

ABSTRACT

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DECISION-MAKING

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Why do some hawkish leaders become doves, and what determines whether these leaders' views affect dramatic change in a state's foreign policy? Structural and domestic political explanations of foreign policy change tend to overlook the importance of leaders in such change. Political psychologists offer important insight into how and why certain leaders are inclined to revise their beliefs. Two psychological factors in particular hold great promise for explaining leaders' foreign policy shifts: cognitive openness and cognitive complexity. Cognitively open leaders are receptive to new information and are thus more prone to changing their beliefs than cognitively closed leaders. Similarly, cognitively complex leaders recognize that distinct situations possess multiple dimensions, and so are more likely to engage in adaptive behavior than their cognitively simple counterparts. The primary case explored in this dissertation is that of Shimon Peres, who began his political career as a tough-minded hawk and, in mid-career, transformed into a leading dove. Peres is found to possess particularly high levels of cognitive openness and complexity, thus explaining why his dovish shift was more expansive and occurred sooner than did Yitzhak Rabin's dovish turn. Begin and Shamir, by contrast, are found to be more

cognitively closed and simple than either Peres or Rabin, thus explaining why these hawks remained hawks despite having witnessed the same systemic-structural and domestic political events as Peres and Rabin. While cognitive structure is seen as the key causal variable for the leader's dovish turn, systemic-structural and domestic political factors serve as the permissive conditions and/or triggering events for this phenomenon. In the case of Peres, his cognitive structure also helps to explain why he was able to wield disproportionate influence on Israeli foreign policy during periods in which he was a secondary political actor. His high degree of cognitive openness enabled him to seek out domestic and international partners in an effort to build coalitions of support for his political agenda. His high degree of cognitive complexity facilitated an understanding of the intricate needs of the many political and bureaucratic actors with whom he dealt, enabling him to win over the necessary support for his agenda.

HAWKS TO DOVES: THE ROLE OF PERSONALITY IN
FOREIGN POLICY DECISION-MAKING

By

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Research Puzzle

Why do some hawkish leaders become dovish and what determines whether these leaders' views affect dramatic change in their states' foreign policies? Recent history provides us with important examples of prominent foreign policy "hawks" undergoing dovish transformations. These leaders' shifts have led, in turn, to major changes in their states' foreign policies. Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's peace overtures to Jerusalem, just four years after launching a surprise attack on Israel, led to the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty in 1979. In South Africa, Nelson Mandela's repudiation of violence in his 1989 letter to President P. W. Botha set the stage for the country's transition from apartheid to democracy. In the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev moved his country from a policy of containment to détente between 1985 and 1991.

Yet major foreign policy transformations have occurred not only in authoritarian regimes, where change, some would argue, may more likely occur as a result of the whims of an authoritarian leader, but also in democratic societies.¹ For example, Charles de Gaulle, the French military leader who became President of the Fifth Republic, reversed the longstanding French policy vis-à-vis the Algerians by granting them independence. The United States also has undergone a number of

¹ It is important to note that leaders of authoritarian states cannot *always* act on all their whims. For example, even at the peak of his power, Soviet leader Nikita S. Khrushchev still had to contend with political rivals in the Presidium. Today, Iran – a modern-day totalitarian state – has a president who, despite his fiery rhetoric, is unable to make significant decisions without the approval of the mullahs of the Guardian Council.

major foreign policy reversals during the past several decades. President Richard Nixon's famous 1972 visit to China marked a significant turnaround of American-Chinese relations. President Ronald Reagan began seeking a rapprochement with the Soviet Union even before Gorbachev came to power and, in so doing, effectively reversed his hard-line stance toward the country he had formerly referred to as "the evil empire" (Farnham 2001; Fischer 1997).

To be sure, foreign policy transformations can also take place in the opposite direction; i.e., dovish policies can be replaced with hawkish ones. This is precisely what happened in the Carter administration. Following the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, President Carter revised his relatively dovish beliefs and attitude toward the Kremlin. Whereas he entered office with high hopes of improving U.S. relations with the Soviet leadership, he ended up pursuing hawkish policies, such as withdrawal from the SALT II treaty, recalling the American Ambassador from Moscow, and boycotting the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow (Aronoff 2006; Glad 1980, 1989; Lebow and Stein 1993; McClellan 1985).

Since the 1990s, Israel has had a comparatively large number of hawkish leaders who have ended up pursuing dovish policies. Former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin made history in 1993 when he authorized members of his government to negotiate the Oslo accords with Yasser Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). This decision represented a reversal both of Rabin's opposition to the longstanding Israeli policy of not negotiating with the PLO. More recently, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, a lifelong hawk, left the right-wing Likud party he helped found to form a new centrist party. In August 2005, Sharon took the controversial

step of disengaging unilaterally from the Gaza Strip, withdrawing all of the Israeli troops and settlers from this territory. Public statements made during his last years in office indicate that Sharon had reassessed the strategic implications of his long-held views concerning Israel's occupation of parts of the West Bank. Sharon's successor, Ehud Olmert, also has apparently moderated his hardline views in recent years. Having publicly voiced his support for a unilateral disengagement from Gaza before Sharon, Olmert subsequently followed Sharon's lead in leaving Likud and forming the Kadima party, which he has headed since Sharon's incapacitation. As Prime Minister, Olmert has publicly supported peace talks with the PLO, territorial compromise, and the establishment of a Palestinian state.

The most striking Israeli example of this hawk-to-dove shift, however, is the dramatic political transformation of former Prime Minister and current President Shimon Peres. In the last two decades, Peres has been known primarily as a champion of peacemaking, a Nobel Peace Prize recipient who, together with the late Rabin and Arafat, concluded the Oslo agreements of 1993. Yet Peres has not always spoken the language of conciliation. In the early years of Israel's existence, he was instrumental in shaping the institutions and policies of the nation's security establishment. He built Israel's arms and aircraft industries, forging an important relationship with France that provided Israel with the armaments and aircraft it needed to win the 1956 and 1967 wars. Most significantly, he pioneered Israel's nuclear program with Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion's authorization, guiding that country's development of nuclear technology and crafting Israel's policy of nuclear ambiguity. A paradigmatic

case of a hawk-turned-dove, Peres serves as the primary case study in this dissertation.

The Significance of Studying a Leader's Hawk-to-Dove Shift

The phenomenon of hawkish leaders who pursue dovish policies has occurred in many parts of the world and, in many cases, these shifts have led to major foreign policy changes by states. The extant political science literature has not provided, however, an adequate explanation of why leaders shift their political views or why certain leaders are able to actualize their views by affecting a change in their state's foreign policy behavior.

Why do some hawks remain hawks, for example, while others become more dovish in their foreign policy orientation? To what extent do situational factors determine the likelihood of a leader's propensity to opt for more accommodative strategies vis-à-vis an adversary? Are certain personality characteristics critical to our understanding of this occurrence? None of these questions are adequately answered by existing theories, but each has significant theoretical and policy value. With respect to theoretical debates, explaining foreign policy change remains an unsettled topic in the international relations literature. With regard to policy debates, if there are certain common factors underlying a leader's shift from a hawkish foreign policy orientation to a more dovish one, then identifying such factors could, among potential benefits, help policymakers shape the circumstances that might sway other leaders to opt for peace diplomacy.

