sense of the term) for the Palestinian community under Israeli control. Coupled by the rigid refusal of successive Israeli governments to recognize the national character of the Palestinian resistance and the legitimacy of the Palestinian demands to self-determination, and their strict policy of non-recognition for the PLO, these policies contributed to the increasing militarization of the conflict. They contributed to the process through which, armed struggle, in the absence of other effective means to draw attention to the Palestinian national aims and urge solutions to the plight of the Palestinian people, became the major means of the PLO, and obtained support and legitimacy among the socially and politically oppressed and economically deprived Palestinians population. The frustration of the Palestinian population would bring about the Intifada in 1987.

In what follows, I examine the evolution of the conceptualizations, discourses and practices of Israeli security by successive Labor and Likud governments the period between 1967 and 1987, against the backdrop of their competing views about Israel's security and future identity, and in the context of the inter-state, inter-communal and domestic processes I have briefly outlined above.

3.1. The Post-1967 Status Quo and its Immediate Consequences

The period between 1956 and 1967, under the leadership of Egypt, and as a result of the Suez war, had witnessed the rise of pan-Arab unity schemes and the emergence of a pan-Arab national security discourse among the radical Arab states, followed by an arms race with Israel. This new conceptualization and discourse of security, which besides other issues also emphasized the pan-Arab nature of the Palestinian issue, and thus defined Israel as the ultimate enemy of the Arab peoples, was especially welcomed and embraced by the larger Arab public opinion, to the extent that it

curbed the ability of Arab regimes —and even Egypt itself— to formulate their own security discourses and practices in a state-centric manner. Accordingly, prior to the 1967 War, and despite Nasser's actual intent, the public mood among the larger Arab world, also reinforced by the discourses at the leadership level, was that time was ripe for a confrontation with Israel, and that it would be rendered a significant defeat in the approaching war (Lustick 1996a: 206-207).

The 1967 War completely changed this picture. The humiliating and costly defeat rendered at the hands of Israel, and the loss of large tracts of territory resulted in a gradual shift in the Arab states' policies where the pre-war pan-Arab national security conceptualization that had primitized military means, left its place to a more pragmatic, diplomacy oriented and state-centric one. Regaining lost territories by diplomacy became one of the guiding principles of strategy making for the Arab States. Being convinced that the Arab-Israeli conflict could not be solved by military means, particularly through Israel's demonstration of its military superiority and also due to information about its nuclear deterrence, the Arabs now turned their attention to diplomatic means to resolve the conflict (Slater 2002: 93). In this vein, the acceptance of Egypt, Syria and Jordan of the UN Resolution 242 was a significant development in the sense that it marked a readiness on the Arab side that they were ready to recognize Israel within the 1949 armistice borders.

This change in Arab attitudes towards Israel —from radicalism towards increasing moderation and pragmatism— had been one of the major ends of Israeli policy dictated by the strategy of the iron wall. According to this strategy, as aforementioned, once the Arabs had been convinced of Israel's invincibility through demonstration of its deterrent power, moderate factions among them, who would be ready and willing to recognize Israel's existence, would rise to power. Only then negotiations with the Arab states could be held, and a permanent peace could be made with them. However, despite what would have been expected, the Israeli politics in the aftermath of the war did not evolve in this direction. To the contrary, the post-war politics of the Arab-Israeli conflict was characterized by a policy of immobilism and 'creeping annexation' in the captured territories, where the unilateral maintenance of the new territorial status quo became the central pillar of Israeli policy making at the inter-state level.

This post-war Israeli position was a result of a series of political, social, psychological and ideological dynamics that were created in the immediate aftermath of the war. Before moving into a discussion of these dynamics however, it is important for one to look at the pre-war Israeli position to understand the extents of change in policy making. Paradoxically in retrospective, prior the 1967 War, Israel had given up on its plans for territorial expansionalism to ensure strategic depth. This change in policy was a direct result of the state elites' reading of the 1956 Suez War. Following the war, and especially due to the position of the US, Ben-Gurion had been convinced that an expansion of Israel's borders for security was unrealistic, and he had come to accept the status quo as defined by the 1949 armistice lines. As an alternative to territorial expansion to ensure strategic depth, he adopted two complimentary strategies for security: the strategy of deterrence through equipping IDF with the latest military hardware, and a quest for external guarantees, particularly from the US, for political and arms support, and security guarantees (Shlaim 2001: 188-189). When Levi Eshkol preceded Ben-Gurion as prime minister in 1963, he continued the same line of policy. Indeed, this period was characterized by a consensus within the government and the military that Israel had achieved its strategic objectives, that it could fully realize its essential national goals within the 1949 borders, and thus, that it did not need more land to ensure its security (Shlaim 2001: 221; Naor 2005b: 229-230). Hence, what Israel needed to do was to act according to the strategy of the iron wall, that is, to maintain its military and diplomatic superiority over the Arabs and force them to recognize Israel through convincing them of its invincibility. The relative calm that Israel enjoyed at its borders with the Arab states also reinforced this view.

In this vein the official policy of Israel prior to 1967 dictated that the Jewish state would not be the initiator of a war with the Arab states. If war was imposed upon it, then in accordance with the offensive-defense strategy, Israel would lead a strategy of carrying the war into enemy territory with the aim of destroying its military infrastructure. This also meant that, territorial expansion would not be the military objective of the Israeli conduct of war, and any territorial gains by the IDF would be used as bargaining chips in negotiations with the Arab states in the post-war period to achieve a political settlement of the conflict from a position of strength (Naor 2005b: 230; Shlaim 2001: 221).

The Six Day war was an extension of this policy of offensive-defense. Although in retrospect the Six-Day War seems to be a "product of error and miscalculation" (Morris 1999: 302), and a war "that neither side wanted" (Shlaim 2001: 236) , from the Israeli point of view at the time, it was a defensive, preemptive war, that was launched in response to the immediate threat of attack by its Arab adversaries. Thus, the military aims of the war had been limited to opening the Straits of Tiran, destroying the Egyptian army in Sinai and restoring the deterrent power of the IDF, and were devoid of any expansionist agenda. In this vein, the territorial aims and achievements of Israel in the war were results of the absence of clear political and territorial objectives which emerged only during the course of fighting (Shlaim 2001: 242). In the end, the Six-Day war ended with a smashing Israeli victory over the Arab states and with the previously unforeseen occupation of the entire Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights, the West Bank and Gaza by the IDF. All in all, the war irrefutably demonstrated the indestructible strength of the Israeli iron wall. Moreover the wide support Israel enjoyed for its war cause also lent it a political victory in the international arena. So from a political and military point of view, by 10 June 1967 Israel was at a high point where it was ready and able —according to its own strategy— by all means to initiate a process of negotiations with the Arab states from a position of strength. So the question remains, what brought about the Israeli digression from this initial strategy? What curbed Israel's willingness and ability to move in this tract?

The answer to these questions lies in a series of political, social and ideological dynamics that were created in the immediate aftermath of the war. To begin with, the crushing victory resulted in a feeling of euphoria among the Israeli politicians and publics alike. The new territorial and military status quo created by the war —the defeat of the Arab armies and the creation of a strategic depth, and defensible borders by the occupation of large tracts of land— led Israelis to believe, from a purely military point of view, that the threat of an existential military attack from the Arab armies in the coming years have been altogether eliminated (Gazit 2003: 6-7). Accordingly it led to the idea that, in the light of its military strength, Israel could impose a peace on the severely defeated and humiliated Arab states, solely on its own terms. If the Arabs disagreed with these terms, the present territorial status quo, which still suited Israel's security needs, could go on for an indefinite period; Israel was safe and did not have to worry about what to do. This feeling was best summed

up by Moshe Dayan: "we are waiting for the Arabs to pick up the phone and call us" (Gazit 2003: 7).

Second, the capture of Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which were considered as the historic parts of the 'Biblical Land of Israel', created an atmosphere in the country which Benny Morris refers to as "a messianic expansionist wind" (Morris 2001: 329). The occupation resulted in an increasing emotional and ideological attachment to those lands among many Israelis, and "created a psychological barrier that made it hard for many people to think about withdrawing from the territories" (Gazit 2003: 7). This mood was reinforced by the immediate annexation of East Jerusalem by a government decision following the war, and the subsequent erection of Jewish settlements in Gush Etzion, Golan and Jordan Valley.

Finally, the national unity government that had been formed prior to the war under the leadership of Labor alignment, with the aim of showing universal solidarity and easing the public anxiety on the brink of war, had brought into government representatives from opposing factions of the Israeli political spectrum. The absence of clear cut pre-war territorial and political objectives at the governmental level stimulated, in the wake of the war, an internal debate about the fate of the occupied territories. Thus, in the aftermath of the war, there were sharp differences among the ministers about what to do with the occupied territories and particularly with the West Bank. While some Labor ministers believed that the territories should be traded for peace, representatives of Herut (which later became Likud), representatives of Rafi and some Labor ministers opposed relinquishment of land, the former on religious–ideological grounds, and the latter two on security grounds, and thus, a decision with regards to the future of the West Bank was postponed to a future time. (Gazit 2003: 138). [15] Lack of consensus on national objectives of the state with regards to the territories captured, prevailed in the coming years and presented a significant constraint on government in constructing a coherent policy. In this vein, in order to avoid a domestic political crises, the Labor governments opted for an

[15] It should also be noted here that, the initial policy of the Israeli cabinet, decided on 19 June 1967 under Eshkol's leadership, was to withdraw to the international border with Egypt and Syria in return for peace. The same decision placed Gaza within Israeli territory and deferred the discussion of the status of the West Bank to a future period of discussion due to sharp differences of opinion within the government. However, the decision was only communicated to the United States and not to the Arab leaders, it was never made public and later it was cancelled as both the ministers and the military decided that the offer was too generous, and that Israel had to retain some territories for security purposes (Shlaim 2001: 253-54).

ambiguous policy of preserving the status quo in the following years, characterized by neither annexation of nor withdrawal from the territories (Shlaim 2001: 288).

To sum up what has been said so far, the 1967 war stimulated a number of complex processes in Israel which rendered the Arab-Israeli conflict more and more complicated. At the inter-state level, Israel, assessing the situation from a purely military perspective, refused to reevaluate its relations with the Arab world in the aftermath of the war, and the increasing moderation in the Arab attitudes towards Israel was read as a sign of weakness that would enable Israel to continue with the status quo, rather than as an opportunity for peace. The domestic constraints, both at the governmental and at the community levels also significantly contributed to Israel's policy of immobility. Thus the Israeli policy between 1967 and 1973 was characterized by a very rigid, hawkish approach towards the Arab states.

3.2. The International Context and the Labor Party Rule: Israel, Arab States and Palestinian Statelessness

3.2.1. Policy of Immobilism, the 1973 War and the Arab-Israeli Relations

In 1969, Golda Meir replaced Levi Eshkol as prime minister. During her term Israeli position towards the Arabs hardened. The Meir Government's policy was characterized by, "offering the Arabs only one of two alternatives: either full contractual peace without full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories or continuation of the status quo without any concessions" (Shlaim 2001: 297). Its refusal to withdraw to the 1949 lines was based on security and strategic depth considerations; any peace agreement with the Arab states had to provide Israel with 'defensible borders' against a renewed Arab attack. Although ambiguous at first, what the government meant by defensible borders was revealed in the 1969 electoral platform which envisaged "that the River Jordan would be Israel's eastern security border (based on the 1967 Allon Plan) [16], that the Golan Heights and the Gaza Strip would remain under Israeli control and that Israel would retain a strip of land all the way down to the Straits of Tiran" (Shlaim 2001: 290)

Along these lines, between 1969 and 1971 the government rejected several initiatives of land-for-peace, particularly with Egypt, on security grounds. The first of

[16] Please see the next section for an explanation of the Allon Plan and its contents.

these was the Rogers peace plan of 1970. The plan was an American initiative based on the UN Resolution 242, and was made during the course of the 1969-1970 War of Attrition between Israel and Egypt. Besides calling for a temporary cease-fire and of a military standstill zone on each side of the Suez Canal, the plan involved Israel's return to the 1949 borders with only minor modifications to ensure mutual security and the settlement of the Palestinian refugee problem. Egypt and Jordan accepted the plan, however Israel declined it on grounds that it endangered its peace and security and returned to the War of Attrition. The second peace initiative in this period was the Jarring mission of 1971. The mission was an American backed initiative to resolve the dispute between Egypt and Israel, by convincing the former into entering into a comprehensive peace agreement with Israel, and the latter into withdrawing to the 1949 international border with Egypt. Egypt, now led by Anwar al-Sadat, replied positively to the initiative. Egypt's reply was a breakthrough; for the first time since the start of the conflict an Arab country had officially and publicly expressed its readiness to enter into a peace agreement with Israel. Israel however responded that it will not withdraw to the pre-June 5 borders, and thus the initiative was terminated (Shlaim 2001: 299-301).

The failure of the Jarring mission was followed by a proposal of interim settlement by Sadat himself. He proposed re-opening the Suez Canal to Israeli shipping in return for a partial withdrawal of the Israeli troops on the eastern bank of the canal. The interim settlement would constitute the first step towards the implementation of the Resolution 242 and a full Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai. The Israeli government ostensibly welcomed Sadat's proposal, but Meir insisted that Israel would in no circumstances commit itself to a full withdrawal from Sinai, and that the new border could be negotiated after the implementation of the interim agreement, and so this initiative was also dead (Shlaim 2001: 301-309). Finally, insisting on the implementation of the 1967 Allon Plan for the future of the West Bank, the Israeli government, in 1968 and in 1972, rejected two offers with regards to the future of the Palestinian territories; the former initiated by Palestinian notables for the establishment of an autonomous, non-belligerent state in the West Bank and

Gaza, and the latter by King Hussein for the attainment of a formal peace with Israel in return for the creation of a federal United Arab Kingdom.[17]

Israel's overwhelming self-confidence that it could preserve the status quo for an indefinite period without any concessions was reinforced by two major factors. The first was related to Israel's reading of the 1969-1970 War of Attrition with Egypt. The War of Attrition was initiated by Nasser as a reaction to the failure of diplomatic means in realizing Israel's withdrawal from the territories, and was symbolized by his slogan "That which was taken by force can only be recovered by force". The war ended in 1970 without a clear victory for any of the sides, yet the Israeli politicians, the military, and the public maintained that Israel had won. This belief reinforced their beliefs about Israel's military strength and invincibility and about the lack of need for diplomatic initiatives to resolve the conflict. The Israeli leadership failed to see that the current status-quo was unbearable for Arabs, that if they could not bring about its solution through diplomacy, they could turn to the use of military power against Israel (Shlaim 2001: 289; Morris 2001: 347). Israel's rejection of the Arab peace initiatives during 1971-72 was a product of this reasoning. As Abba Eban, Israel's foreign minister at the time, explained:

> By 1973 the diplomatic deadlock the failure of the Jarring mission, the strong support given by Nixon-Kissinger administration to an attrition policy, all created a climate of exuberant self confidence that began to border on fantasy. There was an obsession with the physical borders of the country without regard to its political or moral frontiers. (Abba Eban, cited in, Shlaim 2001: 318)

The American position with regards to the region in this period, in the context of the Cold War also reinforced the Israeli stance. Israel's victory in the 1967 had led to a change in the perceptions in the US of Israel as a strong, stable ally that would help promote American interests in the Middle East, and hence the military relationship between the two countries had improved significantly. In the 1970s the US policy makers increasingly adopted the Israeli view that the continued stalemate in the Middle East was favorable to American interests, and detrimental to Soviet interests. They maintained that "the longer the stalemate continued, the more obvious it would become that the Soviet Union had failed to deliver what the Arabs wanted" (Shlaim 2001: 310). Thus prior to the 1973 War, although it engaged in peace initiatives, the

[17] These initiatives with regards to the Palestinian territories and the respective Israeli policy will be examined in greater detail in the next section

US government increasingly ignored the security concerns of the Arab actors in the region and made little attempt to encourage Israel for a political solution. To the contrary, despite Golda Meir cabinet's policy of diplomatic attrition with the Arab states and her constant refusal of all peace initiatives, the US kept on providing Israel with arms and reassured its security concerns (Tessler 1994: 479; Shlaim 2001: 315).

Furthermore, similar to the Israeli policy making between 1948-1951, in the late 1960s and early 1970s the Israeli governments successfully hid from the public the existence of peace initiatives by Arab leaders, as well as their readiness for concessions and for recognition of Israel. In this period, the Israeli security discourses and propaganda portrayed Arab demands for complete Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967 as part of an Arab plan where the return of these territories would be used as a "first stage" toward continuing their struggle to destroy the Jewish state. Such representations reinforced the siege mentality of the Israeli-Jewish community and, thus, enabled the government to justify and continue its policy of immobility (Morris 2001: 455; Lustick 1996a: 217). A relative shift in this public mentality would only start following Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in 1977.

Consequently, by 1973 there was a clear political deadlock in the Arab-Israeli conflict, mainly due to Israeli intransigence. In these circumstances, despite his moderate stance, Sadat saw that the only way to break the deadlock was to go to war. Thus October 1973 war, which was characterized by a full-scale surprise attack by Egypt and Syria on Israel within the 1967 boundaries, was shaped around solely political concerns. It was a product of the lack of diplomatic, non-military means to address the existing problems (Tessler 1994: 479-480; Shlaim 2001: 316). Its two major political objectives were "to reawake Israeli desires to pay something substantial for peace with the Arabs, and trigger serious American involvement in the process of negotiating a peace agreement" (Lustick 1996a: 208). The limited political objectives of the war and the very fact that the Egyptian and Syrian armies attacked Israel within the 1967 borders and not within Israel proper —i.e. the 1949 armistice lines—also illustrated the element of moderation in Arab attitudes towards Israel since 1967. As Ian Lustick argues, "the October war showed clearly that the Arab world had learned the lesson of the iron wall" (Lustick 1996a: 208); it showed that the aim of the Arab states was not Israel's destruction anymore, and that the Arabs by now had recognized Israel's existence as a permanent feature of the Middle East.

Indeed, the relative success of the Arab armies in the war did bring about the change that Sadat had hoped for. The war triggered committed American involvement particularly in the Egyptian-Israeli relations —widely known as the "shuttle diplomacy" of the Henry Kissinger, the then US secretary of state— and a greater Israeli willingness for concessions. It was followed by successive disengagement agreements between Israel and Egypt (1974 and 1975) and between Israel and Syria (1974), and paved the way for the 1979 peace agreement between Israel and Egypt.[18] Ironically, the concessions Israel made in 1974 and 1975 were greater than those it had refused to make in 1971 when Sadat had offered an interim settlement. Although it is not possible to know, the question, "had Israel agreed to Sadat's initiative in 1971, could the war be avoided", nevertheless remains relevant for purposes of immanent critique.

In this sense, the 1973 War proves important, for it led to a reconsideration of the current situation and interests in both Israeli and the US governments. From then on, the American government, also in the context of its Cold War rivalry with the Soviet Union and in an attempt to marginalize the influence of the latter in the affairs of the Middle East, redefined its interests with respect to the Arab-Israeli conflict and took upon itself the more active role of the 'evenhanded' peace broker. Israel, on the other hand, both due to its military and political reliance on the US and due to its realization that the previous policy of immobility, as well as the previous arguments about the deterrence of strategic depth, have decisively failed in providing it with security, became more willing for a compromise.

Domestically, the 1973 War stimulated a further polarization among the secular peace oriented and the religious expansionist camps in Israel, and among their representatives in the Knesset. The war had clearly demonstrated the failure of the post-1967 argument that retaining the territories would prevent war and provide Israel with security (Naor 2003: 135). In cognizant of this fact, the members of the pragmatic peace camp argued that achievement of peace and security could not be realized through military might and confrontation, but through complete withdrawal and a political understanding with the Arabs. The religious expansionist camp, in

[18] The disengagement agreement with Syria was not followed by a more comprehensive agreement, since "Israel took the view that there was only room for 'cosmetic changes' in the disengagement lines on Golan Heights" (Shlaim 2001: 341). This was of no interest to Syria, so negotiations for a second Israeli-Syrian agreement did not succeed.

belief of the Jewish people's right to the territories of the West Bank and Gaza, had argued instrumentally in the wake of 1967, that Israel had to hold on to the territories also for strategic depth and security considerations. When the argument about the strategic depth failed with the war, in fear that Israel might now withdraw from the territories, the religious expansionist camp shifted their instrumental emphasis for retaining the territories from existential security to personal security arguments endangered by Palestinian terrorism (Naor 1999: 151). Moreover in order to create irreversible facts on the ground they accelerated their settlements efforts in the occupied territories. The emergence of Gush Emunim in this period was a result of this process and it further contributed to shaping the communal character of the conflict between Jews and the Palestinians.

In final analysis, the 1973 war and the subsequent triumph of diplomacy over the military means in the Arab-Israeli conflict marked a turning point for the conflict, where the inter-state conflict between Israel and the Arab states diminished in relative importance, and the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, in the backdrop of the continued Israeli occupation and the Palestinian struggle for an independent state of their own, became the central issue of the conflict in the Middle East (Tessler 1994: 465). Accordingly, with the declining threat of all-out war and the rising role of Palestinian terrorism in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the security argument in Israel would gradually shift from one of national security to one of individual security, at the level of practice, if not always so at the level of discourse.

3.2.2. The Palestinian Territories in the Context of Israeli Security: Jordanian option vs. Palestinian Statelessness

The Labor Governments' policies with regards to the future of the West Bank were characterized by what is known as the 'Allon Plan' or the 'Jordanian option'. Prime Minister Eshkol himself came to believe that Israel needed to retain military control over these territories for strategic depth, yet simultaneously he was against annexation, for this would mean a binational state and would endanger the Jewish and democratic character of Israel (Shlaim 2001: 255, Morris 2001: 330). Eventually, the majority agreed on the plan proposed by Yigal Allon at the end of July 1967, which proposed to divide the West Bank between Israel and Jordan in accordance with Israel's security and demographic needs. The plan, which was referred to by the

Israeli policy makers misleadingly as a 'territorial compromise', foresaw the incorporation of the Jordan Valley and the other strategic locations to Israel, while leaving those areas densely populated by Arabs to the Jordanian Rule. It was a product of a realist view of security and was designed, in Allon's own words, "To promote self defense borders from strategic perspective and the prominent [Jewish] features of the state from national perspective" (cited in, Rynhold 2001: 42). Accordingly, it envisioned a policy of selective settlement in the areas retained by Israel, and a demilitarization of the areas handed over to Jordan. Although never formally adopted as government policy, from 1968 onwards the 'Allon Plan' —or in other words 'the Jordanian option'— became the unofficial policy of the Labor led governments until 1977 with regards to the future of the West Bank, and of Labor opposition thereafter (Morris 2001: 330; Inbar 1991: 2).[19]

While trying to outline a plan for the future of the West Bank and Gaza, Israel solely prioritized its own perceived security needs, and completely avoided dealing with the national, political and socio-economic needs and longings of the Palestinian population under its custody. In the political discourse, the Israeli position was best summed up by Golda Meir's infamous statement that "there is no such thing as a Palestinian people". Israel's leaders refuted that the Palestinians were a people and thus a separate political entity with national aspirations, and strictly refused to recognize or negotiate with the PLO, which was gradually ascending in Palestinian politics, on the future of the territories.[20] In their view the Palestinians were not viable actors, independent of the Arab states, but were merely pawns used against

[19] It should also be noted here that, during late 1967 and early 1968, the Eshkol government also explored the options for a limited Palestinian autonomy in those territories that Israel did not need, and held a number of meetings were held with the traditional leaders of the West Bank. However the meetings proved unproductive, for the leadership wanted to have an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, a proposal that Israel would not accept (Shlaim 2001: 255, 261). Shortly afterwards, Israel turned to the Jordanian option and the Palestinian option altogether disappeared from the agendas of successive Israeli governments until after the 1987 Palestinian Intifada. The significance of this episode however is that it shows the leaders of the West Bank had already seen that the solution to the Palestinian problem lay in a two-state solution, before the PLO had.

[20] Between 1968 and 1970, under Fatah leadership, the PLO set out to establish organizational unity within Palestinian ranks, and was transformed into a comprehensive political front uniting all resistance groups. This process was complemented by a significant expansion of activities that helped mobilize the Palestinian population, where the organization, for the first time, established its political presence in the Palestinian towns and refugee camps of East Jordan in particular, and gained mass support with the political and national agenda it had set (Tessler 1994: 426-428). So prior to its expulsion form Jordan in 1970-71, the organization had established its presence both in South Lebanon and in Jordan, in such an institutionalized way that it was termed a *state-within-a-state*.

Israel by purposeful agents (Rynhold 2001: 42). "Therefore", in the words Shlomo Gazit, "they could not be viewed as partners to a dialogue. At the very most their problems could be discussed with a third party, such as Jordan, Egypt and even the United States" (Gazit 2003: 8-9).

In this vein the Palestinian issue was conceptualized by the Israeli leadership solely within the framework of Israeli military security. Indeed, in the immediate wake of the occupation, a military regime, characterized by "a repressive structure of occupation and control" (Morris 2001: 336) was established to rule and administer the territories. This regime severely curtailed all basic human and civic rights of the residents of the territories and became a growing source of political, economic and social insecurities that confronted the Palestinians in every walk of their lives (Pappe 2004: 198).[21] Although the military regime was confronted with acts of civil disobedience, and active and passive resistance from the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza in its early days, these were easily, rapidly and efficiently suppressed by the IDF through brutal military means. (Ilan Pappe 2004: 197-198; Morris 2001: 341-342). Following the 1970-1971 'Black September' events and the expulsion of the PLO from Jordan, the external Palestinian challenge to the West Bank was also significantly eliminated and the Israeli leadership felt that it now held a free and secure hand in determining the future of the territories (Tessler 1994: 474). Paradoxically, Israel's means of occupation further fueled the rise of Palestinian nationalism in the territories and stimulated support for the PLO, even though their obvious manifestations were crushed by the military regime. Nevertheless, having already negated the Palestinian option of autonomy in the territories, the leadership

[21] Some of the major Israeli policies regarding the occupation involved, political repression even of passive opposition to Israeli rule; land confiscation; collective punishment; expulsion of Palestinians and encouragement of Palestinian emigration; and those economic policies where the territories were rendered totally dependent on that of Israel, in a colonial relationship. Moshe Dayan, who was the architect of the Israeli military administration in the territories revealed the Israeli position as follows: "we must understand the motives and causes for the continued emigration of the Arabs, from both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and not undermine their causes, even if they are lack of security and lack of employment, because after all we want to create a new map" (Dayan 1967, cited in, Morris 2001: 338). It should also be noted that the occupation, and the means used against the Palestinians had a brutalizing effect on the IDF, and resulted in an erosion of morality considerations during its conduct in the territories. Yet, the Israeli intellectuals who warned against the corrupting effects of the occupation while drawing attention to its moral consequences, were belittled and delegitimated by the Israeli leadership. Golda Meir, herself sharply opposed the morality argument about the occupation through use of the existential security argument: "For me the supreme morality is that the Jewish people has a right to exist. Without that there is no morality in the world" (cited in Morris 2001: 343).

now more decisively maintained that there could only be one possible partner for negotiations over the West Bank and Gaza – Jordan (Pappe 2004: 211).

King Hussein, however, was more cognizant of the Palestinian identity of the West Bank, and was aware that, restrained by both the wider Arab and Palestinian public opinion and the PLO, he could not agree on any territorial concessions with regards to the Palestinian territories without endangering his own legitimacy and his regime's security. Thus from the very start the Allon Plan was unacceptable to him by all means. Thus he came up with an alternative proposal in 1972 for the creation of a federation between Jordan and Palestine (i.e. the West Bank), which was swiftly and categorically rejected by Golda Meir, who said it greatly endangered Israel's security and peace (Pappe 2004: 211; Shlaim 2001: 313). It is interesting to note how the Israeli leaders almost constantly ignored and downplayed the security concerns of King Hussein, while prioritizing their own country's security. Indeed, despite the King's clear stance and his explanations, time and time again, they continued on bringing up the Allon Plan, with only minor modifications, in the secret meetings they held with Hussein, only to receive the same response.

Israel's insistence of the Jordanian option was also, though partially, supported by the international circumstances. The opinion of the international community during late 1960s and early 1970s was characterized by a lack of significant support for the Palestinian option. Until 1974, the UN, in accordance with the Resolution 242, defined the Palestinian problem as a basic refugee problem, a humanitarian issue that needed to be tackled among Israel and the Arab states, and did not mention about the political rights and needs of the Palestinians as a people (Tessler 1994: 433-434). And so did the peace initiatives that took place within this period. In this early period, the PLO was viewed in the international community basically as a guerilla organization and did not enjoy international legitimacy. Moreover, being interested only in its Cold War security agenda, the US was also uninterested in the Palestinian national aspirations and pressurized Israel to resolve the matter with Jordan. This stance of the US prevailed even after the PLO was granted official recognition in the UN in 1974, and the 'shuttle diplomacy' of Henry Kissinger during 1974 and 1975 between Jerusalem and Amman was still directed at resolving the fate of the Palestinian territories in accordance with the Jordanian option and at the expense of the Palestinians.

Israel had initially rejected dealing with and recognizing the PLO on the grounds that the latter was a terrorist organization committed to the destruction of Israel. Indeed between 1968 and 1970 the PLO, as was also stated in its charter, had adopted the armed struggle against Israel, mostly in the form of guerilla warfare, as the only means to liberate the whole land of Palestine from the Zionists, and consequently, realized numerous guerilla attacks against Israel from its bases in South Lebanon and Jordan (Tessler 1994: 437-39). However, following its devastating expulsion from Jordan during 1970 and 1971, the organization entered a gradual process of increasing moderation, where the radical groups that were held responsible for the expulsion were marginalized within the organization. Between 1970 and 1973 the organization redefined its means of liberation, and although commitment to armed struggle still prevailed, greater emphasis was placed on international diplomacy and the establishment of political relations with major governments (Tessler 1994: 464). The main objective of the PLO's diplomatic activity was to bring about a redefinition of the Palestinian question in the international arena, from that of a more simplistic refugee issue, as had been addressed to in the UN Resolution 242, into one of *statelessness*. It insisted that the in the context of the conflict with Israel the Palestinians were more than a collection of displaced individuals in need of humanitarian aid, but rather "a people and a nation that has been deprived of its land and had its aspirations for statehood thwarted" (Tessler 1994: 433). In this respect, it argued, the Palestinian problem was thus a political problem, and it required a political solution.

The organization's emphasis on diplomacy especially bore its fruits in the aftermath of the 1973 War. In the course of 1974 the PLO's international standing improved first when it was recognized as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people", by all the Arab states, including Jordan, in the Arab League Summit in Rabat, and second, when the UN General Assembly recognized the "inalienable rights" of the Palestinian people —including the right to self-determination and the right to national independence and sovereignty— and granted the PLO observer status in the UN. At the same time, the organization also took a step to further moderate its political program. Starting with 1974 the PLO now recognized the establishment of a separate Palestinian state in the occupied territories of West Bank and Gaza Strip as its prior and more immediate short-term goal. (Shlaim 2001: 330, 333). Furthermore, in significant departure from traditional PLO

thinking, it emphasized the possibility of a political dialogue between the Palestinian state and peace oriented forces in Israel, which had grown stronger and more visible following the 1973 war (Tessler 1994: 483-487).

Meanwhile the PLO still continued its armed struggle, however, in this period the function of armed struggle changed and became an instrument of policy with the aim of securing a broader diplomatic strategy. On the one hand, through armed struggle, the organization tried to demonstrate its presence, "'spoil' political initiatives that excluded the Palestinians —such as the shuttle diplomacy of US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in 1974-1975— and persuade United States and Israel of the need to bring the PLO into the peace process" (Sayigh 1997: 27). On the other hand, through the development of the Palestinian forces in Lebanon, it aimed at protecting the PLO's statist entity from attack and to "shield the internal processes of Palestinian state building, even if they took place in exile" (Sayigh 1997).

To sum up, by 1975 the PLO had largely succeeded in obtaining recognition from the international community —with the exception of the US and Israel— as the sole legitimate representative of the stateless Palestinian people, and also had geared support among the Palestinians living in the territories. Moreover, both as a function of and as affecting these international political achievements, between 1967 and 1977, the organization had gone through a process of increasing moderation, where "these elements [within the organization that] favored the pursuit of Palestinian goals through political rather than military action, and placed emphasis on the establishment of an independent state alongside Israel" became dominant in the organization (Tessler 1994: 498; also 492-93).

The implications of these developments for the course of the conflict were twofold: First the moderation of the organization and the resort to armed struggle as a means for diplomacy showed that the Israeli iron wall strategy had also succeeded over the Palestinians, as it had on the Arab states following the 1967 war, and that the PLO had recognized the invincibility of Israel. Seen in this light, the objectives of the PLO in resort to arms were arguably similar to those of Egypt when it had initiated the 1973 War. Second, the international developments and the PLO's recognition meant that the Palestinians, rather than Jordan, now held the right to these territories captured by Israel in the 1967 war. In the case of an Israeli withdrawal from the West

Bank and Gaza, these territories would revert not to Jordan, but to the Palestinians for the establishment of an independent state.

Nevertheless, despite these significant developments, Israel position towards the PLO remained unchanged. The moderation of the PLO was interpreted by the Israeli leadership as a mere change of tactics rather than a change in the worldview and aims. The Rabin government (1974-1977) continued the prior line of Israeli policy and refused to recognize or negotiate with the PLO and to agree to the establishment of a Palestinian state. The US Government also committed itself to PLO's non-recognition so long as the PLO did not formally recognize Israel's right to exist (Morris 2001: 441). So, between 1974 and 1975, the shuttle diplomacy of Henry Kissinger, with regards to the Palestinian territories, was directed towards maintaining a disengagement agreement between Jordan and Israel. In the secret talks that were held between the Rabin-led-government and King Hussein, this time the king put forward two proposals: to sign an interim agreement which would involve Israel's partial withdrawal from the West Bank, or to sign a full fledged peace agreement in return for Israel's withdrawal from all the territories (Shlaim 2001: 331). However he met with Israel refusal, based on both security and domestic considerations, and talks ended without a solution for good and Israel turned its attention to the Egyptian disengagement.

Rabin's approach to Jordan was constricted by his domestic as well as international concerns. He believed that the surprise attack in 1973 had eroded Israel deterrent image in the eyes of the Arab states, and has shaken the trust among the Israeli community to the Israeli military might (Shlaim 2001: 351). Moreover, the diplomatic achievements of the PLO from 1974 onwards had brought about condemnation of Israeli policies in the international arena, and had pushed Israel onto the defensive. Added to these were the increasing polarization among the society, between the secular peace camp and the religious expansionist camp, and among their representatives in the Knesset. In these circumstances, although Rabin believed in the principle of 'land-for peace', and that in the end Israel would have to make some territorial concessions for peace, he also feared that these might be interpreted as a sign of weakness by the Arabs, could further erode the confidence of the Jewish electorate on the Labor party —whose reputation had already been damaged by the war— and could end up in a domestic political crisis. Rabin's policies were also shaped by his overall assessment of the Arab-Israeli conflict; he believed that the

heart of the Middle East problem was Israeli-Egyptian relations and that the problem of Jordan and the Palestinians was neither central nor urgent (Shlaim 2001: 334). In the end, Rabin opted for a strategy of waiting through which Israel would rebuild its deterrent image and would be stronger both domestically and internationally for a final decision on the fate of the territories. What he failed to foresee was the electorate defeat of his party by one which entertained annexationist ideals about the territories on religious-ideological grounds and completely rejected the formula of 'land-for-peace' with regards to the occupied Palestinian territories.