It is also important to better understand why certain leaders are able to strongly influence their state's foreign policy. After all, not every political actor is successful in affecting change; some actors – even certain secondary ones – are more influential than others. In each of the aforementioned cases, the leader's shift in views on a major foreign policy issue led to a dramatic change in his state's foreign policy. Few would question that events, such as the Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement, the disappearance of Apartheid, and the end of the Cold War are of historic significance. But would they have taken place had other political actors prevailed? This is an important counter-factual question. Writes Fred Greenstein, a political scientist who has written prolifically on leadership:

Most historians would agree...that if the assassin's bullet aimed at President-Elect Franklin D. Roosevelt in February 1933 had found its mark, there would have been no New Deal, or if the Politburo had chosen another Leonid Brezhnev, Konstantin Chernenko, or Yuri Andropov rather than Mikhail Gorbachev as General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1985, the epochal changes of the late 1980s would not have occurred, at least not at the same time and in the same way (1992: 105).

Yet the discipline of political science has long neglected the role of leaders. As Greenstein observed four decades ago, the study of personality and politics has more critics than practitioners (Greenstein 1967: 630). In the field of international relations, scholars generally minimize the importance of leaders and their personalities, attributing political outcomes to structures and situational factors. In recent years, however, a number of scholars have called on political scientists to “bring the statesman back in” because many political outcomes cannot be adequately explained without factoring in the role of leaders and their personalities (Byman and Pollack 2001; see, also, Aronoff 2001; Hermann and Hagan 1998; Hudson 2005, 2007; Sasley 2006).

This dissertation addresses this lacuna by studying the hawk-to-dove phenomenon and its impact on a state's foreign policy change. In so doing, it aims to make three contributions to the literature. First, it explains why certain leaders are more likely to revise their foreign policy beliefs than are others. Second, it better incorporates the individual level of analysis into international relations theory so as to provide an enhanced understanding of the role of leaders in foreign policy change. Third, it offers an integrated, multi-level framework that provides a thicker accounting of foreign policy change – both on the part of the individual leader and the state.

There is no consensus as to what causes states to alter their foreign policies. Kenneth Waltz makes clear in *Theory of International Politics* that his structural theory does *not* determine which specific foreign policy actions states will take or when they will take them. He wisely observes that his theory must not be confused with a theory of foreign policy (Waltz 1979: 121-123). Yet, structural realists tend to account for foreign policy change by pointing out that states adjust their behavior in response to perceived changes in the characteristics of the international system. For these theorists, system-level variables, such as the distribution of power, explain the variation in foreign policy (Mearsheimer 2001).

Domestic-level theorists argue that internal factors, such as bureaucratic politics, public opinion, and political parties are what underlie foreign policy change (Goldmann 1988; Hermann 1990; Risse-Kappen 1991). Several scholars have attempted to combine systemic factors with domestic-level factors in explaining foreign policy change. For example, Hagan (1994) argues that “the rise and fall of

political regimes modify the pervasive effects of international change, acting both as a source of politically redefined foreign policy orientation and as a constraint on governments' ability to respond to that change" (1994: 140).

What both structural and domestic political explanations share, however, is a tendency to downplay or ignore completely the role of leaders in shaping a state's foreign policy behavior. In recent years, political psychologists have challenged structural and domestic political accounts by arguing that certain personality types are more predisposed to changing their own views and their states' foreign policies than are others. Cognitive psychologists note that individuals who are *cognitively open* – that is, receptive to new information that challenges their core beliefs – are more likely to change their beliefs than are those who are *cognitively closed*; those in the latter group are more likely to reject information that challenges their beliefs (Finlay, Holsti and Fagen 1967; Rokeach 1960). Similarly, cognitive psychologists distinguish between *cognitively complex* individuals – those who recognize multiple dimensions in people, objects, and situations – and *cognitively simple* individuals, who tend to view the world in black-and-white terms (Hermann 1980; Shapiro and Bonham 1973; Tetlock 1984, 1985; Vertzberger 1990; Wallace and Suedfeld 1995). Political psychologists studying foreign policy change have argued, accordingly, that cognitively open and complex leaders are more likely to change their beliefs, and will therefore be more inclined to alter their states' foreign policies than their cognitively closed and simple counterparts (Aronoff 2001, 2006; Farnham 2001; Stein 1994). However, much like the aforementioned rationalist approaches downplay the role of individuals, these psychological explanations tend to minimize the importance of

systemic and domestic political factors. Can an adequate explanation of foreign policy change neglect any of these variables?

Research Design

Variables

The dependent variable in this study is the leader's shift from a hawkish to a dovish foreign policy orientation. The term "hawk" is used to denote a leader who has an uncompromising attitude in the realm of foreign policy, whereas the term "dove" denotes a leader who prefers strategies of accommodation with the adversary. But these terms are context-specific, since a dovish policy in one situation might mean something quite different than a dovish policy in other circumstances. For example, the hawk-dove divide in the context of U.S.-Soviet relations was based on one's positions on issues such as arms reduction, whereas the hawk-dove divide in the context of French policy toward Algeria from 1954-1962 was based on one's position regarding granting Algeria independence.

Since this dissertation is focused on Israeli leaders, it is necessary to lay out specific criteria that define the "hawk" and "dove" labels in the Israeli context. For the period in question (1967-1997), I utilize a leader's positions on the following issues to distinguish hawks from doves: (1) territorial compromise; (2) Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza; (3) negotiations with the PLO; and (4) Palestinian statehood.

Since 1967, the year in which Israel became an occupying power in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as a consequence of the 1967 War, it is what one observer calls

“the territorial divide” that has essentially differentiated hawks from doves.² Doves have supported territorial compromise; that is, returning parts or all of the occupied territories. Hawks have opposed territorial concessions, preferring to either provide the Palestinian residents of these territories with some sort of autonomy or having these territories formally annexed by Israel. The establishment of Jewish settlements in these territories has been an important strategy in retaining them; thus hawks have supported their expansion, while doves want to see them curtailed, even dismantled. Until the Islamist movement Hamas won a large majority in the Palestinian parliamentary elections of January 2006, the PLO was widely considered by the international community and by the Palestinians themselves as the sole representative of the Palestinian people. Whereas Israeli doves have long supported negotiations with the PLO, hawks have opposed it on the grounds that one must not negotiate with a terrorist organization. Finally, doves have supported the establishment of a Palestinian state as part of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, while hawks have opposed it.³

Doves and hawks are ideal types; in reality, however, people fall along a continuum, with those at one end being strongly hawkish and those at the other end being strongly dovish. Thus, for example, a leader who opposes the expansion of settlements, favors territorial compromise and supports PLO talks that will lead to the

² Interview with Nimrod Novik, 23 October 2006, Herzliya Pituach, Israel.

³ As is shown in chapters 4-6, the latter two criteria have seen shifts in support over time. Until the early 1990s, a majority of Israelis, including those identifying with the dovish Labor Party, opposed negotiations with the PLO. Mainstream Israelis supported negotiations with local Palestinians who were not officially identified with the PLO; only the left-wing and a minority within Labor advocated direct PLO talks. The notion of an independent Palestinian state was arguably an even greater taboo until the late 1990s. It was only in 1997 when the Labor Party endorsed such a state in its platform; the centrist Kadima party, formed by Sharon and Olmert, included a two-state solution in its 2005 platform.

establishment of a Palestinian state is considered more dovish than one who favors territorial compromise but opposes dealing with the PLO and rejects Palestinian statehood. The latter, however, is more dovish than one who rejects not only negotiations with the PLO and a Palestinian state, but also the concept of territorial compromise.