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So by the end of the Labor's term, the conflict with the Arab states had ceased to be an existential matter for Israeli security. Meanwhile, the rise of the PLO in Palestinian politics, the international recognition of the Palestinian problem as a political one of statelessness, the subsequent gradual fade of the Jordanian option, and with the renewed diplomatic relations between Israel, and Egypt and Syria during the same period, as well as the continued armed struggle of the PLO and the ascendance of the religious right in Israeli politics, had given rise to the transformation of the conflict from an inter-state one between Israel and the Arab states to a communal one, where a state and a people were struggling for control over the same land. This transformation, and the communal nature of the conflict would gain all the more prominence following the 1977 electoral victory of the Likud and the emergence of the Greater Israel Ideology.

3.3. Inter–Communal Context and the Likud Party: the "Greater Israel" Ideology vs. the Palestinian Struggle for a State

3.3.1. A Radical Shift in the Israeli Discourse: Ideology, Security and Land

The Labor governments' policies with regards to the occupied Palestinian territories had been motivated and shaped by security considerations, based on a doctrine of defensible borders. This is not to deny that these policies were expansionist in character or that the policy makers were constrained in their decisions and policies with the ideological and religious currents that ran throughout the Knesset and the society at large. Nevertheless, these constraints were never the priorities and the major dictates of Labor policy making, and throughout the decade,

and despite its frequent intransigent line, Labor still maintained its pragmatic vision for a land-for-peace formula in accordance with the Allon Plan.

The Likud's rise to power in 1977 changed this policy altogether, and the primacy of security arguments to retain the territories left its place to the primacy of territorial maximalism based on religious and ideological reasoning. The Likud's policies about the territories were informed by the ideology of 'Greater Israel', according to which Judea and Samaria (biblical names for the West Bank) were inseparable, integral parts of the historic Land of the Jews. Consequently, advocating the 'territorial integrity of the homeland', Likud denied both the sovereignty claims of Jordan in this area and the right of the Palestinian people to self determination in the territories (Rynhold 2001: 36; Tessler 1994: 499). In this vein, the party's advocacy of the retention of the West Bank and Gaza, portended a major shift in Israel's policies towards occupied territories.

In fact, Likud was the heir to the Revisionist Zionist movement of the 1920s, the founding father of which was Ze'ev Jabotinsky. Consequently, in continuity with the original ideology, it remained loyal to the fundamentals of Revisionism; "a belief in the Nation as a supreme value, an emphasis on power as the central value in international politics, and strong territoriality leading to incessant struggle for a Greater Israel" (Peleg 2005: 133). Yet simultaneously, the conceptualization of Likud's territoriality differed from that envisioned by the early Revisionists. The initial ideal of the early Revisionist Zionists had been the establishment of a state with a Jewish majority on the 'whole land of Israel'; that is, on both banks of the Jordan River, which were seen as integral parts of the biblical Jewish homeland. In this vein, they had viewed the exclusion of Transjordan from the area of the Jewish state as a historical mistake. Yet as Nadav Shelef (2004) explains, the territorial rhetoric of the Revisionist camp and the borders of the 'whole Land of Israel' did not remain fixed, but gradually changed from 1950s onwards. By 1970s the concept of 'the whole land of Israel' had come to correspond to the area west of the Jordan River.

According to Shelef this change in the territorial discourse of the Revisionist Zionists was a product of their battle for hegemony with the Labor Zionists to define the borders of their country and community. For the Labor Zionists, maintaining the Jewish and democratic character of the state had always been more important than

the Revisionist ideals of establishing a Jewish state on the whole land of Israel while incorporating —or expelling— a large Arab population. In this context, by the mid 1950s "it was clear even to [the revisionists] that their vision had lost out to one articulated by the Labor Zionist movement" (Shelef 2004: 136-137). In this vein, as Shelef argues, the attempts by the Revisionist movement during 1950s and 60s, to bring about a redefinition of the 'whole land of Israel', were related to its changing interests in the new political circumstances, and thus, were parts of its wider effort to stay relevant and legitimate in the political field while continuing to draw supporters.

Indeed prior to the 1967 war, none of the neo-Revisionist Knesset members were considered legitimate political partners by the leading Labor elites (Pappe 2004: 214). Yet, the 1967 war and the occupation of the West Bank created the political environment that helped render the discursive transformation in the revisionist conceptualization of land more natural and relevant (Shelef 2004: 138). So from 1967 onwards, when Likud leaders talked about 'territorial integrity of the homeland', or the unification or liberation of Eretz Israel, it was the Western Eretz Israel that they referred to. In time the previous conceptualization of the borders of the Jewish state were forgotten and this new 'shrank' home obtained such a discursive hegemony in the neo-Revisionist, i.e. Likud thinking that it became an unquestionable common sense in the following years.

Despite their emphasis on the historical right of the Jewish people to the land of Israel, nevertheless, Menachem Begin, as well as the Likud prime ministers that succeeded him, used the security argument as an integral part of their ideological claims to the West Bank and Gaza. The first signs of this discourse were revealed by Begin in immediate aftermath of the 1967 war when he said; "One may no longer separate our people's right to its ancestral homeland from its right to security, liberty and peace" (cited in, Naor 2005 a: 160-61). A clearer manifest of Likud's combination of discourses of ideology and security came in the party's manifesto for the 1977 elections:

> The right of the Jewish people to the land of Israel is eternal, and is an integral part of its right to security and peace. Judea and Samaria shall therefore not be relinquished to foreign rule; between the sea and the Jordan, there will be Jewish sovereignty alone.
>
> Any plan that involves surrendering parts of Western Eretz Israel militates against our right to the Land, would inevitably lead to the establishment of a "Palestinian State," threaten the security of the

> civilian population, endanger the existence of the state of Israel, and defeat all prospects for peace (cited in, Shlaim 2001: 353).

In this respect, Arye Naor (1999) draws attention to the rhetorical and manipulative components in the security discourses of the Likud and argues that the function of the element of security in the Likud's political discourse has been more persuasive than strategic. He maintains that;

> The main goal of this kind of argument has been to satisfy the need for rational policy making by demonstrating that the sources and the targets of that policy are rooted in realistic concepts and not in ambiguous theological ideas. The background for the security argument was the belief that Israelis would more easily be persuaded if the Greater Israel perspective were to be presented to them as the only response to the constraints of reality that could be reached using rational tools (Naor 1999: 152).

According to Naor, the security argument was mere rhetoric because even if a reasonable security solution had been found, the relinquishment of the West Bank and Gaza would still be unacceptable since it would be against the 'neo-Revisionist' ideology and in violation of the basic and unalienable right of the Jewish people to their historic homeland. Nevertheless, in the course of time the security argument began to dominate over the ideological discourse and "gradually became the major and most frequent rationale of the policy derived from the ideology", that is, not to relinquish any patrimony over the occupied Palestinian territories (Naor 1999: 151).

Although the security rhetoric may have served as a potent political tool for Begin, this is not to suggest that his security concerns were pretense. The core beliefs of Begin —and at large of Likud— with regards to Israel's security and the conflict were shaped by a realist conceptualization of national power, which, in return, were grounded in a broader identity construct (Peleg 2005). In this respect, Begin did believe that the State of Israel and the Jewish people at large were surrounded by hostile Gentiles, where they would forever live with the threat of destruction by them. Thus Israel had to preserve its power at all costs to prevent this from happening, and it had to construct an iron wall of Jewish military strength. Begin's personal experiences of the Holocaust —he had lost his parents and brother in the Nazi concentration camps— also had a significant role in shaping his views with regards to the Arab-Israeli and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and he and his associates shared a sincere conviction that at the heart of the problem lay the anti-Semitism of the Arab world and their devotion to destroy the Jewish people (Peleg 2005: 137;

Shlaim 2001: 353; Pallis 1992: 46). Such a conceptualization blinded them in recognizing the true roots of the conflict, as well as immanent opportunities for its peaceful solution.

In this context, it was not surprising that the foreign policy discourse of the Likud with regards to the Arabs and the Palestinians was dominated by a sharp 'us' vs. 'them' —or to put it differently, either 'us' or 'them'— dichotomy and a psychology of victimization. In fact, such a dichotomy had been an integral part of the Israeli security discourse from the very beginning. Yet, the Likud policy makers carried this to the extreme. They used binary oppositions, in which the self was presented as the absolute good and the Arabs as the absolute evil. Accordingly, the Likud political discourse, presented the Arabs as the reincarnation of Nazis and as chronic anti-Semites, likened PLO leader Yassir Arafat to Hitler, frequently evoked the Holocaust memory in matters relating to security of Israel, and condemned their Jewish opponents as enemies of the people (Peleg 2005: 136-138; Naor 1999: 154; Pallis 1992: 46).[22] Moreover, dehumanizing language was used to refer to the Palestinians, where they were called at times "two-legged animals" and "drugged cockroaches" (Gazit 2003: 335). The implication of this discourse for Israeli foreign policy was that, by defining the problem as one of Arab anti-Semitism and willingness to destroy the Jewish people, it portrayed the conflict between Jews and Arabs/Palestinians as a predestined, irreconcilable and inevitable one that could not be resolved through political or other means, since there was —and would be—no one to talk to on the other side (Peleg 2005: 138). Genuine peace in these circumstances was impossible. Thus what the Jewish people had to do to survive against this hostility was to resist the 'illusions of peace' (Naor 1999: 156; Rynhold 2001: 36).

[22] Karin Fierke (2007: 123-144) in reflecting on the role of securitization of trauma for the political discourse and for regional security, also touches upon the instrumental use of the Holocaust, as a form of societal trauma, by the Israeli leadership. According to Fierke, "An experience of societal trauma … [partially] made it possible to weave a coherent collective identity in political discourse which paved the way for a projection of military force. The result was a regional and international security dilemma" (2007: 134). Specifically for the Holocaust, Fierke establishes that construction of a direct link between Arab states as Israel's enemies and the Nazis, "established the basis for articulating an existential thereat to Israeli identity.… The dangers confronting Israel remained essentially Nazi dangers and any military threat to Israel would mean a new Holocaust. In this respect, the trauma of the Holocaust made the consolidation of Jewish identity not only possible but actual. This trauma had had a central place in the collective memory of Israel and it has been repeatedly invoked by Israeli leaders to justify particular acts vis-à-vis the Arab world and Palestinian population" (2007: 133).

Likud's discourses about the 'other', the 'enemy' were combined with discourses about the land. Frequent references to the territorial integrity of the homeland were coupled by Begin's instructions to the government personnel and the media to use the biblical terms of Judea and Samaria while referring to the West Bank. As for, Gaza Strip, it would be called the Gaza District in a manner as to emphasize that it was a part of Israel (Pappe 2004: 202). Moreover, shortly after he took power Begin in his address to the Knesset stated with regards to the legal status of the territories that, "as far as international law is concerned, Israel's rule over the Land of Israel is not that of an occupying power"; instead he defined Israel's status as that of a "liberator" (Peleg 2005: 141). Later, after he assumed power from Begin, Yitzhak Shamir, in many speeches, presented the land and territorial integrity as an important element in constructing the Jewish nation, and as basis for this nation's unity (Shenhav 2004: 91). In one event, for example, he said; "As there is one sun, thus Jerusalem is one, and as there is one Jerusalem, thus there is one Israel, and as there is one Israel, thus there is one Israeli nation" (Shamir 1992, cited in Shenhav 2004: 91). Meanwhile, Begin-led government's policies with regards to the territories were not only restricted to discursive action, but were manifested in a sharp change in its settlement policy.

Although it had been Labor who had first initiated the construction of settlements in the territories following the occupation, the nature and number of Labor's settlements had been limited to security considerations, and had been mainly guided by the Allon Plan. Conversely, upon coming to power in 1977, Likud started an immense project of building civilian Jewish settlements in the territories. Settlement efforts especially concentrated on the West Bank and were projected to the Israeli public as part of both a national and a security agenda. Indeed Likud's 1981 Principles of Government Policy read: "Settlement of the land of Israel is a right and an integral part of the nation's security" (Naor 2005a: 161). In essence, however, the project was hardly related to strategic considerations. Rather, it was designed to make the occupation irreversible, and to enable Israel to eventually annex the territories by fragmenting the Palestinian land, creating irreversible facts on the ground, and paving the way for the Judeazation of the West Bank through changing its political and demographic structure (Tessler 1994: 505-506; Peleg 2005: 140; Peled 2006: 23). Moreover it was also designed to limit the political options that would be available to future Israeli governments (Tessler 1994: 540). The confirmation for the essential

aims of Likud settlements would come more than a decade later, prior to the Oslo peace process, from the son of Begin, Benyamin Zeev Begin, who was also a prominent Likud member. "In strategic terms," explained young Begin, "the settlements (in Judea, Samaria and Gaza) are of no importance. They constitute an obstacle, an insurmountable obstacle, to the establishment of an independent Arab state west of the Jordan River" (1991, cited in, Pallis 1992: 45-46).

Therein, besides helping religious groups like Gush Emunim[23] in their settlement efforts, the Likud governments, from 1980s onwards, also made instrumental use of economical factors and established settlements with heavily subsidized housing opportunities to attract ordinary Israelis. This latter policy was an invention of Ariel Sharon[24], and became a cornerstone in the government's 'fact creation' strategy. The idea behind it, as argued by Meron Benvenisti, was,

> [R]apid creation of a strong constituency of Israelis, who, while they may not necessarily embrace Likud ideology, can be relied upon to fight any scheme involving territorial compromise, in order to protect their newly acquired quality of life in the territories (Benvenisti 1984: 59).

In other words, by drawing the non-ideological Israelis to the territories for economic and practical reasons, the Likud governments aimed to change their perceptions and beliefs with regards to the territories and security, in a hawkish direction.

Meanwhile, Israel continued to apply strict military rule in the territories and furthermore, confiscation of private Palestinian land to build new settlements, and house demolitions, both of which were strictly illegal under international laws of belligerent occupation, became ordinary actions. Consequently, for the local resident Palestinians life in the territories became increasingly difficult and insecure in a broader critical sense of the term. One advisor to Yitzhak Shamir (who succeeded Begin as prime minister in 1983) explained that Likud's strategy "was based on the

[23] Gush Emunim is a nationalist-religious settler movement identified with the Greater Israel ideology. It emerged in 1974, as a consequence of the 1973 War and in fear that the new diplomatic initiatives created by the war could lead the Labor government to territorial concessions in the West Bank. Initially the government and the Labor political elites allowed its emergence because, as explained by David Newman "they were not … seen as constituting a threat to the political hegemonies of the elites… to which these religious protest groups had no real access" (Newman 2005: 219). In time however, and especially following Likud's ascendance in Israeli politics, the movement transformed into a powerful political player with a strong influence over the Israeli society. For more information on the group and its impact on Israeli politics and society, see Newman 2005.

[24] Minister of Agriculture 1977-1981, and Minister of Defense 1981-1983

hope that Palestinians in the occupied territories would find life so uncomfortable that they would decide to leave on their own in large numbers" (cited in, Telhami 1996: 42; also see Morris 2001: 339)

Overall, Likud's policies of Judaization of the occupied territories, as well as its discourses about land and the roots of the conflict had many lasting consequences on the nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To begin with, settlement of Israeli Jews in the Palestinian territories, and the freedom of movement they enjoyed there, helped in blurring the Green Line as a meaningful border both at the perceptual and at the factual levels. This process, in return influenced the central conceptions that underlay the construction and borders of the Israeli-Jewish political community. The extension of the country's borders to the 'promised' ones —coupled with the different legal status granted to the Jewish settlers and local Palestinian residents of the territories— resulted in a shift in the common collective identity of the political community from one of Israeliness to Jewishness. In other words, the uncertainty about the exact borders of the Israeli state stimulated a process in which the civic membership in Israel left its place to more exclusionary forms of ethnic association where the society was increasingly defined as the whole Jewish nation (Migdal 1996; Yiftachel 1999). Together with the ascendance of Palestinian nationalism in the territories, and the increasing tension between the Jewish settlers and the local Palestinians as two communities struggling for the same land, this change in the boundaries of the Israeli-Jewish community had a significant impact on the nature of the conflict attaining an inter–communal and an intractable character.

In short, Likud's policies and discourses of territorial maximization had a significant impact on turning the conflict into an inter-communal and an intractable one between the Jews and the Palestinians. As summed up by Shlomo Gazit "[t]his policy change [by Likud] made the almost inevitable problems of the relations between the occupier and the occupied into existential confrontation, a zero-sum confrontation of 'all or nothing'" (Gazit 2003: 336). The implications of this policy would become all the more prominent in the light of the Likud foreign policy following the Camp David Accords of 1979.

3.3.2. Israeli Foreign Policy, the Occupied Territories, and the Lebanon War of 1982

Upon coming to power Begin had adopted two major aims of foreign policy. One, as discussed above, was integrity of the homeland. The second aim was peace. In this vein, while he had made it clear from the start that he would not accept the principle of withdrawal from the West Bank under any circumstances, Begin had also stated, in a pragmatic manner, his willingness for a reconsideration of Israel's relations with Egypt and Syria (Shlaim 2001: 355). Indeed, it was the Begin-led government that responded favorably to a renewed peace initiative by Egypt and agreed to full withdrawal from Sinai in return for Egyptian recognition and normalization of relations between the two countries.