This study tests the effect of three sets of independent variables on the dependent variable: (1) cognitive openness and cognitive complexity (the individual level); (2) the balance of power (the system level); and (3) coalition politics, party politics, and public opinion (the domestic level).

Cognitive openness and complexity are evaluated through a comparative analysis of character assessments provided by the interviewees as well as discourse and content analysis of statements made by Begin, Shamir, Rabin, and Peres on issues other than the Palestinian question. The leader's level of cognitive openness is assessed by comparing the analytical results as they pertain to three questions: (1) Is the leader receptive to the views of other leaders? (2) Does the leader surround himself with advisers who are free to challenge his views? (3) Does the leader respond to new information that challenges his beliefs by dismissing that information or by updating his beliefs in response to these inputs? The leader's level of cognitive complexity is assessed by determining his ability to identify nuances in given situations and use them to his advantage. The analytical results of three key questions are employed in this regard: (1) Does the leader tend to view the world in black-and-white terms, or does he view shades of gray in people and events? (2) Is the leader

able to identify situational ambiguity and use it to his operational benefit? (3) Does the leader tend to view conflict situations in zero-sum terms or positive-sum terms?

The balance of power is evaluated in terms of the distribution of military and political capabilities of actors in the Middle East. The impact of these systemic-structural conditions on Israeli security interests are then assessed, specifically the extent to which shifts in the international and regional balance of power have increased or decreased Israel's security.

Coalition politics, party politics, and public opinion are evaluated by examining press reports, polling information, party platforms, intra-party debates, Knesset debates, and responses from interviewees. These factors are examined within the context of Israeli foreign policy decision-making as it pertains to the Palestinian issue, in order to determine whether and to what extent they have impacted these foreign policy decisions.

Case Selection

George and Bennett observe that a common methodological critique – particularly pertaining to statistical research – is “selection bias,” which occurs when the analyst selects cases that do not represent an accurate sample along the dependent variable of the relevant population of cases, resulting in faulty inferences. As George and Bennett point out, however, case study researchers may deliberately choose cases that share a particular outcome. “Cases selected on the dependent variable, including single case studies, can help identify which variables are not necessary or sufficient conditions for the selected outcomes,” they write (2005: 23). Indeed, the findings based on the primary case study in this research project – Shimon Peres –

demonstrate the inadequacy of standard rationalist explanations of foreign policy change that are based on systemic and/or domestic political variables. These factors are found to be insufficient in explaining why Peres became a dove prior to his erstwhile Labor Party rival Yitzhak Rabin, who was witness to the same international and domestic events. Moreover, other hawks who were witness to these events, such as Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir, never became doves. Begin and Shamir are cases of the “dogs that did not bark.”

Why study Peres?

Shimon Peres is selected as the central figure in this study for four reasons. First, the data availability on Peres makes him a particularly appealing leader to study. Peres’s nearly six-decade political career is unique not only in terms of its broad time span but also in terms of the extent to which he has been a key player in Israeli foreign policy. As the empirical chapters make clear, Peres had a hand in major foreign policy decisions from the mid-1950s on. Many archival documents dating to the earlier part of Peres’s career have been declassified and are now available to the public. Because Peres is a prolific writer and speaker, his transformation from hawk to dove also can be traced through his own words. Furthermore, expert testimony is readily available given the numerous family members, friends, acquaintances, former colleagues and aides – supporters and detractors alike – who are still alive. These witnesses are important for corroborating Peres’s words as well as providing the interviewer with insight into Peres’s personality. Finally, Peres himself is alive, alert, and generally avails himself to interviews.

A related reason to study Peres is his continued political relevance. As Israel's ninth President, he is now in a largely ceremonial role that lacks institutional power to make or directly influence political decisions. However, he is widely regarded as the country's elder statesman whose foreign policy views are sought both at home and abroad, and his views continue to receive considerable attention by the media. Thus, this project is not merely historical; it is of contemporary importance as well.

Third, Peres is a paradigmatic case of a hawk-turned-dove. His formative political years were spent running the Ministry of Defense, where he oversaw furtive arms deals with the French and the construction of a nuclear reactor in Israel. His views on foreign policy were distinctly hard-line, as was manifested by his belligerent rhetoric towards Israel's Arab adversaries, his fervent support for counter-terror operations, and his push for Israel's involvement in the 1956 Sinai War. Following the 1967 War, Peres stood to the right of the Labor Party, his political home, by opposing territorial concessions and promoting the establishment of Jewish settlements in the West Bank. It was only in the late 1970s that he changed his mind about territorial compromise and settlement expansion, becoming a supporter of the former and an opponent of the latter. By the late 1980s, Peres identified with the party doves, who were advocating negotiations with the PLO, a position he vigorously pushed following Yitzhak Rabin's victory in the 1992 elections. By 1997, Peres publicly endorsed the notion of an independent Palestinian state. The one-time hawk had become a devoted dove.

Fourth, Peres has had a significant impact on Israeli foreign policy; he is not just a policymaker whose views have shifted. Peres matters because he has had a

central role in shaping the course of events in Israel, in contrast to other hawkish Israeli officials who, at one point or another, became doves but whose impact on Israeli foreign policy has been far more limited. For example, former President Ezer Weizman, who had been a high-ranking official in Likud, became increasingly dovish in the late 1970s. In 1980, Weizman left Begin's government and formed his own political faction before ending up in the dovish wing of the Labor Party. Yehoshafat Harkabi, a former chief of military intelligence, similarly shifted in a dovish direction, advocating in 1977 talks with the PLO that would lead to a Palestinian state, many years before Israel's mainstream political establishment was prepared to do so. Weizman and Harkabi are but two examples of Israeli hawks who became doves. However, neither they nor other figures had nearly as significant of an impact on Israeli foreign policy as did Peres.⁴ Rather, in contrast to Peres, they had relatively minor roles in influencing the direction of Israeli foreign policy and are thus less appealing cases for exhaustive research.

To be sure, there are other examples of hawks who adopted dovish policies *and* who played a major role in Israeli foreign policy decision-making – Rabin, Sharon, and Olmert. However, the extent of their transformation is unclear and appears to be more limited than Peres's shift. Rabin's untimely death just two years following his reluctant acceptance of the Oslo process raises questions about the

⁴ Although Weizman attained senior positions in the government, he is considered by some political elites to have been a marginal foreign policy player, even during the years in which he served as Minister of Defense, when he was a member of the negotiating team at Camp David. See interviews with Zalman Shoval, 20 November 2006, Tel Aviv; and Gad Yaacobi, 9 October 2006, Tel Aviv. As is shown in chapter 4, Peres was instrumental in forging an alliance – albeit a tacit one – with France in the 1950s, which provided Israel with a significant source of arms and which led to the construction of a nuclear reactor in the 1960s. Peres the hawk was also a central figure in the establishment of Jewish settlements in the West Bank. His influence on Israeli foreign policy did not diminish after he became a dove. As is shown in Chapter 6, Peres was a key figure in the Rabin government's dramatic foreign policy change vis-à-vis the PLO in 1993.

extent to which his views had been transformed, even though it was he who took responsibility for the sea change in Israeli policy towards the PLO. Ariel Sharon, who arguably pushed harder for settlement expansion than any other Israeli politician, stunned the nation when, as prime minister, he unilaterally withdrew the Israeli army from the Gaza Strip, evacuating the settlements there in the process. His premiership was cut short, however, by the massive stroke he suffered on 4 January 2006 that left him incapacitated. Did Sharon's disengagement from Gaza foreshadow future withdrawals from the West Bank and thus further evacuation of settlements, thereby indicating a real change in Sharon's worldview? Or was Sharon's move a carefully orchestrated tactic aimed at neutralizing pressure from the international community so that he could then solidify Israel's hold on the West Bank? Given that Sharon kept his cards close to his chest, one can merely speculate about the meaning and scope of his dovish turn.⁵ Finally, Ehud Olmert appears to have undergone a genuine transformation from a hawk to a dove. He began his political career thirty years ago as a disciple of right-wing firebrand Ze'ev Jabotinsky, whose views informed Olmert's Herut (later Likud) party. Today, he is a proponent of territorial compromise and favors a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Olmert is still in the midst of his premiership, however, and it remains to be seen whether he carries out his stated intention to negotiate a peace agreement with the Palestinian leadership that would entail withdrawing from vast parts of the West Bank (and probably East Jerusalem as well). While it may be premature to assess Olmert's dovish

⁵ Indeed, interviews conducted with Israeli elites in the fall of 2006 point to very different interpretations of Sharon's Gaza withdrawal. One observer boldly asserts that Sharon "tergiversated," while another is convinced that Sharon's move was merely tactical and that he had had no intention of pursuing further withdrawals in the West Bank. See interviews with David Landau, 21 November 2006, Tel Aviv, and Nimrod Novik, 23 October 2006, Herzliya Pituach, respectively.

transformation, a case study of Olmert would be the logical extension of this project and, accordingly, is given treatment in chapter 7, the concluding chapter of this dissertation.

Methods of Inquiry

To overcome problems that can stem from a single method of investigation, this dissertation relies on what Robert G. Burgess has termed “multiple strategies of field research” (1982: 163-7; 1984: 144). It is these multiple strategies that have led some scholars to compare the qualitative researcher to a *bricoleur*, a person adept at using and adapting diverse materials and tools (Coffey and Atkinson 1996: 4, 24; Denzin and Lincoln 1994: 2). By “triangulating” – combining different methods of investigation – the distinct methods employed in this research project complement one another. Within the course of the investigation, these multiple strategies were integrated, which is considered preferable to merely being used alongside one another (Burgess 1984: 146). Interviews, archival documents, and a slew of primary and secondary source material were consulted and analyzed via process tracing, content analysis, and discourse analysis.

Primary Source Material: Memoirs, Interviews and Archival Documents

Given that Peres serves as the primary case in this project, this dissertation consults the numerous books he has written, which attest to his political views at various junctures in time. Peres’s books include his published memoirs, *Battling for Peace* (1995), as well as earlier books that are semi-autobiographical, including *The Next Phase* (1965), *David’s Sling* (1970), *Tomorrow is Now* (1978), and *The New*

Middle East (1993). Autobiographical works of his rivals have also been utilized in the course of this research (Begin 1977; Rabin 1979/1996; Shamir 1994), as have those leaders' numerous published interviews, speeches, and op-eds.⁶

The original research in this dissertation consists of interviews conducted by the author as well as extensive archival sources. Archival research has been performed in three locations in Israel: the IDF Archives in Tel Hashomer, the Israel State Archives in Jerusalem, and the Moshe Sharett Israel Labor Party Archive in Beit Berl. The IDF Archives have yielded a plethora of newly available material – specifically, minutes from meetings, briefings, and closed-door speeches from Peres's early years as Director-General of the Ministry of Defense. The Israel State Archives has supplied transcripts of Knesset deliberations and speeches, which provide a glimpse of the various leaders' attitudes at different points in time and highlight the differing approaches toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict amongst the various Knesset factions. The Labor Party Archive, a repository for all archival materials pertaining to the party, is a particularly valuable resource for helping to assess the differences between Rabin and Peres within the context of the general attitudes prevailing in the party at any given time.

Complementing this archival research are 57 interviews, which have yielded expert testimony from current and former associates of Begin, Rabin, Peres, and Shamir.⁷ The majority of the interviews were conducted in Israel with veteran

⁶ These autobiographical works and written and spoken statements are indicative, of course, of the leaders' public views, but do not necessarily reflect their private thoughts, beliefs, and opinions on a particular course of action. One should not, therefore, overly rely on these materials. The interviews conducted with those individuals who are familiar with these leaders help to clarify where each leader stood at various junctures and serve to mitigate the exaggerations leaders are prone to make when discussing their roles in various events.

⁷ A total of 54 individuals were interviewed; two people were interviewed on more than one occasion.

journalists and writers, former political aides, current and former Members of Knesset, retired diplomats, retired generals, and close friends and family members (in the case of Peres). A personal interview with Peres is included in this list. The rest of the interviews were conducted in Washington, D.C., where retired diplomats and ex-government officials gave their accounts of the personalities of these leaders and their take on what factors led Peres and Rabin – as opposed to Begin and Shamir – to change their positions on the Palestinian problem.

The interviews were conducted using the “semi-structured” approach. Per the recommendation of qualitative researchers, an interview guide was devised to help remember what to ask and to assist in recognizing the relevant information for the interviewee (Jones 1996: 141-143). There is a strong consensus among those who do qualitative interviews that tape recording and transcribing are essential for several reasons: they provide an accurate record of the interview and they eliminate the distraction produced by taking notes, making it easier to be attentive to the interviewee (Jones 1996: 148). With a few exceptions, the interviews were thus recorded and later transcribed. Although each interview guide was tailored to the interviewee, there were a number of questions asked of each participant. The following is a partial list of these questions:

1. When did you first get to know Shimon Peres? What years did you work closely with him or get to know him well?
2. How would you describe his personality?
3. How would you compare his personality with other Israeli leaders with whom you were acquainted (Begin, Rabin, and/or Shamir)?
4. How open was each of these figures to the views of others?
5. Who was the most receptive to new information that might challenge his views – and who was the least? Can you provide an example or two?
6. Did Peres tend to describe people and situations in black-and-white terms or did he tend to describe them in multiple dimensions? How about the other leader(s)?

7. When you first met Peres, did you regard him as a hawk, a dove, or neither?⁸
8. And today, would you regard Peres as a hawk, a dove, or neither?
9. How would you compare Peres's views on the Palestinian issue with those of the other Israeli leaders whom you knew?
10. What do you think were the key factors that led Peres to support territorial compromise, oppose settlements, support negotiations with the PLO, and accept the notion of an independent Palestinian state? Was there a particular turning point for his shift on any of these issues?

Secondary Source Material: Newspaper Articles, Biographies and Historical Works

George and Bennett point out the importance of contextual developments “to which policymakers are sensitive, to which they are responding, or which they are attempting to influence” (2005: 97). Leading newspapers can be essential to this end (2005: 108). I have examined relevant papers of record and periodicals covering political affairs in Israel from 1953 to the present. U.S. publications that were consulted include *The New York Times* and *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report* magazines. Israeli newspapers and periodicals, however, comprise the majority of these sources. The central branch of Tel Aviv's main public library and the IDF Archives in Tel Hashomer proved to be rich sources of newspapers such as *Davar*, *Haaretz*, *HaMishmar*, the *Jerusalem Post*, *Ma'ariv*, *Yedioth Aharonoth*, and now-defunct magazines like *Davar Hashavua* and *Nir HaKvutza*.