The change in US policy with the election of Jimmy Carter to presidency in 1976 was an important factor that underlay this development. Carter was committed to full withdrawal of Israel from the occupied territories, and he was the first American president that recognized of Palestinian rights and supported the establishment of a Palestinian homeland. Thus from his early days in office onwards he started pressurizing Israel for a peace agreement with the Arab states (Shlaim 2001: 350, 355).

The most important facilitator in the road to peace, without doubt, however, was the change in Israeli public opinion following Anwar Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in 1977. Indeed the essential aim of Sadat in undertaking this trip, which was characterized by his slogan "no more war", had been to break the psychological barrier that he believed made up the large part of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In this respect he was quite successful. His visit made a powerful emotional impact on a public which had been made to believe for years now that there was "no one to talk to" on the other side, and rapidly helped weakening their age-old siege mentalities, their psychology of isolation and intransigence (Morris 2001: 455; Shlaim 2001: 360; Pappe 2004: 216). The change in public mood was epitomized by the establishment of a grassroots movement called Peace Now, which was dedicated to raising support among the Israeli community for the peace process and in these lines advocated withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967. It should be noted, however, that the support of the movement for withdrawal was based more on their vision of

Israel's security and future as a Jewish and democratic state, than on moral concerns about the Palestinians (Pappe 1997b: 37-38). Nevertheless, in the wake of the 1979 Camp David Summit, the movement managed to organize the biggest demonstration in Israel's history and rallied around 100,000 people. The demonstration displayed the extent of popular yearning for peace and had an impact on Begin's agreement to a peace treaty with Egypt at the Camp David (Shlaim 2001: 371).

At the Camp David Summit, which took place under the good offices of the US, Begin agreed —although due to enormous pressure from both the Americans and from the key members of his own government, and particularly from foreign minister Dayan, and defense minister Weizman— to withdrawal from the whole Sinai Peninsula in exchange for Egyptian recognition of Israel, and normalization of relations between the two countries. Moreover, the two parties also agreed in principle on autonomy talks for the future of the West Bank. Somewhat ironically, the Camp David Accords were a major achievement for Begin, for they enabled him to achieve his both aims of peace and territorial integrity (Shlaim 2001: 377). On the one hand, by agreeing to peace with Egypt, he neutralized the strongest Arab state, brought in peace and tranquility to Israel's southern border and deprived the Arabs from any real military option in the future. On the other hand, by —ostensibly and tactically— recognizing the "the legitimate rights of the Palestinians" and agreeing to the autonomy concept, he warded off pressures with regards to the fate of the territories for a while, and earned precious time to solidify Jewish settlements in territories as a part of his long-term objective of *de jure* annexation, while preventing any foreign sovereignty over the West Bank. Ezer Weizman, who served as minister of defense in Likud cabinet, yet later resigned in protest of his policies in the territories, summed up Begin's position: "he was giving up Sinai to protect himself against any concessions in the West Bank" (cited in, Peleg 2005: 139). In this vein, the Camp David 'concessions' should be seen as a pragmatic act, designed to guarantee permanent Israeli control over the Palestinian territories.

Indeed, Begin adopted a view of autonomy that was referred to by Weizman as a "caricature of genuine self-rule" (cited in, Shlaim 2001: 366). He emptied the autonomy agreements of their intended content, adopted the concept of non-territorialism where the autonomy would be applicable not to the land but only to the people but who lived on it, and insisted that "self-determination meant little more than [Palestinian] administrative control over local affairs" (Tessler 1994: 529).

Moreover, he stepped up settlement activity, as soon as the agreement with Egypt was signed.

Begin-led Likud's policy of the territories also stimulated an intense domestic debate in Israeli political spectrum. Labor was among Likud's fiercest critiques. While still advocating a solution to the Palestinian problem in accordance with the Allon Plan, Labor argued against Likud's policies of retaining permanent Israeli rule over the territories, and claimed that these policies were undermining the peace process, strengthening the position of the Arab rejectionists opposed to negotiations with Israel, and creating serious new security problems for Israel (Tessler 1994: 540). Their latter concern was verified shortly after with the initiation of an escalating cycle of violence between the Jews and Palestinians in the territories and the emergence of an underground Jewish extremist organization calling itself "Terror against Terror".[25] In the face of these developments proponents of territorial compromise —among whom were the Peace Now movement and other domestic opponents of Likud besides the Labor— argued that retention of West Bank and Gaza was not in Israel's interest. In their view, it placed hostile elements inside Israel's de facto borders, weakened the democratic character of the Israeli-Jewish society "by making Jews insensitive to the rights of those Palestinians over whom their government exercised control" and even led to emergence of Jewish terrorism (Tessler 1994: 543).

In 1981 Israeli elections Begin was re-elected to office. A strike to an Iraqi nuclear power plant only days before the election, had played a major role in shifting the support of the Israeli electorate in the party's favor, and as such had demonstrated the power of the still prevailing right-wing, military mind-set among the society despite the peace agreement with Egypt. With two of the party's most hawkish members, Yitzhak Shamir and Ariel Sharon heading foreign and defense ministries, the government now adopted an even more aggressive and uncompromisingly nationalistic foreign policy vision for Israel. In contradiction to the Accords signed at Camp David, and despite significant domestic opposition, the foreign policy guidelines of the new cabinet emphasized the prior view that, "right of the Jewish

[25] This organization was associated with Gush Emunim and the larger Jewish settler movement. Against shooting of six religious Jews in Hebron —where a small Jewish settlement had been established at the heart of the city— by Palestinian assailants, they started a campaign of planting bombs in the cars of Palestinian mayors and attacking local Palestinians (Tessler 1994: 542).

people to the Land of Israel is an eternal unassailable right that is intertwined with the right to security and peace" and stated that Israel would assert its claim to sovereignty over all of the land west of the Jordan River. Thus, under the renewed government, "[I]t became official policy to establish a permanent and coercive jurisdiction over the 1.3 million inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza" (Shlaim 2001: 390). [26]

As a result, the situation in the West Bank and Gaza deteriorated and became increasingly tense, as the Palestinians became more and more disillusioned with the Israeli policies of occupation, administration and settlement, and more conscious about their Palestinian identity. Moreover, starting from 1981, against the background of a rising international diplomatic support for the PLO and increasing Israeli isolation, Begin and Sharon took upon themselves the project of suppressing Palestinian nationalism and curbing support for the PLO in the territories (Tessler 1994: 550-551). Another major problem the local population of the West Bank and Gaza had to deal with, in this period, was the frequent vigilantism of the armed Jewish settlers, and the indifferent attitudes of the Israeli authorities in the face of these perpetrations. Increasingly violent attacks by Jewish settlers against the Palestinians, even in cases of murder, were almost always left unpunished; the perpetrators were neither arrested, nor were they put on trial (Tessler 1994: 564).

The Israeli policies of settlement, massive land confiscation, political and social oppression, and lawlessness in the West Bank and Gaza, all combined in the spring of 1982 to result in protests of massive scale by the Palestinians in the territories.[27] "The clashes that erupted during this period", as asserted by Mark Tessler, "were the most intense and prolonged of any that had occurred since Israel took control of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967" (Tessler 1994: 562). The protests were an attempt by the Palestinians to reaffirm their opposition to occupation and to demand recognition

[26] Israel's policies regarding the territories —the emptying of the autonomy concept of any political content, the building of new Jewish settlements in the most densely populated areas of the West Bank, the expropriation of the Arab land and displacement of its owners—made it impossible to continue the peace process. Another development by the government that signaled the end of the Arab-Israeli peace process was its decision in 1981 to annex the Golan Heights. The decision was intended to convey the Arabs and the international community, as well as to its own settler constituency who was against withdrawal from Sinai, the message that there would be no more future withdrawals after Sinai (Shlaim 2001: 393-394, Tessler 1994: 559).

[27] These protests involved demonstrations and protest marches, general strikes, and incidents in which young Palestinians threw stones at the Israeli soldiers and Jewish civilians traveling in the occupied territories (Tessler 1994: 562)

of their right to self determination. Not surprisingly, the Israeli authorities responded to the protests both by harsh military intervention, and by further political and social oppression, where they closed down those Palestinian institutions that they claimed were supporting the PLO, and forcefully removed pro-PLO mayors from office. Yet these measures neither reduced the intensity of turmoil, nor undermined the influence of the PLO among the Palestinian population (Tessler 1994: 565). Indeed, they had the opposite impact, and also were significantly criticized by Likud's domestic opponents. One commentator in a critique of the government policy wrote; "Never has there been such brutalization… Arab blood is cheap. Sometimes it seems that Ariel Sharon is the greatest recruitment officer the PLO ever had" (cited in, Tessler 1994: 568).

The incidents of 1982 spring clearly demonstrated, for the advocates of territorial compromise, and for the world at large that, in the absence of a resolution of the Palestinian issue there would be no genuine peace for Israel. The Likud government had also made a conclusion in similar lines, though its definition of a 'resolution' was radically different from that of its opponents. For Likud and its leading figures Begin and Sharon, the root cause for Israel's problems in territories was the PLO, not their own policies. An American state department official summed up the Likud's position in the following words: "The Israeli government thinks it has a Palestinian problem because of the PLO; not that it has a PLO problem because of the Palestinians" (cited in, Tessler 1994: 569).

The incidents and the failure of the government policies in suppressing Palestinian nationalism in the territories did not change Begin and Sharon's initial conclusions. To the contrary, it convinced them that handling the PLO problem in Lebanon through its destruction would have to be the key step in 'resolving' the Palestinian 'problem'. Besides its strong influence in the territories, the need for Likud to immediately deal with the PLO also stemmed from the organization's significant diplomatic achievements in the recent years. Indeed, according to Sayigh, by 1982 the PLO had succeeded in turning itself "from merely a state-within-the-state in Lebanon into a far flung state-in-exile," and had come to achieving a breakthrough in the Palestinian issue (Sayigh 1997: 27-28) This, combined with Reagan administration's pressures on Begin to return to autonomy talks, presented a significant challenge to the Greater Israel project of the government. In this respect, suppressing Palestinian nationalism in the territories and rendering the PLO in

Lebanon a military and political defeat became "two interrelated aspects of a single vision shared by Begin, Sharon and other supporters of territorial maximalism" (Tessler 1994: 569). This vision played a key role in Israel's decision of invading Lebanon in the summer of 1982.

Although Begin and Sharon had also other aims in invading Lebanon —like installing a pro-Israel Christian-led government, masking the economic deterioration of the country, and shifting the focus of those maximalist Jews who opposed withdrawal from Sinai, as well as getting Syria out of Lebanon (Shindler 2002: 115-116)— nevertheless, their main driving force was destruction of the PLO and its ejection form Lebanon. The main line of their public argument for the invasion was security oriented. They maintained that, the PLO's attacks to Israel from southern Lebanon had been threatening the security of Israeli citizens in Northern Israel, and that they had to be stopped for good. This became the main public argument of the government for the 'limited' war it advocated, and enabled it to render enormous popular support for its agenda. Thus the invasion was called "Operation Peace for Galilee".[28]

The real motivation of both Begin and Sharon in invasion, however, was more political than security related. Both men had reasoned that once the PLO was destroyed and ousted from Lebanon, the backbone of Palestinian nationalism would be broken and they would have a freer hand in determining the fate of the West Bank and Gaza in accordance with their maximalist agenda, and in warding off international pressures for withdrawal from the West Bank. The government's assumption was that, in the absence of the PLO, the Palestinians would have to give up on their national political aspirations on the territories and would have to come to

[28] The trigger for the war was the assassination of the Israeli ambassador to Britain by the Palestinians in 1982, at a time when the PLO was careful in respecting the ceasefire with Israel, in order to avoid the latter's offensive. The assassination had been purposefully realized by a group led by Abu Nidal, a split from the PLO and an adversary of Arafat who advocated the military means to advance Palestinian national goals and rejected PLO's increasing moderation. Through the assassination, Abu Nidal wanted to weaken Arafat and leave him in a difficult position, and the Israeli intelligence reports confirmed this. Nevertheless, Begin purposefully ignored the intelligence reports, claiming all Palestinians terrorists were the PLO and so the PLO was responsible. It was on this base that the government legitimated its offensive agenda on the PLO in Lebanon to the Israeli public. As asserted by Schindler, "The lack of understanding of the difference between Palestinian groups and total ignorance of Palestinian politics on the part of an overwhelming majority of Israelis and Jews played into the hands of those who did not wish to distinguish between the PLO and the Abu Nidal group" (Shindler 2002: 119). The case was another example among many, where misrepresentations of or disinformation about the enemy were used to legitimize wars, that were in fact conducted with different agendas.

terms with the government's limited autonomy plan. Sharon also had wider aims and ambitions, as he envisioned a "Jordan is Palestine" solution to resolve the problem of Palestinians altogether. According to this, Israel's destruction of the PLO and its bases in Lebanon would result in an influx of Palestinians from Lebanon and the West Bank into Jordan, would eventually bring down the Hashemite monarchy, and convert the east bank of Jordan River into a Palestinian state, thus, solving the Palestinian problem of statelessness once and for all (Shlaim 2001: 396; Morris 2001: 509). It was for these reasons that Palestinian historian Rashid Khalidi wrote that "'Operation Peace for Galilee' was in a very real sense a war for the future disposition of Palestine" (1986, cited in, Morris 2001: 509).

The invasion, which started as a 'limited' operation in June 1982, lasted for more than two years and ended with Israeli withdrawal to the 'security zone' in the south of Lebanon in 1985. As far as Israel's security at its northern border was concerned, the invasion seemed to be successful, for the PLO was driven out of Lebanon in the autumn of 1982, as had been planned, and it had to move its headquarters to Tunis. With this exodus and geographical detachment from the territories, the organization lost its military alternatives against the Israeli occupation and found itself confined to unsatisfactory diplomatic means and appeals (Hroub 2000: 1). However, the war and Israel's continued invasion of the security zone in south Lebanon, breed a new and a far more efficient militant group named the Hizballah. With backing from Syria and Iran, this group conducted a fierce guerilla warfare to drive Israeli forces from Lebanon and became one of the major 'problem's of Israeli military security at the individual level in the following twenty years (Shlaim 2001: 427; Morris 2001: 540). Moreover, the PLO's geographical separation from the territories and its loss of its military means would fuel the growth other more militant and armed Palestinian resistance organizations in the territories against the occupation in the late 1980s; namely Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

At the political level too, the results of the war were disappointing. To begin with, although it was ousted from Lebanon, the PLO nevertheless maintained its influence over the Palestinian community at large, and Palestinian nationalism remained to be a powerful driving force both in the territories and among the Palestinian refugee communities. Moreover, its deprivation of military means forced it to further moderate its positions, the culmination of which would be Arafat's declaration in 1988 of recognizing Israel, and denouncing terrorism, which would

pave the way for the peace process and the prospects for the establishment of a Palestinians state during the 1990s (Morris 2001: 558). Second, the war, and especially the massacre in Sabra and Shatila, reaffirmed at the international level, the inescapable need to find a solution to the Palestinian problem. Furthermore, far from reducing international pressure on Israel for withdrawal, the war resulted in a shift in American policy where, instead previous policy which envisioned autonomy in accordance with the Camp David Accords, Americans now called for full Israeli withdrawal from the territories and establishment of a Palestinian homeland in association with Jordan and in accordance with the new "Reagan Plan". Finally, the war destroyed the hope that had been stimulated by the Sinai withdrawal and all the remaining visions for a peace in the Arab-Israeli conflict disappeared. Particularly the massive scale of force used by Israel, number of civilian casualties and most importantly the Sabra and Shatila massacre had a very negative impact on the Arab perceptions of Israel, both at public and state levels, and severely destroyed the relations between Israel and Egypt (Shlaim 2001: 418-422).

The war also had important domestic consequences. Although the Israeli public had initially supported the war on security grounds, the expansion of the war, its continuation even after its initial objectives were achieved, and the loss of large numbers of Israeli soldiers, resulted in an increasing dissent among large sectors of the public with regards to the aims and the conduct of war, and seriously damaged the consensus on national security for the first time in Israel's history. For the first time in Israeli history there were mass protests against the government, calling for the withdrawal of troops from Lebanon. The realization by the Israeli community that the war was not one of "no choice," and was not imposed on Israel by its enemies, but was a result of the political ambitions of the leaders was also effective in this dissent. Moreover, the war brought about an increasing polarization of the Israeli-Jewish society. The already existing struggle between the proponents of peace camp and advocates of 'Greater Israel' deepened following the war.

Overall the Lebanon War demonstrated both the inefficiency of military means to tackle political problems, and the means by which the national security argument could be used instrumentally by policy makers to camouflage and advance their ideological agendas. As summed up by Avi Shlaim;

> The war in Lebanon was a war for the land of Israel. But it was absurd to assume that the Palestinian problem would be solved by military

> action in Lebanon, since the roots of the problem did not lie in Lebanon… The greatest misconception and the one underlying all the others, lay in thinking that Israel's military superiority could be translated into lasting political achievements (Shlaim 2001: 422).

Indeed Israel could not translate its military security to political achievement on the Palestinian issue within this period, and realization of this would bring about a reconceptualization of Israel's approach to the Palestinian problem in the following years with the Madrid talks and the Oslo peace process.

CHAPTER 4

RISE AND FALL OF THE PEACE PROCESS: BETWEEN 1987 AND 2000

In the previous chapter the evolution of Israel's security discourses and practices in the period 1967 and 1987 were examined, against the background of the mutually constitutive processes of the transformation of conflict from an inter-state into an communal one between Israelis and the Palestinians, and the emergence of religious and ideological reasoning as the dominant discourse in guiding Israeli security conduct regarding the occupied Palestinian territories. This final chapter focuses solely on the communal context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, or in other words, the Israeli-Palestinian one between 1987 and 2000, and examines the role of (re)conceptualizations of security and the 'other' in bringing about (re)definitions of the Israeli security policy regarding the Palestinian issue against the backdrop of the 1987 Intifada, and the Oslo Peace Accords.