Numerous biographical and historical works have also been consulted, including the only existing biographies on Shimon Peres – Matti Golan's (1989) *Road to Peace: A Biography of Shimon Peres* and Michael Bar-Zohar's (2007) *Shimon Peres: The Biography* – and numerous books focusing on various aspects of Peres's political activities. These sources include journalistic accounts (Azoulay-Katz 1996), as well as academic and historical works (Bar-Zohar 1964; Bilski Ben-Hur 1992; Bar-

⁸ The terms “hawk” and “dove” were discussed in each interview so that they meant the same thing to the interviewer and the interviewee. Each instance in which the interviewee took exception to my criteria of “hawk” and “dove” was duly noted.

On 1995; Cohen 1996/1998; Golani 1998; Keren 1995). Because this dissertation compares and contrasts Peres with three other Israeli leaders, various accounts of his political rivals have been consulted as well; specifically, biographical works on Menachem Begin (Haber 1978; Perlmutter 1987; Rowland 1985), Yitzhak Rabin (Kurzman 1998; L. Rabin 1997; Slater 1996), and Yitzhak Shamir (Margalit 1992).

Data Analysis: Process Tracing, Content Analysis, and Discourse Analysis

Three common methodological approaches have been used to analyze the data: process tracing, content analysis, and discourse analysis. Useful for both theory testing and theory development, process tracing is used to trace the link between possible causes and observed outcomes. Bennett and George define “process induction” as a type of process tracing that involves “the inductive observation of apparent causal mechanisms and heuristic rendering of these mechanisms as potential hypotheses for future testing” (1997: 5). Indeed, the plentiful research data has helped to identify the causal path depicting Peres’s and Rabin’s dovish turn.

Qualitative content analysis of leaders’ interviews and speeches, as well as their statements contained in the archival documents, have provided clarity to their positions concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To determine the extent to which a leader’s positions were “hawkish” or “dovish,” a coding scheme has been devised based on the dependent variables tailored to the Israeli cases: the leader’s statements on (a) territorial compromise; (b) Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza; (c) negotiations with the PLO; and (d) Palestinian statehood. The coding scheme is thematic in that, rather than counting the number of times a statement containing a

particular phrase has been uttered, the focus of this analysis has been the leader's stated positions on each of these issues since 1967.⁹

Discourse analysis has assisted in the process of determining each leader's personality characteristics – in particular, his/her levels of cognitive openness and complexity. A leader at the lower end of the complexity continuum tends to describe situations in black-and-white terms, using absolutist language to convey a thought – words like *always*, *never*, or *without a doubt*. Little or no ambiguity can be discerned from his/her statements. By contrast, a cognitively complex leader tends to avoid absolutist language, crafting thoughts in a more subtle or ambiguous manner, thereby leaving some wiggle-room for an altered position in the future. The cognitively complex thinker, when discussing a controversial issue, will generally convey the impression that the issue under discussion is not cut-and-dry but rather involves multiple dimensions. Such thoughts are often conveyed by employing conditional language (e.g., *if*, *as long as*, etc.), a certain level of ambiguity, or by explicitly acknowledging (though not necessarily endorsing) alternative points of view. The latter is indicative not only of cognitive complexity – the recognition of different dimensions to an issue – but also of the extent of an individual's cognitive openness. Of the four leaders examined in this study, Shamir most closely typifies the cognitively closed and simple leader. He rejects out of hand the validity of other viewpoints and indicates absolute certainty in the rightness of his way. At times, he

⁹ It was determined that a coding scheme based on themes would make more sense than a count of specific words. A comparative word count of “peace,” for example, would yield very little insight in a country whose politicians – left, right, and center – have been, since the founding of the State of Israel, obsessed with the notion of Arab-Israeli reconciliation and have thus almost always expressed their support for peace in public statements. More importantly, nuanced expressions and the context in which statements are made are often lost in such a count.

even perceives those who challenge his views as traitorous. Peres, by contrast, exemplifies the cognitively open and complex leader. He often acknowledges various ways of looking at a problem, and his statements are often ambiguously worded so as to leave the door open for a future change in policy.

Summary of Research Findings

The findings lead to several important conclusions. First and foremost, the more cognitively open and cognitively complex is a leader, the more likely that leader is to change his or her foreign policy preferences, becoming either more hawkish or more dovish towards an adversary. The leader's cognitive structure is deemed the key causal factor underlying his/her dovish shift. Specifically, Peres's particularly high levels of cognitive openness and complexity have enabled him to undergo a more expansive revision of his views than Rabin. Shamir's particularly low levels of cognitive openness and complexity are central to explaining why he did not revise his views. At the same time, cognitive factors alone cannot account for changed views or changed foreign policies. The cases of Peres and Rabin demonstrate that structural and domestic political factors served as permissive conditions and/or triggering events for their dovish turns.

A second conclusion is that, to the extent that leaders will pursue foreign policy change, they will do so when the distribution of power shifts in a way that alters their states' vital security interests. Both Prime Minister Rabin and Foreign Minister Peres were affected by the epochal events of the late 1980s and early 1990s – the Palestinian Intifada, the Persian Gulf War, and the end of the Cold War. The

latter two events, which resulted in the unchallenged military supremacy of Israel's closest ally, the United States, dramatically altered the regional and global system structure; Israel's primary military competitor in the region, Saddam Hussein's Iraq, had been decisively defeated, and the world had become unipolar. As would be expected from neorealist logic, Prime Minister Shamir did not alter course with respect to Israel's policy toward the PLO either during or after the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference. Yet, Rabin and Peres saw an opportunity in negotiating with an organization that, to survive, would be compelled to compromise on its demands and accept Israel's right to exist in peace and security. Therefore, structural realism alone cannot account for why one set of structural changes led two Israeli governments in two radically different directions. In order to explain these seemingly contradictory outcomes, one must supplement structural theory with additional factors, particularly the ability of Israel's more cognitively open and complex leaders to distinguish between the near-term security situation and long-term security threats.

Rabin had been particularly affected by the first Intifada. As Defense Minister when the Intifada began, he had come to the realization that, notwithstanding Israel's military strength, the Palestinians could not be ruled by force (Slater 1996: 416-419). Israel's inability to defeat the rebellious but ill-equipped Palestinian population also highlighted the long-term costs of the occupation to Israel's security. Both Rabin and Peres were concerned that, in the long run, Israel would be less secure by continuing the occupation. Moreover, a fast-growing Palestinian population threatened to upset the demographic balance of the Jewish state. As Telhami points out, "Israeli policies are constrained by the drive to preserve a Jewish majority" (1996: 35). Thus, Rabin

and Peres came to believe that Israel's *long-term* security interests warranted foreign policy change.

All of this stands in sharp contrast to the behavior of Yitzhak Shamir, who did not perceive Israel's security to be significantly threatened by holding onto the West Bank and Gaza Strip. On the contrary, he was convinced that conceding territory to a weakened PLO – an organization that, to Shamir, remained committed to Israel's destruction – would be more threatening to Israel's long-term security interests than retaining the disputed territories. The leaders' varying levels of cognitive complexity is relevant here as well, because the ability of Peres and Rabin to discern nuances – in contrast to Shamir's binary approach – may have been the decisive difference in their ability to see various forms of threat and to weigh them against each other.