The years following the Palestinian uprising of 1987 against the occupation witnessed drastic developments in the nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It witnessed first, a bright optimism and an elevation of hopes among both the Palestinian and the Israeli-Jewish communities regarding the solution of the decades old conflict when Israel and the PLO signed the historic Oslo Accords in September 1993. Agreement on the establishment of an autonomous Palestinian entity in the West Bank and Gaza marked, a major breakthrough in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and for the first time after decades, political means and negotiations to resolve the conflict were prioritized, instead of violent means and mutual delegitimation.

The signing of the Oslo Accords with the Palestinians also improved Israel's relations with the wider Arab world. In 1994 Israel and Jordan signed a peace treaty, and other Arab states also began diplomatic relations with Israel. By 1996 fifteen Arab states had established diplomatic relations with Israel. Moreover the Arab

League gradually began to lift the then forty-five years old economic boycott on Israel.

From 1995 onwards, however, following the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin by a Jewish fundamentalist, increase of Islamic terrorism, and the victory of Likud's Benjamin Netanyahu in the 1996 elections, the peace process gradually began to take a downward slide. The relationship between Israel and the PLO got worse, and so did the security situation in both Israel proper and in the territories. In the end, the failure of the talks at Camp David in 2000, and the eruption of the Al-Aqsa Intifada sealed the fate of the peace process.

This chapter examines the shifts in the Israeli policy regarding the conflict with the Palestinians between 1987 and 2000, in the context of the transforming nature of the Israeli–Palestinian relations, and with a focus on the continuities and changes of security conceptualizations and practices by consecutive Israeli policy makers with different worldviews. To this end, after reflecting on the root causes and consequences of the first Palestinian Intifada and the international and regional developments that stamped the early 1990s, the chapter turns to an examination of the period of the Oslo peace process, and its implications for reconceptualizing Israeli security. Here, it explores those factors and processes that have enabled the peace process, as well as those that rendered it fragile and led to its breakdown in 2000, and try to assess the peace process in terms of its implication for Israeli security.

4.1. On the Road to Peace Process

4.1.1. The Palestinian Context: The 1987 Intifada and Its Consequences

In early December 1987 the Palestinians territories shook with a popular national uprising of unprecedented scale. The *Intifada*, as this uprising came to be called among the Palestinians, was not initially a nationalist revolt. At its roots was the Palestinian hopelessness and anger in the face of twenty years of continuous Israeli occupation. Despite its claims to an 'enlightened occupation,' the Israeli military rule in the territories had, in fact, been characterized by constant Palestinian subjugation to structural violence in all walks of life. The Palestinians were robbed of all basic human and civic rights, while life under occupation —and particularly in the refugee camps— was characterized by poverty, daily humiliation, economic exploitation, land expropriation, and social and political suppression by brutal, and oftentimes

collective, measures of the Israeli authorities. Meanwhile, there was also a growing frustration and a sense of isolation in the face of the failure of diplomatic initiatives in the international arena to bring about a political solution to their problems in the foreseeable future.[29] All these factors combined in the December of 1987, and resulted in the spontaneous outbreak of an all-encompassing Palestinian uprising.

The Intifada was a campaign of civil resistance of unprecedented scale against the Israeli occupation. For twenty years the Palestinians, both the leaders and ordinary people, had lived to bear the numerous burdens of the occupation, yet simultaneously had been excluded from the debates regarding the future of their homelands, while Israel, Jordan, the US, and later Egypt, in the light of their differing political agendas, had conducted negotiations to determine the status of the territories and fate of their residents. Now, with the Intifada, the residents of the territories wanted to show Israel and the world that they wanted to have a say in their own future (Tessler 1994: 684; Shlaim 2001: 451; Morris 2001: 561). As the uprising spread and became all-encompassing its two ultimate national objectives also became clear —self-determination and the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza— and the uprising took a nationalist character.

The Intifada took the Israelis by complete surprise. Until then, both the politicians and the military had been confident that the occupation could go on forever without any large-scale disturbances or revolts, and that even in the face of acts of protests and violence by the inhabitants of the territories, the IDF would be able effectively suppress them as it had done so in the past. This mind-set also determined the Israeli conduct in dealing with the uprising. The Israeli measures to contain the Intifada relied solely on brutal, violent means, almost always of unproportional scales, and were realized in disregard of the rule of law and in violation of human rights.

[29] Following its expulsion from Lebanon in 1982, and thus having lost its military alternatives, the PLO leadership, now settled in Tunis, found itself confined to unsatisfactory diplomatic means and appeals against the Israeli occupation, unable to deliver any solutions neither to the occupation, nor to the refugee problem. Under the governance of a Labor-Likud coalition (1984-1988) that was unable to reach a consensus on the future status of the occupied territories, Israeli position remained inflexible and intransigent. In the international arena too, and even among the Arab states, the Palestinian issue was low on the political agenda. In the Arab summit of 1987 the Palestinian issue was barely mentioned and was relegated to the sidelines (Tessler 1994: 682; Pappe 2004: 232).

Needless to say, these extreme measures failed bring the uprising under control, nor did it succeed to suppress Palestinian nationalism; to the contrary, they inflamed the intensity of the Intifada. It had been exactly such maltreatment and harassment by the Israeli authorities that lay at the roots of the Palestinian uprising and, thus, it was futile by Israeli governments to hope to suppress it through sheer resort to violence. By the end of the first month, it was obvious that the IDF policy was bankrupt (Tessler 1994: 698; Shlaim 2001: 453). While the Israeli government continued with its policy of crackdown on the Palestinian population, and despite the uprising did not triumph over Israeli military, nevertheless, both the decision makers and the public were gradually beginning to realize that they now had to consider alternatives to the status quo (Shafir 1996: 31).

One of the most important results of the Intifada was the awareness it triggered among the Israeli public of the ongoing occupation and the Palestinian problem. Prior to the uprising the Palestinian problem was not a part of the Israeli public consciousness. Even the word 'occupation' was absent from the Israeli political vocabulary until the early 1990s (Peri 2007: 98). Despite the differences in their views regarding the future of the territories, both Labor and the Likud had presented this matter as one of a security issue, and as a part of the wider Arab-Israeli inter-state problem. In this context, the Israeli political discourse had from the beginning presented Israel's administration of the territories as one of an 'enlightened occupation,' where it was argued —particularly by the Zionist right, to provide a legitimate moral basis for their territorial maximalist agenda— that the Israel's presence in the region had increased the standard of living in the territories, that the Palestinians were content with the Israeli 'administration', and demanded nothing more than a regional autonomy under Israeli rule. Likud and other rightist parties also argued that the occupation could be considered without any significant costs to Israel (Tessler 1994: 707). These assertions were accepted by the majority of the Israeli-Jewish population at face value. These perceptions were reinforced by the disappearance of the Green Line, the 1967 international border, from the maps, from the reality on the ground, and therefore from the Israeli consciousness as early as 1968 (Tessler 1994: 708; Gazit 2003: 299). Until 1987, the Israelis could freely travel in and out of the territories. Moreover, as noted by Mark Tessler, by then "a majority of Israel's population was too young to remember a time when the West Bank and Gaza were not under their country's control" (Tessler 1994: 708). For the majority of

the Israelis occupation had become a natural or —more correctly— an invisible phenomenon; it could go on forever.

The Intifada transformed these perceptions of the Israeli public. It reasserted the Green Line in the public consciousness, demonstrated to the public that neither the Palestinians were content with the occupation as claimed, nor was the continuation of the occupation cost-free, and convinced them that, the current status quo could not be sustained in the long-run, and the Palestinian problem needed to be resolved if Israel was to have any peace. Concerning how the problem would be resolved, however, the Israeli society remained more bitterly divided than ever between Left and Right (Morris 2001: 598; Shlaim 2001).[30]

On the right of the Israeli political spectrum, the religious and secular advocates of territorial maximalism, including the settlers, maintained that the solution to suppress the Intifada lay in even harsher measures by the IDF. Members of this camp, including Prime Minister Shamir himself, publicly argued that the uprising was not about Palestinian demands for political and other rights —for Israel was already running a just occupation,— but was directed at Israel's destruction, and hence threatened the very existence of Israel and the Jewish people (Shlaim 2001: 462). In this context, as it became obvious that these measures failed to contain the uprising, the idea of 'transfer' of the Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza, came to be considered a logical response to solve the Palestinian problem altogether. The idea of transfer, of course, was not new in the maximalist camp, but nevertheless its supporters have been limited to extremists. Following the outbreak of the Intifada, however, the idea seized to be a taboo and became a legitimate subject of political debate. A poll conducted in mid-1988 showed that the idea was popular among the electorate and even among some supporters of Labor (Tessler 1994: 709). In this context, it should also be mentioned that during the first year of the Intifada, the majority of the Israeli population was supportive of harsh measures adopted by the government (Shlaim 2001: 452; Tessler 1994: 706). Although a significant shift occurred in the public opinion during the course of 1989 in an opposite direction,

[30] The bitter polarization of the Left (the peace camp that wanted to go back to the June 1967 borders) and the Right (the maximalist camp that wanted to retain the territories) had become evident following the Lebanon War of 1982. This polarization, and the fear of civil war had constituted one of the many reasons for the paralysis of Israeli politics between 1984 and 1987 regarding any issue on the future of the territories (Pappe 2004: 226). The Intifada split the society even more than the Lebanon War had done and radicalized both camps.

nevertheless, this early support can be said to have demonstrated the extent to which the Palestinians were 'otherized,' delegitimized and 'dehumanized' in the Israeli political discourse, and the extent to which cultural violence regarding the Palestinian 'other' had become a part of the Israeli collective consciousness.

At the other end of the political spectrum was the Israeli Left, or the peace camp. The proponents of the peace camp were troubled by excessive use of force by the IDF, and by the human rights violations and the disregard for the rule of law that characterized the IDF behavior. Since 1973, the Leftist camp had advocated a political solution to the problem, and had argued that Israel had to withdraw from the territories —in accordance with the Jordanian option— both for its national security and to maintain its Jewish and democratic character. Now with the eruption of the Intifada, they increasingly came to realize that the political solution to the problem rested in negotiating with the PLO, and a subsequent establishment of a Palestinian state in the territories; issues which had been considered 'blasphemous' prior to the uprising (Shlaim 2001: 452). The outbreak and continuation of the Intifada gradually added more legitimacy to their claims.

From spring 1988 onwards, the Left's views regarding Israeli withdrawal to the pre-June 1967 borders also began to find support from other circles in the country. Many in the IDF, and especially generals and high ranking officers, as well as prominent scholars and business leaders, pragmatically maintained that due to advancements in military technology Israel no longer needed to continue the occupation, and thus withdrawal from the territories was acceptable from a security point of view (Tessler 1994: 710). A second related argument was that the territories were a security liability for Israel. Proponents of this line of argument maintained that, excessive IDF involvement in the territories to restore order was turning the soldiers into policemen, lowering their morale, and, more importantly, was reducing the overall military preparedness of the army against 'real' security threats such as that from Syria (Tessler 1994: 711). In short, overall, the Intifada stimulated a reorientation in Israel of the security argument regarding the territories. As was summed up by Zeev Schiff at the time;

> As a result [of the Intifada] … Israel has learned that the strategic importance of the [West Bank and Gaza] is not only a function of territorial depth, but also of the activities of the populace. The uprising has taught Israel that ruling the West Bank and Gaza does not automatically provide greater security to the rulers. What was once

> considered a security belt may now be a security burden. Israel has learned that one nation, particularly a small one, cannot rule another nation for long; that 3.5 million Israelis cannot keep 1.5 million Palestinians under perpetual curfew (Schiff 1989; cited in Tessler 1994: 712)

It should be noted, however, that this reorientation —or reconceptualization— was to a great extent pragmatic and Israeli-centric in nature, in the sense that it did not involve a moral consideration or recognition of the legitimacy of the Palestinians' rights to a state of their own. Nevertheless, they had a significant influence on the perceptions of the society in the later years, and had a major impact on the reconceptualization of Labor's policy regarding the territories following its electoral victory in 1992.

Another important result of the Intifada —and the massive Israeli use of force to suppress it— was that it drew the attention of the world to the plight of the Palestinians. Intense media coverage informed the world public opinion on the situation in the territories and on the excessive IDF behavior against the Palestinians. Israel was highly criticized in the international circles, including the UN, for its conduct of the uprising. But the most important impact of the uprising, probably, was the change it triggered in the US-Israel relations and in the American public opinion. The Intifada resulted in a fundamental change in the American policy regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict, the culmination of which would be the Reagan administration's recognition of the PLO in 1988 (Shlaim 2001: 455).

The uprising also refocused the attention of the Arab states on the Palestinian problem. The extraordinary summit of the Arab League summit that convened in June 1988, promised diplomatic and financial support for sustaining the Intifada, while reaffirming the position of the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people in future negotiations. This was followed by King Hussein's surprise announcement in July 1988 that, Jordan was relinquishing all its claims to the West Bank and severing its ties with the territories, in order to enable the establishment of an independent Palestinian state (Shlaim 2001: 457; Tessler 1994: 719; Morris 2001: 605). The King's announcement was the first political gain of the Intifada. It was also important, in the sense that it marked the end of Labor's 'Jordanian option,' this time for good.

Despite these developments, however, as the end of its first year was approaching, the Intifada had yet to deliver a significant political opening. In Israel the public opinion was divided, yet the majority of the Israeli Jews seemed to be unconvinced about the causes and the aims of the uprising. In this respect the major challenge for the was to translate the revolt into political and diplomatic gain for the Palestinians. The PLO leadership was well aware that any solution to their problem had to be accompanied by a change in the Israeli-Jewish public's perceptions with regards to the conflict, and with regards to the organization's aims and objectives (Tessler 1994: 718; Gazit 2003: 301; Morris 2001: 603, 606).

Against this background, Arafat and his associates decided to further moderate their political program. At the historic meeting of the Palestinian National Council (PNC), held in Algiers in November 1988, the majority voted in favor of recognizing Israel's legitimacy, formally adopted the principle of a two-state solution, and called for the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza in accordance with resolutions 242 and 338. Furthermore, in order to improve the international standing of the organization, the PLO also attempted to distance itself from terrorism. A month later after the PNC decisions Arafat declared in Geneva: "[W]e totally and absolutely renounce all forms of terrorism, including individual, group and state terrorism" (cited in, Shlaim 2001: 466; also see Morris 2001: 608). He also emphasized that the PLO recognized Israel's right to exist.

The PLO's recognition of Israel and renouncing of terrorism was not met with enthusiasm in Israel. For Shamir, the PLO was a terrorist organization and the change in its stance was tactical; it was meant for propaganda purposes. Accordingly, he maintained his prior position of intransigence in favor of maintaining the status quo in all issues. The change in the Israeli position regarding the PLO would only come five years later (Shlaim 2001: 466-467; Morris 2001: 608-609). Nevertheless, there still was one significant area where the moderation of the PLO positions made an immediate impact: the US–PLO relations.[31] The PNC decisions and Arafat's declaration stimulated a major shift in the American policy regarding the organization and resulted in the latter's recognition of the PLO as a legitimate partner

[31] With the outbreak of the Intifada the Americans had already begun to acknowledge that a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict could not be realized in the absence of the PLO, yet they had made any recognition of the organization conditional on its recognition of Israel and renouncement of terrorism.

in negotiations and subsequently its start of a dialogue with the organization (Shlaim 2001: 466-467; Morris 2001: 608-609). The change in American position, combined with the overall impact of the Intifada and the moderation of the PLO —as well as the impact of regional and global developments.

4.1.2. The International and Regional Context: The end of the Cold War and the 1991 Gulf Crisis

The eruption of the Palestinian uprising in the territories in 1987 was a seminal event in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Yet it was not the Intifada alone that triggered a comprehensive change in Israel's Palestinian policy. The drastic changes in both the international system and the regional politics during the late 1980s and the early 1990s, especially the end of the Cold War in 1989 and the 1991 Gulf war, also played a significant role.

The end of the Cold War, and thus the end of the bipolar international system, provided both opportunities and constraints for Israel. On the one hand, the demise of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the US as the only hegemonic power in the international system meant that Israel's adversaries, the Arab states, had lost the support of their old superpower patron against Israel, suggesting that the regional balance of power was clearly shifted in favor of Israel. On the other hand, however, the end of the bipolar world also meant that Israel had lost its value as a strategic partner of the US, which was based on containing Soviet influence in the region. This observation worried many in the Israeli leadership that the special relationship between Israel and the US would now be damaged, and these worries were reinforced by the US's conduct of the Gulf crisis 1991 Gulf war.

A small minority in Israel had an optimistic opinion about the implications of the Gulf War. From this perspective its seemed that Israel had emerged from the Iraqi conflict as one of the greatest beneficiaries, since it had witnessed the defeat of one of its strongest enemies in the region, and the significant decline of Arab radicalism. However, the majority of Israelis viewed the US's conduct of the crises with anxiety. During the crisis, having building its war coalition on strategic alliance with Israel's adversaries —the Arab states— the Bush administration asked Israel to refrain from escalating the tension by not retaliating to Iraqi provocations and by keeping a low profile. For the Israelis this was worrisome for it showed that instead of being a

strategic asset in the Middle East, now, in the post-Cold War era Israel was perceived as a liability (Shlaim 2001: 484). This realization would require Israel to revisit its continuing regional strategies and conceptions of security in the following years.

Moreover, during the crisis Saddam Hussein had linked his invasion of Kuwait with the Palestinian problem and had made Iraq's withdrawal conditional on Israel's withdrawal from the Palestinian territories. Furthermore this discursive move had found a ready audience whan Arafat had supported the cause of Saddam Hussein. Although Bush initially rejected this linkage, following the end of the war and in the context of his new alliance with the Arab states, and his vision of a 'New World Order', the comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict became one of the priorities of the US policy regarding the Middle East (Shlaim 2002: 173) . This strategy change of the US would become all the more prominent when the Bush administration would pressurize the Shamir-led Israeli government, despite the latter's unwillingness, to participate in the international conference for peace negotiations with the Arab states, as well as with the representatives of the Palestinians at Madrid.

Although Madrid talks failed to deliver any significant developments for resolving the Palestinian problem due to insistence of Shamir on his Greater Israel vision, the decisive stance of the Bush administration that he would financially support Israel only if the latter committed itself to the peace process and agreed to full withdrawal from the territories[32], significantly contributed to the Shamir's electoral defeat in the 1992 elections, and paved the way for the Oslo Peace Accords in 1993 (Shlaim 2002: 174).

[32] Against the reluctant Shamir-led government, Bush used a $10 billion loan requested by Shamir as leverage to pressurize the latter to participation in the Madrid conference. In the end Shamir agreed to participate on condition that the PLO would not be a negotiating partner and the Palestinians would be represented by inhabitants of the occupied territories. During the talks too, he maintained his uncompromising stance regarding relinquishing land for peace. Nevertheless the conference still proved to be a leading event for the Palestinians; bilateral talks between the Israel and Palestinian representatives were held in its aftermath, and for the first time since the beginning of the conflict the Palestinian presence was recognized by Israel, and the Palestinians were represented in negotiations (Shlaim 2001: 485-487).

4.2. The Peace Process and the Transformation of the Israeli-Palestinian Relations

4.2.1. The Beginning: A New Reconceptualization of Israeli Security and Identity

The historic Oslo Accords that marked the beginning of the peace process between Israel and the PLO were signed in September 1993. In retrospect, however, it might be argued that Labor's electoral victory in the 1992 elections over the Likud marked the real beginning of the peace process that had been initiated in Madrid (Jamal 2000: 39). Indeed, the 1992 elections was one of the most important elections in Israel's history, for it focused almost entirely on the future of the occupied territories and, thus, on alternative visions of the borders of the Israeli state and identity (Barnett 1999: 19). The Shamir-led Likud's position, prior to the elections, did not signal any changes; it advocated the party's traditional line of maintaining the territories in accordance with the Greater Israel vision. Rabin-led-Labor's position, could also be read as a continuation of the traditional party position, in the sense that it favored 'territorial compromise' for an end to the conflict.

What was new in Rabin's discourse, however, was his open advocacy of peace through the establishment of a Palestinian self-government, his bitter stance against the settlements in the territories, and his focus on the 'citizen' as a major referent of a broader conceptualization of security (Shlaim 2001: 498; Barnett 1999: 20). Regarding the first issue, the Intifada had led him to recognize, first, that Palestinians were a separate people, fighting for their national rights independent of the Arab states, and second, that Israel could not maintain military rule over the Palestinians for an indefinite period and hence it needed to look for a political solution to the conflict (Levy 2008: 148; Shlaim 2001: 467). Moreover, he was also concerned about the costs of the ongoing occupation on Israel and on the IDF's deterrent power, as well as the rising Islamic militancy in the territories. Thus, during the election campaign, Rabin attacked Shamir for his stubborn stance in the bilateral talks with the Palestinians, and argued that this policy of maintaining the status quo was costing Israel its future peace.

Regarding the second and the third issues, Rabin severely criticized Shamir, for diverting country's scarce resources on the construction of settlements solely for

ideological reasons, and at the expense of the social and economic problems (such as, absorption of immigrants, unemployment, education, etc.) that needed immediate attention within Israel proper, thus establishing a connection between withdrawal and the security and welfare of the Israelis. He further argued forcefully that the Greater Israel vision and the settlement project constituted a significant threat to the country's Jewish and democratic foundations (Shlaim 2001: 498-499; Barnett 1999: 19-20). In this context, Rabin-led Labor's discourse manifested a shift in the national priorities and interests of Israel, and called on the Israeli electorate for a decision on the future borders and identity of the state of Israel, either as a Jewish and democratic state, or as an undemocratic Greater Israel. Labor's landslide victory in the elections clearly showed that the majority of the Israelis opted for the former idea and thus handed over to Rabin the power he needed to put his vision of withdrawal and peace to action.

Rabin was aware that, the realization of his objectives for ending the conflict with the Palestinians, and promoting a Jewish and democratic Israel could not be realized without a fundamental change in the perceptions, interests and the attitudes within the community (Jamal 2000: 37). Thus, upon coming to power, Rabin continued stressing the new national priorities of Israel, as well as the opportunities that awaited it in the new era. He emphasized frequently, Israel's progressive, secular and humanistic values, and its place among the Western cultural tradition, as well as its identity as a Jewish and democratic one (Barnett 1999). In this context, one of Rabin's earliest attempts was to challenge the prevailing Zionist narrative that presented Israel as a small and vulnerable state, isolated in the international community, and permanently doomed to fighting for its survival. In his address to the Knesset following the elections, Rabin forcefully rejected this notion of isolation and declared:

> No longer are we a necessarily 'a nation that dwells alone'…. And no longer is it true that 'the whole world is against us.' We must overcome the sense of isolation that has held us in its thrall for almost half a century" (1992, cited in, Shlaim 2001: 507)

During his entire career, Rabin had been a security hawk and a strong believer in the policy of the iron wall. Accordingly, his attempts to redirect the Zionist narrative, and redefine Israel's place in the world as a strong state that could secure itself, reflected his firm belief that the iron wall of Jewish military strength had finally

achieved its ultimate purpose, and that time was ripe for negotiating with the Arab states and the Palestinians to end the conflict (Shlaim 2001: 504). In this context, his redefinition of Israel as a strong state was a major challenge to the maximalist ideology. It was meant, as Barnett argues, to create the cultural (and psychological) space required for rendering the party's vision of territorial withdrawal legitimate and desirable, and as such was a part of his broader attempt to reconceptualize Israeli security (Barnett 1999: 21).

Rabin's attempts to reconceptualize security were the most evident in his approach the Palestinian question. He made it clear from the beginning that he would give priority over the talks on Palestinian autonomy, as a part of his plan to move on from the peace process to peacemaking. In this, while emphasizing strongly that, in all dealings, Israel's (military) security would take precedence over all other considerations (Shlaim 2001: 507), he simultaneously strove to link the peace process to Israel's (broader) future security and prosperity, drawing attention to the new economic opportunities and improvements that would be provided by withdrawal from the territories, such as reallocation of the defense budget on social welfare, and the construction of a stable and secure climate that that would promote foreign direct investment in Israel (Shafir 1996: 31; Barnett 1999: 22).[33] In other words, he introduced and integrated to his new political discourse, those non-military dimensions of security and interests which so far have been marginalized from the Labor's 'territorial compromise' formula (Barnett 1999: 22).

Attempts of Rabin for a new orientation of Israeli security were also supported by his foreign minister Shimon Peres. Peres maintained a much broader conceptualization of security than just its military dimension. Security, in his view, also had political, psychological, and economic components (Shlaim 2001: 505, 558).[34] Moreover, Peres was also a strong believer in the primacy of diplomatic means over military means in resolving the conflict. "To achieve peace," he wrote in 1993, "[f]irst and foremost we must all acknowledge the futility of war: The Arabs

[33] These opportunities included reallocation of the defense budget on social welfare, and the construction of a climate that that would encourage foreign direct investment. Especially regarding the latter issue, Rabin found himself under pressure from the new business elites, upon being elected, to exploit the new economic opportunities that were brought about by globalization, but were conditional on the end of the conflict (Shafir 1996: 31; also see Shafir and Peled 2002).

[34] Peres argued that any sustainable resolution to the conflict in the Middle East would have to take into consideration these multiple components, and his vision of a 'New Middle East' envisioned Israel's future in close economic cooperation with the Arab states in the region.

cannot defeat Israel on the battlefield and Israel cannot dictate the conditions of peace to the Arabs" (Peres 1993: 49 cited in, Isacoff 2002: 56).[35] Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Peres believed that there could be no settlement without the PLO. "There are two ways in which to end the conflict with the PLO," he said once, "With the power of power and with the power of wisdom. Wisdom is better than power. If we all act wisely, the PLO will become a partner in peace instead of an obstacle to it (Peres 1993: 29-30, cited in, Isacoff 2002: 56). In the end it was this vision of Peres —and of his young deputy Yossi Beilin— of the PLO as a future partner, that enabled them to convince Rabin and to start the unofficial talks between Israel and the organization at Oslo in January 1993.

In short, upon coming to power Rabin —and Peres— adopted a broader reconceptualization of Israeli security and security practice, as well as a consequent redefinition of security–interest–identity relationship, and promoted an alternative future vision of Israel as a strong, peaceful and prosperous state. These discursive moves were meant to open up the cultural and psychological space for rendering the party's vision of territorial withdrawal and peace with Palestinians legitimate and desirable among different factions of the Israeli-Jewish community —which hitherto had perceived the conflict as an intractable and a zero-sum one. As put by Barnett, "Rabin attempted to recreate a national identity that was situated in a new historical narrative and tied to a frame of peace and prosperity" (1999: 9). In this, his vision was shaped vis-à-vis the new realities that had been created by the Palestinian Intifada and globalization of world economy, and the subsequent reorientations among Israeli military and business elites regarding the country's security strategy regarding the territories. In final analysis, it was these new conceptualizations of Israeli security, identity and interests that enabled him to sign the Oslo Accords in 1993 and rally the majority of the Israelis' support behind the peace process.

Recognizing these discursive shifts regarding security in Israel in the pre-Oslo period proves important since it points out to the essence of security as not an objective, but a constructed phenomenon. However, an examination of the extent of the attempts by the 'peace leaders' of Labor —Rabin and Peres— to reconstruct national narratives and to promote a discursive space for a change in the Israeli

[35] It was this understanding that had directed his efforts for a resolution of the conflict with the Arabs during his prime ministry and foreign ministry in the Labor-Likud coalition of 1984-1988, and enabled him to conclude the unratified London Agreement of 1987 with King Hussein.

national identity and security interests directed to the objective of 'territorial compromise,' also requires an exploration of the representation of the Palestinian 'other' in this new peace discourse. This is all the more important when it is remembered that, the prevailing perceptions and attitudes of the majority of the Jewish Israelis regarding the Arabs and the Palestinians, molded by their experiences of the conflict, the official history, and the discourses of the leadership, had been extremely negative (Bar-Tal and Teichman 2005). Indeed, Peres himself recognized the extents of this stereotyping and 'otherization': "So much suffering, so much pain that Israelis and Arabs were blinded, making us incapable of changing our images of either 'them' or ourselves" (1993, cited in Jamal 2000: 42). So the question is, to what extent did this conception of the 'other' change with the new peace discourse?

This issue is explored by Amal Jamal (2000). Examining the speeches of the peace leaders from 1992 onwards, Jamal demonstrates that, in spite of the significant shift of Labor in defining Israel's national priorities, and despite the entrance of the Palestinians as a 'people' to the Israeli political discourse following the Intifada and the 1991 Madrid Conference, the transformation of the image of the Palestinians as the 'other' has only been marginal. Among several, one significant example of this 'unchange' is Rabin's speech before the Knesset following the 1992 elections, where he directly addresses the Palestinians —the same speech where he challenged the official narrative by declaring Israel was no longer "a nation that dwells alone":

> It is our fate to live in common on the same tract of land in the same country. Our lives are conducted with you, beside you and against you. … A century of your blood letting and terror against us has caused you only suffering pain and loss. … For 44 years and more now, you have stumbled about in illusion. Your leaders guide you by falsehood and deceit. They have missed every opportunity. They have spurned all our proposals for a solution and have brought you disaster upon disaster (1992, cited in, Jamal 2000: 39-40, emphasis by the author).

According to Jamal, in the new peace discourse, one finds more continuity, than change with the official Zionist narrative regarding the Palestinians. While the new discourse recognizes the existence of the Palestinians as a people, just as it has been with the Arabs in the past, it blames them for the continuation of a century old conflict while representing them as obstacles to the realization of legitimate and peaceful Zionist objectives (Jamal 2000: 43). Moreover, the discourses are also consistent with the official narrative in the sense that there are neither any admissions about Israel's own role and responsibility for the past developments, nor any causal

connection between creation of Israel, the occupation, and the emergence and continuation of the Palestinian problem (Jamal 2000: 40). To the contrary, the new discourse reinforces the official Zionist "empty" land myth in a way that disregards the existence of another, indigenous people, and hence delegitimizes from the very beginning the aims and objectives of the Palestinian's national struggle, while also rendering completely invisible the root causes of the Palestinian resort to violence. Instead of sharing the blame for the past, Palestinians are held responsible for the present status quo, and Israel is represented as the mere innocent victim of (cause-less) Palestinian "blood letting and terror" (Jamal 2000: 40-41).

Jamal's observations point out to the limitations of the new peace discourse adopted by the peace leaders prior to and during the Oslo Process. It demonstrates that, the attempts by Labor leaders to redefine the Israeli-Jewish identity in the context of the conflict, was confined to a reconceptualization of Israel's and the Israelis' security interests in a pragmatic manner, and only marginally involved a redefinition of the Palestinian 'other'.

Seen in this light, it is possible to talk about several major implications of the new peace discourse for the Oslo Peace process. First, and foremost, Palestinians entered the peace discourse only in the framework of Israeli security; not as the legitimate 'other' but as agents to deliver Israel peace and (military) security (Jamal 2000: 44). In this vein both the military and non-military sources of insecurity for the Palestinians (both in the pre-Oslo and the Post-Oslo stage) were either ignored or downplayed, and the improvement of their conditions were made conditional upon the improvement of the Israel's (sense of) security. As will be discussed shortly, the practices regarding the Oslo Accords also supports this observation. Second, although it did create space for alternative political action, the new discourse failed to prepare the Israeli community for the hardships and concessions that would be brought by the peace process (Kimmerling and Migdal 2003: 381-382). It led to an impression among the Israeli public that, Israel was generously offering the Palestinians a chance to establish their own autonomy and become a people, by voluntary transfer of the territories —thus downplaying Palestinians' legitimate right to the land. This was also evident in the very discourse of Labor's 'territorial compromise,' which indirectly suggested that Israel's presence in the territories were 'natural' and relinquishment of land for peace was in accordance with Oslo was in

essence a 'sacrifice' (Yiftachel 2002: 239-240). This framework of 'generosity' and 'sacrifice' blinded the Israelis to the key concerns and demands of the Palestinians — such as refugees' right of return, status of Jerusalem, or removal of settlements. Furthermore it rendered the peace process even more fragile in facing the costs associated with it; that is, acts of violence from extremists on both sides for purposes of sabotage. Finally, the framing also disguised the negative consequences of the Oslo process on the Palestinians (Jamal 2000: 45).

The argument here is that, the new conceptualizations of Israeli security, identity and interests by the peace leaders were necessary and groundbreaking moves for *initiating* the peace process, and indeed they enabled the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 with the support of the majority of the Israelis. However they were not enough for *maintaining* the process. For the process to succeed, a much deeper reconceptualization of security, one that attempted to transform the perceptions of the Israeli Jewish community regarding the Palestinian "other" towards its more empathetic forms, and simultaneously addressed the insecurities of the Palestinians were needed. For a complex set of reasons, this did not happen. Even during the initial phases of the peace process, under Labor's term, Israel's approach to peace remained to be shaped by solely Israel's own security considerations defined in military means. This was also reflected in the substance and the practice of the Accords, and thus, contributed to the setbacks regarding the peace process in the following years.

4.2.2. The Oslo Accords and the Peace Process in the Context of Israeli Security

In September 1993, Israel and the PLO exchanged letters of mutual recognition, and signed the joint Declaration of Principles (DOP) on interim Palestinian self-government in Gaza and Jericho. The Oslo Accords, as the agreement came to be called, marked a major breakthrough in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. After decades of mutual denial and delegitimation, the two sides finally recognized the existence and the legitimacy of the other, and agreed, on principle, on giving up on violence to resolve the conflict in favor of political means and dialogue. In this context, especially striking was Israel's recognition of the PLO —which it had hitherto labeled as a terrorist organization— as the representative of the Palestinian people, and as a legitimate party in negotiations. Moreover, for the first time in the

history of the conflict, both sides accepted the principle of partition as the solution to their ongoing conflict, leaving aside "the ideological dispute over who was the rightful owner of Palestine" (Shlaim 2001: 519). The Accords were also met with sheer optimism and excitement among both the Palestinians in the territories and the Israeli-Jews, the majority of whom expressed full support for the Accords. In fact, this was one of major strengths of the agreement; without significant public support among both communities, the Accords would not be.

The Accords were essentially not a full-blown agreement, but an interim settlement that was part of a peace process, governed by a tight timetable. The shape of the final settlement regarding the status of the territories was not specified in the Accords, and was made conditional on the successful implementation of the interim period. This meant that the agreements in substance did not initially involve an Israeli commitment to the establishment of a full-blown independent Palestinian state.