The third conclusion is that, to the extent that leaders will change from hawk to dove (or from dove to hawk), they will do so following domestic political realignments that favor such policies. Thus, domestic political developments – in particular, Peres's challenge to Rabin for the chairmanship of the Labor Party and his subsequent role as leader of the opposition – served as triggering events for his dovish turn in the first half of 1977. Labor's ascent to power in 1992 helps to explain the sea change in Israel's policy vis-à-vis the PLO; this event was a permissive condition for Rabin's dovish turn. Yet domestic political developments, including growing public support for talking to the PLO, had no discernable influence on Shamir, who never altered his views on this issue.

Although the primary focus of this dissertation concerns why some hawkish leaders becomes doves, the inductive nature of the research has also led to interesting

findings concerning the conditions under which a leader's hawk-to-dove shift is more likely to affect the foreign policy behavior of states. The leader's cognitive structure appears to be a critical causal variable in determining his/her ability to affect foreign policy change. A leader who is cognitively open is more likely to attempt to expand his/her circle of bureaucratic support for the policies he/she is pursuing. Further, a cognitively complex leader will be able to demonstrate greater understanding for the positions of the various players with whom he/she interacts. Together, these factors can help to win over useful allies, facilitating an eventual change in policy. As demonstrated in chapters 4-6, Peres was highly influential in foreign policy making despite being a secondary political actor. For example, by actively engaging a wide array of French politicians and bureaucrats – meeting them, listening to their concerns, and highlighting mutual interests – Peres succeeded in forging an important alliance with France in the 1950s, which produced massive arms deals, tilting the balance of power in the region in Israel's favor. It was this alliance that also led to Israel becoming a nuclear power. Another example is Peres's handling of the backchannel negotiations with the PLO in Oslo. Peres had learned from his prior experience with the ill-fated London Agreement that, to get the prime minister's backing, he would need to involve him every step of the way and do so in an open, honest manner. Peres's openness and complexity enabled him to improve his working relationship with Rabin, eventually earning his trust.

In sum, the empirical findings demonstrate that systemic and domestic political factors are necessary but insufficient conditions for explaining a hawkish leader's dovish turn. To that end, the concluding chapter (chapter 7) offers a multi-

level, multi-factoral framework that incorporates systemic, domestic, and cognitive insights. The purpose of this framework is to provide a better explanation of foreign policy change than can be offered by approaches that apply either one or two levels of analysis. The framework stipulates that the leader's cognitive structure – his/her levels of cognitive openness and complexity – is the critical causal variable in determining his/her propensity to revise core positions in light of new information from the environment; that the leader's cognitive structure is the critical causal variable in determining his/her ability to affect foreign policy change; and that systemic-structural factors and domestic political factors serve as either permissive conditions or triggering events for the leader's foreign policy shift.

Limitations of the Study

This in-depth exploration of Peres's dovish shift enables us to gain a rich understanding of the circumstances that led to his shift and why his political rivals were either slow or failed to revise their foreign policy beliefs. One should not attempt to overgeneralize from this study, however, since it examines a small number of cases. The conclusions derived herein are contingent generalizations, and it is left to future researchers to apply the theoretical framework presented in this dissertation on other cases. The concluding chapter (chapter 7) provides a road map for carrying out this task.

An additional limitation concerns the loss of parsimony in an explanation that encompasses various sets of factors at different levels of analysis. Explanations that use fewer variables to explain outcomes are generally preferable to those that employ more variables because they explain a lot with a little and so maximize analytical

leverage. Yet, as this dissertation attempts to demonstrate, more parsimonious approaches provide inadequate explanations of changes in leaders' foreign policy views and of changes in their states' foreign policy behavior. A more accurate account of this phenomenon, therefore, may require scholars to sacrifice some analytical parsimony.

Structure of Dissertation

This introductory chapter has introduced the research puzzle and its significance to the field of international relations, followed by the research design and a summary of the key findings.

Chapter 2 features a review of the various explanations concerning foreign policy change found in the international relations literature. This chapter highlights the failure of these explanations, individually, to adequately account for the role of the leader in this change. Cognitive psychology is shown to be particularly useful in explaining why people may revise their beliefs on core matters. The case is made for incorporating insights from cognitive psychology in an effort to provide a better explanation for shifts in leaders' foreign policy views and their subsequent decisions to alter their states' foreign policies.

Chapter 3 compares the cognitive structure of four Israeli prime ministers – Menachem Begin, Yitzhak Shamir, Yitzhak Rabin, and Shimon Peres. To avoid a tautology, the analysis is done not on the basis of this dissertation's dependent variable, but rather on each leader's statements and actions on issues *other than* the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Shamir is shown to be the least cognitively open and

complex of these leaders and therefore the least amenable to altering his views. Begin is not far behind. Peres is shown to be the most cognitively open and complex, and therefore the most likely leader to alter his views, followed by Rabin.

Chapter 4 explores Peres's hawkish years (1953-1977). The purpose of this chapter is twofold: (1) to show that Peres, in the earlier part of his career, was an uncompromising hawk; and (2) to demonstrate that he had a major impact on Israeli foreign policy during these years despite his status as a secondary political actor.

Chapter 5 focuses on the first phase of Peres's dovish transformation (1977-1987). The Socialist International and political aides at home, coupled with domestic and international events, are shown to have impacted his acceptance of territorial compromise, opposition to settlement expansion, and, more generally, a change in rhetoric towards the Palestinians and the elevation of the peace process to the top of his agenda.

Chapter 6 covers the second phase of Peres's dovish transformation (1987-1997). The London Agreement that Peres reached with King Hussein in 1987, followed by the collapse of the "Jordanian option" the following year, led Peres to the conclusion that Israel needed to directly engage the PLO. Peres had an important role in bringing about this sea change in Israeli foreign policy following the election of Rabin in 1992.

The final chapter of this dissertation (chapter 7) summarizes the central conclusions drawn from the empirical research. A multi-level framework, which integrates systemic factors, domestic political factors, and individual-level cognitive traits, is proposed in an effort to offer an improved explanation of why some hawkish

leaders end up pursuing dovish policies and what determines whether these leaders' views affect dramatic change in a state's foreign policy. It is then shown how this model might be applied to explaining other hawk-to-dove cases (Ronald Reagan, Mikhail Gorbachev, and Ehud Olmert) and a case of a dove-turned hawk (Jimmy Carter).

CHAPTER 2

RETHINKING EXPLANATIONS OF FOREIGN POLICY CHANGE

Introduction

What leads hawkish decision-makers to turn to peace diplomacy? This chapter reviews the international relations literature on foreign policy change, and introduces relevant insights from cognitive psychology in an effort to address this question. Existing explanations are found to be inadequate, as none alone offers a complete explanation of foreign policy change. International relations scholars tend to downplay the role of individuals in state (and non-state) behavior. Yet a leader's personality can play a central role in foreign policy decision-making. Theories that emphasize systemic-structural factors or domestic-level variables, while ignoring the signal role of decision-makers, can offer, therefore, only partial explanations of foreign policy change.