The signing of the initial Accords was followed by the Cairo agreement of May 1994, and the Interim agreement (also known as the Oslo II) of September 1995. The Cairo agreement required Israel to turn over most of the territories in Gaza and Jericho to the administration of the PLO, and redeploy its forces from "Palestinian population centers" (Shlaim 2001: 526). The Interim agreement on the other hand, set out the details regarding the second stage, the "transitional period," and provided for the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA) as the main administrative body of the Palestinians in the territories. According to this agreement, the PLO gained exclusive control over Palestinian towns and urban areas (Area A), and limited administrative–civilian control over villages and less densely populated areas (Area B). In these latter areas Israel was to retain military and security issues. The remaining areas, consisting of the lands confiscated by Israel for settlements and roads (Area C) were to remain exclusively under Israeli control. The agreement also involved some important reciprocal commitments that were coined as "confidence building measures". Israelis, for their part, agreed to ensure free and secure passage between the PA governed parts of the West Bank and Gaza, to release political prisoners, and to partially provide financial aid for the social and economic structure of the PA ruled areas. In exchange, the Palestinians would recognize Israel, end guerilla warfare and violence, and commit to preventing acts terror (mainly by Islamist militant groups) against Israel and the Israeli Jews, including the settlers

(Shlaim 2001: 526-528; Kimmerling and Migdal 2003: 332-333; Morris 2001: 627-628).

The Interim Agreement provided an important point in ending Israel's rule over the Palestinian people. It marked the beginning of a transitional period, which would not exceed five years, and would be followed by negotiations on the final status of the PA and on all the key issues unaddressed by the Accords (such as the status of Jerusalem, fate of the settlements, solution to the Palestinian refugee problem), based on UN resolutions 242 and 338.

Overall, Israel's motives in concluding the Accords had mainly been security oriented. As previously noted, Rabin had realized that Israel could not maintain a military rule over the Palestinians for an indefinite period, without having to bear its significant costs. Moreover the emergence of militant Islamic groups, particularly Hamas and Islamic Jihad in the territories, and the alarming growth of support for these groups among the Palestinian population had been seriously worrying the Israeli leadership and the army. In this respect, the Oslo Accords proved to be an efficient way out for Israel in dealing with the Palestinian problem. On one hand it brought a separation of the two peoples, rendered the PA responsible for delivering civil and legal administration to the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza, and enabled Israel to retreat from administering the territories and their local population. On the other hand, it handed over the PA the responsibility to deal with the Islamic militant groups, while making the shape of final status of the territories, as well as carrying out further stages in the agreement, conditional on the PA's ability to effectively deal with Islamic terrorism. Meanwhile, the Accords gave Israel the overall responsibility for the external security and foreign affairs of the territories, and also for the security of the Jewish settlements. In other words, the Accords provided Israel with an efficient security framework at the outset, enabled it to separate the two peoples without giving up on its military control over the Palestinians.

Rabin's vision for a permanent settlement which he outlined in the Knesset following the conclusion of the Interim agreement, was informing in this respect: "military presence but no annexation the Jordan Valley; retention of large blocs of settlements near the 1967 border; preservation of a united Jerusalem with respect for the rights of the other religions; and a Palestinian entity which would be less than a

state and whose territory would be demilitarized" (Shlaim 2001: 528). This vision of a future settlement was strikingly similar to those outlined by the Allon Plan, and was meant to provide Israel with maximum security. Yet, it was still radically different from the Palestinian vision of a permanent settlement: Israeli withdrawal from nearly all of the territories and establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state with east Jerusalem as its capital.

As would later be revealed, paradoxically, this primacy of Israel's military security concerns in the framing of the Accords simultaneously constituted one of the most significant constraints to the success of the peace process, and to maintaining Israeli current security. In reflection of the imbalance of power between Israel and the PLO, (and as a result of the involvement of IDF generals in implementation negotiations), this security orientation played a significant part in shaping the substance and the practice of the Accords in a way that prioritized Israeli military security over those concerns of the Palestinians.

First of all, although it was pragmatic for Israel to render the PA responsible for preventing the Islamic terrorism, when considered within the internal dynamics of the Palestinian politics and also within the way the Oslo was concluded, this was an extremely challenging task for the PA. One of the reasons that the PLO had been so eager and anxious to conclude the Oslo Accords, had been its anxiety due to the emergence of Hamas in Palestinian politics in the course of the Intifada, and its rapid success in gaining a wide range of support from the Palestinian street, in a way that threatened the PLO's influence and control over grass roots Palestinian support (Pappe 2004: 243; Gunning 2003: 243; Hroub 2000: 102). Thus, the desire to keep Hamas out of the Palestinians politics while reestablishing its own power was probably the most important motive of Arafat and his disciples in signing the Oslo.[36] In this respect, and not surprisingly —and maybe inevitably— he had excluded Hamas and other opposing Palestinian factions from those processes by which the Accords and the follow up agreements were concluded. This meant that upon returning back to the territories the PLO (and its dominant fraction Fatah) found itself in a power competition with Hamas regarding the future of the Palestinian politics.

[36] It should also be noted that the period that preceded the signing of the Oslo Accords, corresponded to a time when the PLO was at its weakest. First, the support of the organization for Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War of 1991 had led to a significant decrease in financial assistance from the Gulf states it hitherto enjoyed. Second, the bilateral talks with Israel initiated after the Madrid conference had come to a standstill, gradually undermining Arafat's authority.

Without doubt, Hamas had some important irreconcilable ideological reasons for opposing the peace process. Yet, at the same time, the organization also believed that the PLO had made too many concessions to Israel, and thus the peace process had become not a genuine peace attempt but an instrument for Israel to consolidate its control over the territories by other means. In the absence of a powerful arbitrator that would force Israel to abide by its promises, and also in the absence of any non-violent means by which to oppose both the substance of the Accords and Israel's noncompliance with them, Hamas believed that the only way to achieve a viable Palestinian state was to withhold from Israel what it strive for the most —security— through organized violence; a tool that Arafat had signed away with the Oslo (Gunning 2003: 242-243). In this respect, according to Jeroen Gunning, Hamas's attempts to sabotage the peace process through resort to violence should be seen in this double framework of both opposing the substance of the process, and opposing the PLO domination in Palestinian politics (Gunning 2003: 238-243). Seen in this light, to expect the PA to curb Hamas's terrorist activities was a contradiction embedded in the process, for the process itself, instead of silencing Hamas, heightened the organization's motives to sabotage the Oslo through resort to violence and terrorism.

Secondly, Israel's prioritization of security affected both the substance of the agreements and their practices by Israel in a way that proved harmful for the Palestinians' (human, as well as, social and economic) security, and this too constituted a constraint for the peace process. First of all, while the agreements entailed those mechanisms that would provide security for Israel and the Israeli Jews, they did not involve those that would also provide human security for the Palestinians —both against the militant settlers and the misconduct of the Israeli army (Shlaim 2001: 525). The Hebron massacre in 1994, when twenty-nine Palestinians were killed by an extremist Jewish settler, was one of the early demonstrations of the flawed nature of the Israeli concept of security. Second, the agreements stated that, regarding any issues that could not be settled through negotiations between Israel and the PA, Israeli military laws of occupation would apply, rather than those of the international law, and particularly the Geneva Convention (Carey 2003: 685). Moreover, in none of the agreements there were explicit reference to human rights of the Palestinians (Kaufman and Bisharat 2002: 78). Accordingly these two factors gave Israeli government and army a freehand in its conduct of security in the territories in

accordance with its own security interests, and rendered the Palestinian community vulnerable, and without protection of the law against any potential misconduct by Israel. The human rights violations towards the Palestinians continued as they had prior to the peace process.

Of significant importance in this vein were Israel's repeated borders closures. In fact, the closure system had been introduced in 1991 by Rabin who was then the defense minister, both to reduce the threat posed to Israel by militant attacks, and to legitimize separation of the territories from Israel proper in the perceptions of the Israelis for the 'territorial compromise' formula. During the peace process, however, following a series of suicide bombings by Hamas in 1994, the closure became a routine instrument for Israeli security, and one of the main instruments for pressurizing the PA to clamp down on Islamic terror. Simultaneously, however, these closures constituted a serious source of insecurity for the Palestinian population, worsening the economic situation in the territories, causing in a serious drop in living standards, and resulting in rising unemployment and poverty (Kimmerling and Migdal 2003: 372; Shlaim 2001: 530). Together with other measures, such as house demolitions and mass arrests without trial, the closure policy became a measure of collective punishment for the Palestinians.

Meanwhile, Labor government continued the policy of expanding the Jewish settlements in Palestinian land in violation of the spirit of the peace process. Moreover, it built by pass-roads in order to connect the settlements and secure safe passage between them, and established a system of checkpoints and road blocks within the territories for security purposes. While the bypass roads fragmented Palestinian lands, frequent closures, check points and roadblocks disrupted Palestinian life by violating freedom of movement of people and goods. This latter development was also against the provisions of the interim settlement which dictated that Israel would ensure free and secure passage inside and between West Bank and Gaza. All these developments made the Palestinian public more and more skeptical regarding the process and Israel's intentions, and resulted in increased support for Hamas inside the territories.

All these factors together also limited the ability of the PA to deal with Islamic terrorism and Hamas. In the light of Israeli practices, and also due to the support for Hamas in the territories (not only for their vision but more importantly for the social

services they provided to the deprived population), attempts by the PA to crush the Islamic organization risked an erosion of its legitimacy in the view of the Palestinians. In final assessment, the very conceptualization of the PA as an instrument to ensure Israeli security in the Israeli-Palestinian agreements posed a significant dilemma for the PA: On the one hand it had to curb Islamic terrorism to make Israel to deliver its promises and ensure the conclusion of the interim period. On the other hand clamping on the Islamic militant groups challenged its own legitimacy to move on with the peace process, and to ensure the public support for it. In the end, it tried to strike the midway, and thus failed in both fronts.

The argument here is that, Israel's prioritization of its military security, and its desire to solve this problem only in reflection of its own interests, and in disregard for the Palestinian concerns, played a crucial role in paradoxically failing to bring security for Israel during the peace process. As expressed by Jamal, the Oslo from the Israeli perspective "[was] not a solution to the Palestinian problem, but a solution to Israel's problem with the Palestinians" (Jamal 2000: 46). The agreements had delivered Israel the means for what it had wanted the most; security and recognition. Meanwhile, however, they had only promised the Palestinians their objectives and demands, while making this conditional upon Israel's sense of security. Having delivered its main objectives, the Labor leaders during the process had low incentives to engage in concessions regarding domestically contested issues, and especially those of the settlements and the status of Jerusalem (Kimmerling and Migdal 2003: 358). In order to carry out further stages of the agreements, and in order to ensure wide public support for their aims, they expected the Palestinian leaders to prove them that they were capable of dealing with terror. In this respect, in the face of terror acts by Islamist militants they delayed delivering their promises to the PA, and furthermore retaliated harshly by military means. In the meantime, however, they either ignored or downplayed the hardships endured by the Palestinians as a result of the new status quo and of their own practices, and furthermore, failed to calculate the impact of this on the overall process and on Israel's security. In other words, they failed to see that Israeli current security and Palestinian security were interdependent, and the success of the peace process, and the public support on both sides for it depended on the achievements in both spheres.

The result was a spiral of violence on both sides, and frequent interruptions in the peace process between 1994 and 1996. The opposition to Oslo among both the Jews

and the Palestinians discovered that violence was the most successful way to block the process. As Palestinians were becoming disillusioned about Oslo, so did the Israeli Jews in the face of suicide bombers. Paradoxically, as the rising personal insecurity convinced more and more of the public on both sides that the implementation of the Oslo Accords was the ultimate solution to the conflict, at the same time it also increased their support for harsher means to deal with the 'other'; through harsh Israeli retaliations for the Israelis, and through armed struggle for the Palestinians.

Nevertheless, Rabin throughout his period remained committed to the land-for-peace formula and a non-zero sum conception for a resolution of the conflict. His motto, in this vein, had been: "fighting terrorism as if there was no peace process and pursue the peace process as if there was no terrorism" (cited in, Morris 2001: 617). Despite his doubts about Arafat's ability to control Islamic terror, and despite both leaders differing visions about the nature of a permanent settlement, Rabin still treated him as a partner for peace and worked for the establishment of a Palestinian entity in the territories. In his attempts, however, he had to face a significant challenge from the Zionist Right and its radical Jewish settler constituency, who had longed viewed his attempts for relinquishment of the territories as a blasphemy. Despite the ideological and religious reasoning that lay behind this opposition, however, the Zionist Right, including Netanyahu's Likud, frequently revoke the existential security argument and the Holocaust memory as the base of their argument to label Rabin as a traitor to the Jewish cause (Naor 1999: 163-164). In 1995 Rabin was murdered by a Jewish religious fanatic. The murdered confessed that he had done so to in order to derail the peace process (Shlaim 2001: 549). In retrospective it seemed that he achieved his purpose, for following Rabin's death, the peace process gradually but rapidly took a downward slide.

4.2.3. The Return of the Greater Israel Vision

In the 1996 general elections Peres who had replaced Rabin after his death, competed with Netanyahu for the office of prime ministry, and he lost. Peres's defeat was majorly a result of a key decision he made. In early 1996 he gave permission to the Israeli security services to assassinate Yahya Ayyash, who was seen to be the 'engineer' behind Hamas's suicide bombings (Shlaim 2001: 557). The assassination was meant to prevent further terrorist attacks and was meant as a practice of

deterrence. However, the opposite happened. Hamas promised revenge, and started a new campaign of suicide bombings which ended up killing sixty Israeli Jews. The suicide bombings were a severe blow to Peres. They raised questions about Peres's ability to deal with Islamic terror, and shifted the public opinion against the Labor Government, and to some extent against the peace process (Shlaim 2001: 562). Thus in the lead up to the elections the personal security of the Israelis was the main item on agenda, and the Zionist right succeeded in capitalizing on this issue.

Netanyahu's prime ministry signaled the return to Israeli politics of the Greater Israel vision and the zero-sum mentality in dealing with the Arab states and the Palestinians. Netanyahu, stuck to the arguments of his predecessors in Likud: he viewed the conflict between Israel and the Arab states as a permanent one, refuted that the Palestinians had a right to self-determination while arguing that their main and unchanged aim from the beginning had been destruction of Israel, and drawing on the eternal right of the Jewish people to the land, opposed any prospects that would require Israel to relinquish the territories (Shlaim 2001: 566). In this respect, for him the Palestinians as a people were a security threat to Israel, rather than partners for peace.

Along these lines Netanyahu reversed the image —promoted by Rabin— of Israel as a strong state among other nations, to a small and vulnerable state in desperate need of strategic depth (Isacoff 2002: 54). Consequently, he also reversed Rabin's vision that the strategy of the iron wall had achieved its ultimate purpose:

> What iron walls do is give us time. The hope is that in the course of this time, positive internal changes will occur in the Arab world that will enable us to lower the defensive walls and perhaps even drop them one of these days. This process is taking place gradually but in order to complete it we must create in the Arab world an irreversible understanding that we will not vanish…. We must realize that peace treaties do help security…but they cannot substitute as a source for deterrence. The opposite is true. Military might is a condition for peace. Only a strong deterrent profile can provide and preserve peace (1996, cited in, Shlaim 2001: 574-575).

Although he had previously claimed that he would freeze the Oslo process upon coming to power, Netanyahu was aware that the majority of the Israelis still continued to support the peace process. Simultaneously however, he was also aware that the feeling of security, especially in the face of the suicide bombings, was the Achilles heel of the Israeli public that had enabled his electoral victory. Accordingly

he played this card to impress the public and to achieve his aims for undermining the Oslo Accords, and adopted a discourse that equated land with security, which was defined not in personal but in existential terms (Isacoff 2002: 53-54; Naor 1999: 163). This move was meant to mobilize the fears of the Israeli public, and to blur the line between objectives of national security and objectives of Likud's Greater Israel ideology.

Netanyahu also undertook other measures to undermine the peace process. He openly declared that he was against the establishment of a Palestinian state in the territories, and accelerated the establishment and financing of the settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. He refocused the peace process on strict fulfillment of Israel's security needs and made relations with the PA strictly conditional on the latter's cooperation with Israel in suppressing Islamic terror. Furthermore he also abstained from delivering further stages of Israel's commitments to the Palestinians within the framework of the Oslo (Shlaim 2001: 578). Accordingly Netanyahu's term was characterized by increasing tension, and mistrust between Israel and the Palestinians.

Although Netanyahu signed the Hebron Protocol and Wye River Memorandum, within the framework of Oslo Accords in 1997 and 1998 respectively, he did so due to significant international and particularly US pressure. Moreover both agreements were followed by Israel's expansion of settlement activity —in accordance with the zero-sum mentality, to compensate for the 'concessions' given to the Palestinians— and both were suspended after a short term under the pretext of security (Shlaim 2001: 579, 605). Meanwhile, the fact that both of the agreements had been accepted by an overwhelming majority at the Knesset showed the commitment of the majority Knesset members to the peace process, and also that his policies of undermining the Oslo was not representative of the majority of the Israeli politicians.

"Peace with security" was Netanyahu's catch line for the 1996 elections. However, his own actions undermined the country's security by consistently undermining the spirit of the Oslo, and by intentionally weakening the PA and lowering the expectations of the Palestinians regarding the peace process. During his period Hamas suicide bombings in Israeli cities continued unabated. Not being able deliver the dividends of peace from Israel, Arafat remained reluctant to deal with Islamic terror, and risk his own legitimacy. Meanwhile, in the face disillusionment

with the peace process and with the deteriorating living conditions in the territories Hamas continued to widen its grassroots support. Netanyahu's decision for an unsuccessful assassination attempt at Khaled Meshal, one of Hamas's prominent leaders, also backfired and significantly strengthened the organization when Israel had to release from prison Sheikh Yasin, the spiritual leader of the movement, in exchange for the two Mossad agents in charge of the attempt.