Indeed, the mainstream international relations scholarship currently lacks a robust theory of foreign policy change. Insight from the literature on cognitive psychology into leaders' personalities may be critical in explaining foreign policy change – in this case, the decision-maker's dovish turn. Cognitive psychologists, pointing to such factors as an individual's cognitive openness and complexity, are able to show why some decision-makers are more prone to alter their beliefs than others. This chapter argues that rationalist approaches must be supplemented with cognitive psychological explanations for an improved theory of foreign policy change. It concludes with a call for an integrated, multilevel theory of foreign policy

change that takes into account situational factors as well as particular personality characteristics (i.e., a decision-maker's cognitive structure).¹⁰

The present chapter is structured as follows. The first section consists of an overview of the study of individuals in the field of international relations, demonstrating that they have traditionally been marginalized as an explanatory variable; the foreign policy decision-making framework aims to address this lacuna. It is then shown that important insight on the study of individual actors can be gleaned from the literature on cognitive psychology. Various methodological tools commonly used by cognitive psychologists in their study of foreign policy decision-makers are presented as well. The next section explores how foreign policy change has been studied by international relations scholars, beginning with rationalist approaches, which are found to be under-determined. Next, a variety of psychological approaches are discussed. It is argued that studies concerning leaders' cognitive style – that is, their levels of cognitive openness and complexity – seem to hold great promise for analyzing why some hawks end up pursuing dovish policies. The chapter concludes with a call for a multi-level, multi-factoral theory to explain instances of foreign policy change, such as a hawk-to-dove shift.

¹⁰ Although this rationalist-psychological synthesis will result in a loss of parsimony, it will increase the theoretical explanatory power, and explanatory power must never be sacrificed at the altar of parsimony (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994: 104-105). To that end, extant theories may be parsimonious but they are also underdetermined, because a decision-maker's personality, as well as the international structure and domestic-level variables, are all necessary components of a more robust explanation of foreign policy change. A multi-causal and multi-level theoretical framework is thus in order. Evidence for this claim is provided in chapters five and six – two of the empirical chapters – and an inductively-derived theoretical model of foreign policy change is presented in the concluding chapter.

International Relations and the Role of Leaders

The role of leaders' personalities has traditionally been downplayed in the international relations literature, which has all too often focused on system structures and treated the state as a unitary rational actor (a "black box"). Those from the neorealist school argue that states' political actions are determined by the structure of the international system – an anarchic, self-help system, where states seek survival above all else. This is not to say that states are alike in their capabilities, but neorealists treat them as alike in the tasks that they face and, in so doing, justify their treatment of states as like units (Mearsheimer 1994/95; Waltz 1979: 96, 100-01).¹¹

To be sure, not all neorealists contend that system-level factors, such as distributions of power, adequately explain foreign policy variation. Waltz makes clear in his *Theory of International Politics* (1979) that structure determines that states will act to ensure their survival by balancing against power internally and externally, but it does *not* determine which specific political actions they will take or when they will take them (Waltz 1979: 121-23). Moreover, Waltz is explicit that his theory requires no assumptions of rationality or constancy of will, only that if states buck the system, they are not likely to survive (1979: 118). Significantly, Waltz emphasizes that his theory of international politics, which is aimed at explaining systemic patterns, must not be confused with a theory of foreign policy (1979: 121-2). Shibley Telhami similarly argues that foreign policies of states are not deducible from their relative position in the international system. He shows, for example, that ideological

¹¹ For "offensive realists," the goal of states is not merely survival but power maximization – in contrast to defensive realists' emphasis on security maximization. Thus, states will attempt to maximize their relative power regardless of the type of regime or personality characteristics of their leaders (Mearsheimer 2001).

differences between the two major parties in Israel are important in explaining variations in Israeli foreign policy – even on issues of war and peace (Telhami 1996).

Yet most realists, including those who recognize the value of analyzing domestic politics for explaining foreign policy, shy away from analyzing personalities. While they do not necessarily deny that individuals may matter from time to time, they argue that their influence does not lend itself to generalizations that political scientists seek. It is more parsimonious to leave leaders out of the explanatory equation.

Liberal scholars partially open up the state's "black box" by arguing that domestic forces – institutions, bureaucracies, interest groups, etc. – are instrumental in shaping decisions affecting international outcomes. Proponents of the democratic peace theory, for instance, posit that, for a variety of structural and normative reasons, democracies do not fight other democracies (Doyle 1983; Ray 1998; Russett 1993; Russett and Starr 2000; Weart 1998). Neoliberal institutionalists have explored the role of institutions in facilitating international cooperation not only in the economic realm but also on security-related issues (Keohane and Martin 1995). However, while they show that institutions that facilitate cooperation develop when state elites foresee self-interested benefits from cooperation, the elites themselves remain an abstract concept; liberal and neoliberal institutionalist scholars, much like realists, tend to ignore the personal characteristics of leaders.

Indeed, as Fred Greenstein observed forty years ago, the study of personality and politics has more critics than practitioners (Greenstein 1967: 630). That political scientists have tended to avoid the study of personality may have been justifiable to a

certain extent during the Cold War, which was characterized by the bipolar international system, a system that imposed severe constraints on what leaders could do (Hermann and Hagan 1998). It was also more practical for scholars to focus on system structures than on opaque decision-making bodies in places like the Soviet Union, China, and Eastern European countries (Hudson 2007: 31). However, as Valerie Hudson correctly points out, the collapse of the Soviet bloc regimes cannot be adequately explained without taking into account the personalities of Gorbachev, Havel, Walesa, etc. (2007: 31). Moreover, in the aftermath of the Cold War, and with the international system being characterized by far greater ambiguity today, domestic political concerns and foreign policy decisionmaking have grown in significance (Hermann and Hagan 1998; Hudson 2007: 31).

It is in this context that there have been growing calls from the scholarly community in recent years to study what Kenneth Waltz (1959) has referred to as “first-image” theory; i.e., the level of analysis that deals with the individual. While its proponents do not necessarily dismiss the value of systemic-structural (or “third-image”) theory, they argue that such explanations are inadequate in the analysis of foreign policy – a contention to which, as noted, Waltz himself would not object.

In a much-cited piece, Byman and Pollack (2001) decry the lack of attention on individual decision-makers in mainstream IR scholarship. They argue compellingly that individuals are able to have significant effects on political outcomes and should therefore be studied accordingly. Drawing on five case studies – Germany under Hitler; the contrasting impact of Chancellor Otto von Bismarck and Kaiser Wilhelm II on European politics; France under Napoleon Bonaparte; a

comparison between Saddam Hussein and Hafez al-Asad; and the behavior of Iran in its war with Iraq under Ayatollah Khomeini – the authors are able to show how, in each of these cases, personalities had a huge impact on states' conduct. "Recognizing the importance of individuals is necessary to explode one of the most pernicious and dangerous myths in the study of international relations: the cult of inevitability," they write (Byman and Pollack 2001: 145).

In a recent work that illustrates the inadequacy of a purely systemic approach in accounting for foreign policymaking, Joe Hagan (2001) examines the evidence concerning the origins of the twentieth century's three great power conflicts – World War I, World War II, and the Cold War. Systemic explanations are incomplete, he asserts, because foreign policy problems are inherently complex – even in crisis situations where the threat of war appears imminent. Decision-making approaches, he argues convincingly, can fill some of the gaps and account for some of the resulting anomalies in systemic explanations of conflict and war (Hagan 2001: 6). According to Kenneth Waltz, systemic explanations of foreign policy apply under three conditions: information certainty, goal maximization, and the presence of an essentially unitary actor. Surveying the historical literature, Hagan shows that in each of the cases he examines, war decisions were fundamentally complex and involved pervasive uncertainty, value trade-offs, and the dispersion of authority (rather than states as unitary actors). He demonstrates how each of the major conflicts is marked by value trade-offs between the continental balance of power and imperial goals in Africa and Asia, domestic versus foreign policy priorities, and between the larger domestic political context and the desire of leaders to retain power and preserve their

regimes. Systemic explanations of war can thus underestimate the complexity of decision-making conditions leading to war.