Not having been able to achieve neither security, nor peace, Netanyahu lost his post to Ehud Barak of Labor in the 1998 elections. Despite his short prime ministry, as he had intentioned, he caused serious damage to the peace process. His radical nationalist rhetoric and relevant practices broke the mutual trust between Israel and the Palestinians that lay at the core of the Accords, rendered the already weak PA weaker, and caused anxieties among both the Israelis and the Palestinians regarding the sustainability of the peace process.

Barak had led his electoral campaigned under the slogan "continuation of the Rabin legacy". Upon assuming power, however, he gave primacy to negotiations with Syria. By the time he realized that peace with Syria would not be achieved he returned to the Palestinians, but by then the peace process had taken a heavy blow. The collapse of the Camp David accords between Israel and the Palestinians, and the consequent eruption of the Al-Aqsa Intifada more or less marked the end of the peace process. The peace process which had started as a major breakthrough with many hopes and expectations had failed for good, leaving in its place violent confrontations between Israel and the Palestinians.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This thesis attempted to provide an account of Israel's conceptions, discourses and practices of security, in the context of the Arab–Israeli conflict in general and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict in particular. The historical context of the study was defined as the period between the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948 and the collapse of the Oslo peace process and the start of the Al-Aqsa Intifada in 2000. In its attempt the thesis was guided mainly by the works of the post-Zionist scholars whose recent findings in the fields of Israeli history and sociology have challenged realist approaches to explaining the construction of Israeli security policies. Thus, throughout the thesis a definition of security, as a notion that is historically constructed and reconstructed in reflection of different worldviews, interests and identities, was adopted.

Along these lines the thesis had two primary tasks. First, it set out to explore those historical and political processes through which particular definitions and practices of security regarding the Palestinian conflict have been produced and changed. In this respect, it tried to reflect on the domestic debates and different worldviews among the Israeli political actors between 1948 and 2000, regarding what Israeli security should mean, and how it must be attained in the long run. Second, it tried to highlight the overall impact of these points in different periods on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and, thus, on Israel's overall security.

The basic findings of the thesis can be summarized in three main points.

First, it is observed that from the early days of the state onwards, the domestic debates and competing worldviews among the political actors, have played a key role in the construction and reconstruction of Israeli security policy vis-à-vis the Arab states and, more importantly, the Palestinians. This debate mainly concentrated on the future borders and the identity of the state —or in other words the 'ends' of security strategies– and found its expression among the competition between the Labor Zionism (or Zionist Left) and Revisionist Zionism (or Zionist Right).

The Labor Zionists, whose views remained hegemonic until the 1967 war, adopted a pragmatic approach to Israeli security. Their main priority was to maintain the Jewish and democratic character of Israel. In this regard they were decidedly against the Revisionist ideals of expanding the borders of the Israeli state to whole land of Israel while incorporating —or expelling— a large Arab population. Nevertheless, they also believed that the 1949 armistice lines did not match Israel's security needs; that Israel suffered from lack of geographical strategic depth. Except for a period between 1956 and 1967, attaining and maintaining defensible borders constituted the main strategy of all the leaders of the Zionist Left. Following the 1967 war and the occupation of large tracts of Arab land, the pragmatism of Labor for maintaining a Jewish and democratic Israel, while also preserving its strategic depth, found its expression in the Allon Plan. This plan —which was referred to by the Israeli policy makers misleadingly as a 'territorial compromise', and was also known as the 'Jordanian option'— foresaw the incorporation of the Jordan Valley and the other strategic locations to Israel, while leaving those areas densely populated by Arabs to the Jordanian Rule. It became the unofficial policy of the Labor led governments until 1977 with regards to the future of the West Bank, and of Labor opposition thereafter. This 'territorial compromise' formula also informed Rabin's conception of land–for–peace during the Oslo peace process for the solution of the Palestinian problem; only this time the areas to be left to Jordanian rule would be allocated to an autonomous Palestinian entity.

The vision of the Revisionist Zionists, on the other hand, was informed by the ideology of Greater Israel, according to which Judea and Samaria (biblical names for the West Bank) were inseparable, integral parts of the historic Land of the Jews. Until the 1967 war, it seemed that the vision of the Revisionists had lost out to one articulated by the Labor Zionist movement. The war and the occupation of the West Bank, however, created the political and psychological environment that helped render the Revisionist conceptualization of land natural and relevant. Thereupon, from 1967 onwards the Likud leaders frequently emphasized the right of the Jewish people to the land, denying both the sovereignty claims of Jordan in this area and the right of the Palestinian people to self determination in the territories. Meanwhile the existential security and strategic depth argument became potent political tools for the Likud leaders, and were extensively and pragmatically used for purposes of attracting a wider constituency that would support their vision of 'territorial integrity'. Upon

coming to power in 1977 Likud continued to emphasize the security rhetoric both for retaining the territories, and legitimizing its related practices, and especially those regarding the rapid expansion of illegal Jewish settlements. In the following years, this line of argument proved to be consistent and was also adopted by Benyamin Netanyahu in the 1990s, with a stronger emphasis on the security element, in his opposition to the Oslo Accords.

Second, despite the competition among these two future Israel visions for informing and directing the ultimate aims of Israeli security policy, the differences in their views regarding the nature of the conflict with the Arabs, and their consequent conceptions of security and security practice have nevertheless shown some striking similarities. Both camps, from the very early days of the state onwards, defined the conflict with the Arabs as an existential, zero-sum game, and prioritized military force as the only available, legitimate and desirable means to promote security for Israel vis-à-vis the Arabs. In this respect, the security visions and practices of both camps were informed by the policy of the iron wall.

The policy of iron wall was a policy of *realpolitik* initially developed by the Revisionist leader Zeev Jabotinsky during the 1920s. It called for the construction and defense, at all costs, of an impenetrable iron wall of Jewish military strength against the Arabs, with the aim of persuading them into acceptance of the Israeli state. The iron wall policy was institutionalized as the main security strategy during the early years of the state, and thereafter, until 1992, it informed all Israeli security policies in dealing with the conflict. The advocates of this policy believed that sole purpose of the Arab states was Israel's destruction. Thus, in order to deter them for good, and to ensure its own survival, Israel had repeatedly to demonstrate its military superiority through rendering Arabs humiliating and costly defeats in all wars, as a result of which the latter would finally give up on their ideals of destroying Israel while recognizing its existence.

Initially the strategy of the iron wall was an existential strategy, designed for a relatively weak Israel in the face of relatively stronger Arabs. According to its formulation by Jabotinsky, it was to be abandoned for mutual recognition and negotiations and, finally, normalization of relations, once Israel had proven its invincibility and the moderate elements among the Arabs gained power at the expense of the radicals. However, despite gradual moderation of Arabs (and also

Palestinians) in their attitudes towards Israel from 1967 onwards, and despite the gradual transformation of the insecurities that threatened Israel from one at existential level to that at personal level with the emergence of the PLO's terror activities, the policy of the iron wall, defined as the supremacy of military means to confront these threats, proved to be enduring.

The reasons for Israel's continued reliance on military means to realize its aims can be explained by the results of the 1967 war. The war, —which was not only a military but also a political victory for Israel— demonstrated Israeli invincibility and strength, established it as the most powerful state in the region for the next two decades, and forced first the Arab states, and later the Palestinians towards increasing moderation regarding their attitudes towards Israel. Seen in this light, by the end of the war, the ultimate aims of the policy of the iron wall had been achieved, and Israel was clearly in a position where it could deal with the Arab-Israeli conflict through political means, and negotiate peace from a position of strength. However, the Israeli victory in the war and the occupation of large tracts of land simultaneously caused a perceptual and psychological change among the Israeli leaders and the community, and resulted in an expansion of Israel's minimum (territorial and political) requirements for peace with the Arab states. In other words, as Israel grew stronger and as this strategy was institutionalized, Israeli policy makers became unwilling to make the compromises necessary for peace. Along these lines, in contradiction to the initial aims of the iron wall strategy, Israel did not to recognize Arab and Palestinian moderation that took place in the following years, considering these not genuine but tactical maneuvers. Accordingly rather than engaging in negotiations, it opted to preserve the new territorial status (be it for reasons of security and strategic depth, or Greater Israel ideology) in its favor through its superior military power. Seen in this light, the 1979 peace with Egypt and Israel's consequent withdrawal from Sinai should be considered, not a result of a change in this military mind-set, but as a tactical and pragmatic move on the part of the Begin-led Likud government, to avoid increasing international pressures for concessions over the Palestinian territories.

Israel's conceptions of the Palestinian question were also characterized by this military orientation. Following the establishment of the state, Israeli leadership (and mainly the activists among the Labor elite) had shied away from politically dealing with the Palestinian refugee problem, considering potentially required concessions as detrimental to its security and survival. Having negated the political options, and in

the face of the growing threat of Palestinian infiltrations during the first half of the 1950s Israel opted for a retaliation policy against the Arab civilians and military targets for purposes of deterrence.

Following the occupation in 1967, The Palestinian issue continued to be conceptualized by the Israeli leadership solely within the framework of Israeli military security. In the immediate wake of the occupation, a military regime was established to rule and control the territories, and active and passive Palestinian resistance both during the early days of the occupation, and during the 1980s were suppressed by the IDF through resort to violence. Meanwhile, and despite the UN's recognition of the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinians in 1974, Israeli governments refrained from doing so until 1992, identifying the organization merely as a terrorist organization that could be dealt only through military means. Successive governments, neither Labor nor Likud recognized the national, political and humanitarian root causes of the Palestinian problem, and thus, refrained from offering political solutions to the conflict. The culmination of Israel's military strategy to solve the Palestinian problem once and for all was Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982, when the PLO was ousted from the country and had to move its headquarters to Tunis.

Paradoxically, and thirdly, however, its prioritization of military means in dealing with its perceived security problems, over political means and negotiations simultaneously constituted sources of renewed security threats for Israel. The activist policies of the Labor elites for security during the initial years of the state had significantly deepened the conflict with the Arab states, culminating in the 1956 war, causing an arms race in the years that followed, and indirectly preparing the ground for the 1967 war. Although Israel consolidated its existential security as a result of the 1967 war, its continued reliance on its military might to preserve the status quo produced new military threats in the years that followed. At the inter-state level, one major example of this production was the 1973 war, which was initiated by Egypt and Syria with aim of breaking the political deadlock regarding Israeli stance over the fate of the occupied Arab lands. In this vein it was a product of the lack of diplomatic, non-military means to address the existing problems.

Regarding the Palestinian problem too, Israel's sole reliance of military means created new and unconventional security threats, particularly at personal level. Lack

of political means to address the refugee problem, and the worsening relations between Israel and the Arab states, had created the Palestinian fedayeen groups which penetrated into Israeli territory and threatened Israeli security at the personal level. Following the 1967 war, and the occupation, a sharp increase in PLO's guerilla and terrorist activities against Israeli targets, both inside and abroad, became a major challenge for Israeli current security. In fact, the root causes of Palestinian resort to violence were mainly political; forcing Israel to bring about a solution to the 1948 refugee problem, and concerns for the establishment of a Palestinian state inside the territories lay at the heart of the matter. Nevertheless, considering both matters as existential threats to its security (and after 1977 with Likud, to the Greater Israel ideology) Israel refrained from dealing with the problem through political means and instead opted for a military strategy of suppression (of the residents of the territories) and retaliation (against the PLO).

Moreover, Israel refused to recognize the PLO despite the latter's moderation form 1974 onwards, refuted that the Palestinians were a people entitled to national and political rights, and continued its rejection of a solution to the 1948 refugee problem. Finally, in the face of growing Palestinian nationalism, and consequently riots against the occupation inside the territories, Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982 with the aim of destroying the PLO bases there and getting rid of the organization, and thus the Palestinian problem, once and for all. In short, Israeli security strategy regarding the Palestinian problem became one of confronting the symptoms rather than the causes.

However all these measures fell short of solving Israel's security problems regarding the Palestinians, since the root causes of the problem remained. Although the PLO was removed from Lebanon, it was replaced just a few years later by other Palestinian militant organizations inside the territories — Hamas and Islamic Jihad— with growing grassroots support. Furthermore, Israel's invasion of Lebanon produced another and far more efficient militant organization than the PLO, Hizballah, the operations of which proved to be a growing source of military insecurity for Israel in the coming decades. In short, the Israeli conceptualization of security and security practice within the narrow military framework reproduced a wide range of new insecurities, and failed short of providing the Israeli community with security within the period studied. Moreover, they provided the ground for the Palestinian Intifada in 1987.

Israeli conception of military power as the only means to deal with its security problems that stemmed from the Palestinian conflict, was abandoned for the first time in 1992, under the Rabin-led Labor government. In this respect, Israel's recognition of the PLO, and its agreement to the establishment of a Palestinian entity in the occupied territories with the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, marked a major breakaway from Israel's previous military-oriented approaches to the Palestinian problem. Putting aside the international, regional and local developments (the 1987 Intifada, the end of the Cold War and the 1991 Gulf war) that lay at the background of its initiation, the Oslo was enabled as a result of Yitzhak Rabin's belief that the Israeli iron wall had achieved its ultimate purpose, and his recognition that the conflict with the Palestinians could not be resolved through military force alone, but also required some significant political steps. Thus, his attempts at reconceptualizing Israeli security, identity and interests regarding the Palestinian question were meant to open up political space for negotiations and the land-for-peace formula.

Nevertheless, Rabin's reconceptualization of security, maybe inevitably, was also centered mainly on Israeli national security defined in military terms. Indeed one of the primary motivations of Israel in engaging in the Accords was to stop Islamic terrorism that had become a major current security challenge for Israel following the Intifada. In reflection of the imbalance of power between Israel and the PLO, this security orientation played a significant part in shaping the substance and the practice of the Accords in a way that prioritized Israeli military security over the concerns and insecurities of the Palestinians. In this context, it can be said that the Oslo process has been a pragmatic peace —'peace for security'— from the Israeli perspective, and not 'peace for peace'.

In retrospective, arguably, this orientation constituted one of the major constraints of the peace process, for it did not involve those mechanisms that would simultaneously provide the Palestinians with security. Although the Labor leaders were committed to the land-for-peace formula, prioritization of Israel's security concerns, especially in the face increasing suicide bombings by Islamic militants during the process, and Israel's subsequent practices (border closures, house demolitions, mass arrests, establishment of checkpoints and road blocks inside the territories) simultaneously proved to be a wide range of physical, economic, and social security problems for the Palestinians. In this respect, these security practices paradoxically lent much legitimacy to the arguments and violent activities of Hamas

and other Islamic militant groups which had opposed the peace process from beginning, and resulted in an increased grassroots support for them. This renewed legitimacy for the militant groups also made it more and more difficult for the PA to curb their activities. The result was a cycle of violence, characterized by suicide bombings and Israeli retaliations. Along these lines, it might be argued that the framing of the Accords that prioritized Israeli security was paradoxically one of the factors that failed to bring security for Israel during the peace process.

The backlogs inherent within this framing of the Oslo became more obvious with Netanyahu's prime ministry. Unlike Peres and Rabin who simultaneously valued both the peace process and Israeli security, Netanyahu valued territorial integrity besides Israeli security. Thus, he made the national security argument the main pretext for its efforts to weaken the PA, to blame it for the Islamic terrorism, and thus, to undermine the peace process by refraining realizing Israel's responsibilities as outlined in the agreements. During his term the peace process was severely curtailed, and the suicide bombings by Hamas continued. Prior to his election, Netanyahu had blamed the Labor leaders for providing peace but not security, and had claimed that he would bring both peace and security. By the time his term ended by a non-confidence vote, he had provided none, yet he had succeeded in undermining the peace process. Mutual trust between Israelis and the Palestinians were shaken and the Oslo had produced a wide range of new insecurities for both peoples. In this vein, Netanyahu's policies, coupled by his successor Barak's own mistakes, contributed significantly to the processes that led to the failure of the peace process and the start of the Al-Aqsa Intifada in 2000.

To sum up, the debates among the key Israeli political actors —the Labor Zionists and the Revisionist Zionists— regarding the future borders and the identity of the state, played a key role in the construction and reconstruction of Israeli security policy particularly vis-à-vis the Palestinian problem. Nevertheless, the extent of these differences was limited to the objectives of the security policy. A zero-sum conception of security guided by the strategy of the iron wall, and the primacy of military means to confront the perceived threats, prevailed as the common characteristics of Israeli security understanding, informing Israel's related practices, under different governments until 1992. Along these lines the Oslo peace process was an anomaly. It introduced a new conceptualization of security to Israeli policy making by defining it in positive-sum terms and by giving priority to diplomacy and

negotiation over those of military means in dealing with the security threats. However, also as a result of the imbalance of power between Israel and the PLO, the Oslo was characterized in a way that prioritized Israeli military security over the Palestinian concerns. This framing of the Accords constituted a significant backlog for the peace process. First, it downplayed the insecurities faced by the Palestinians, and consequently enabled the Islamist anti-Oslo camp with a legitimacy base among Palestinian population. Second, it provided the Israeli–Jewish anti-Oslo camp with the necessary framing to undermine the peace process through its own instruments, both at the discursive and at the substantial levels. Also supported by other factors and processes this framing, although indirectly, brought about a failure of the peace process and the al-Aqsa Intifada in 2000.

It is observed that from 2000 onwards, and with the shift of the Israeli public to the politics of the right, the Israeli security policy has re-transformed into its zero-sum and military oriented self. The previous Sharon government's introduction of the discourse of "there is no one to talk to on the other side" and the policy unilateralism show striking similarities regarding Israel's security policy during the 1970s. The construction and consolidation of this policy among the Israeli body-politik and community at large, and the implications of these notions for Israel's current security problems provide a fertile area for further research. Nevertheless it can be said that Israel has gone back to the policy of the iron wall. Whether Israel will ever be able to move beyond the iron wall again, towards alternative conceptions of security remains a curious question.

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