The Foreign Policy Decision-Making Framework

Hagan is one of a growing number of international relations scholars engaged in the IR subfield of foreign policy analysis (FPA), which indeed accounts for the role of individual decision-makers. A distinguishing feature of FPA is its emphasis on *decisionmaking* rather than *outcomes*. While mainstream international relations scholarship sides with the structure side of the so-called “agent-structure” debate, FPA stresses agent-oriented theory. As Valerie Hudson writes, “States are not agents because states are abstractions and thus have no agency. Only human beings can be true agents, and it is their agency that is the source of all international politics and all change therein” (2005: 2-3). FPA scholars tend to offer multifactoral explanations of foreign policy decision-making, incorporating insight from a number of intellectual disciplines (e.g., psychology) and examining variables from several levels of analysis in their research – including the individual level (Hudson 2005: 2). If the international relations literature has focused largely on *actor-general* theory, in which decision-makers are “black boxed,” FPA has stressed *actor-specific* theory (George 1993, 1994; Hudson 1997, 2005, 2007).

The origins of the decision-making approach can be traced back to the works of Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin (1954) and Sprout and Sprout (1956).¹² Snyder et al. (1954) pioneered a decision-making framework whose focal point of analysis was the individual decision-maker. Their approach contrasted sharply from the dominant

¹² Subsequent references to this work will refer to the 2002 edition, which includes additional essays by Valerie M. Hudson, Derek H. Chollet and James M. Goldgeier.

“unitary rational actor” approach in IR, which, as noted, has tended to downplay the role of the decision-maker. They wrote:

It is one of our basic methodological choices to define the state as its official decision-makers – those whose authoritative acts are, to all intents and purposes, the acts of the state. *State action is the action taken by those acting in the name of the state.* Hence, the state is its decision-makers. State X as *actor* is translated into its decision-makers as actors. It is also one of our basic choices to take as our prime analytical objective the re-creation of the ‘world’ of the decision-makers as *they* view it. The manner in which *they* define situations becomes another way of saying how the state oriented to action and why. This is a quite different approach from trying to recreate the situation and interpretation of it *objectively*, that is, by the observer’s judgment rather than that of the actors themselves. To focus on the individual actors who are the state’s decision-makers and to reconstruct the situation as defined by the decision-makers requires, of course, that a central place be given to the analysis of the behavior of these officials (Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin 2002: 59).

For Snyder et al., it is insufficient, therefore, to study the environment alone, because the environment is defined by the decision-maker. His or her perception is critical to foreign policy analysis. As the authors note, “information is selectively perceived and evaluated in terms of the decision-maker’s frame of reference. Choices are made in the basis of preferences which are in part situationally and in part biographically determined” (Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin 2002: 144). Thus, multicausal explanations are in order.

Like Snyder et al. (2002), Sprout and Sprout (1956) also emphasize the importance of ascertaining a decision-maker’s perception of his or her environment, which they characterize as the actor’s “psychomilieu.” To the Sprouts, poor decisions can result from discrepancies between the perceived and the objective operational environments.

The role that perception – and misperception – plays in decision-making is explored more deeply by Robert Jervis (1968, 1976), who also offers an important challenge to structural and rationalist explanations when it comes to foreign policymaking. Psychological factors are shown to play a role in limiting rationality in

foreign policy decision-making. Jervis demonstrates, for example, that the environment is filtered by political actors' pre-existing images; they tend to perceive what they expect. Other cognitive distortions likewise affect how actors perceive incoming information, which, in turn, affects their decisions.

Another early contribution to the subfield of foreign policy analysis and to the foreign policy decision-making approach is James N. Rosenau's (1966) seminal piece, "Pre-Theories and Theories of Foreign Policy." Rosenau, too, is intent on addressing the leadership factor in his call for a more scientific and systematic approach to studying foreign policy. He posits that general, testable theory should be melded with actor-specific theory given the complexity of reality, thus joining Snyder et al. (2002) in advocating for *multicausal* theories (Hudson 2007: 16). Like those authors, Rosenau also encourages the development of *multilevel* theories: foreign policy variation can best be explained, he argues, by incorporating factors at different levels of analysis including the much-neglected individual level.

Finally, two major works representing powerful challenges to the "rational actor" model of foreign policy decision-making were published in the 1970s. The first is Graham Allison's (1971) classic study of the Cuban missile crisis. Allison shows that, while the rational actor model "fixes the broader context, the larger national patterns, and the shared images," it fails to take into consideration organizational and political pressures that were part of the calculus in the decisions made in that crisis and is thus an insufficient explanation; complex decisions require more complex explanations. For a more complete explanation, he supplements the rational actor model (which he finds to be the least satisfactory one of the three models he

examines) with two other models – the “organizational process model” and the “governmental politics model.” The former asserts that decisions are the output of government organizations; the latter highlights the importance of the decision-makers themselves, whose collaboration produces decisions. Writes Allison about the governmental politics model: “The core of this level of close political analysis is personality. How each man manages to stand the heat in his kitchen, each player’s operating style, and the complementarity or contradiction among personalities and styles in the inner circle are irreducible pieces of the policy blend” (1971: 166).

The second seminal critique of the rational actor model, which followed Allison’s book, is John Steinbruner’s (1974) *The Cybernetic Theory of Decision*. Like Allison, Steinbruner finds that the rational actor model – to which he refers as the “analytic paradigm” – falls short of adequately explaining decision-making. He develops an alternative model, based on cybernetics and cognitive theory, in an attempt to address the uncertainty and complexity of the decision-maker’s environment. Contrary to the rational actor model, avers Steinbruner, the decision-maker is not “engaged in the pursuit of an explicitly designed result.” He is, instead, engaged “in buffering himself against the overwhelming variety which inheres in his world” (Steinbruner 1974: 66). In the cybernetics model, the actor continuously monitors a select stream of information from the environment and engages in incremental self-corrective action accordingly. Steinbruner illustrates the utility of his model in explaining the evolution of U.S. policy regarding the sharing of nuclear weapons with NATO in the early 1960s.

Each of these works, by themselves, has proved to be an important contribution to the development of the foreign policy analysis subfield. Together, they constitute a powerful challenge to theoretical approaches that exclude the decision-maker from the study of foreign policy and, more generally, the field of international relations. Fortunately, the field of psychology offers the political scientist interested in examining the decision-maker some powerful tools by which to do so.

Cognitive Psychology and the Study of Decision-Makers

The 1970s heralded a “cognitive revolution” in the social sciences. Jervis’s (1976) study highlighting how perception and cognitive biases impact decision-making marked an important turning point for international relations scholars focusing on foreign policy. Numerous theorists have since examined cognitive constraints on decision-making (George 1980; Kahneman, Slovic, and Tversky 1982; Tetlock 1985, 2004; Vertzberger 1990). Much has been written, for example, about the *cognitive heuristics* (i.e., mental shortcuts) that decision-makers use, challenging rational choice’s “logic of consequences,” which assumes that current actions are dictated by anticipation of the value associated with future outcomes (Lau 2003). One prominent heuristic, *selective attention*, explains the tendency for decision-makers to be generally more receptive to information that is consistent with their prior beliefs than to information that challenges those beliefs (Levy 2003).¹³

A large number of cognitive researchers have focused on cognitive styles of leaders, which emphasize beliefs and reasoning processes of individuals (Holsti 1976;

¹³ Later in this chapter, in the section on foreign policy change, I expound upon the major heuristics and biases that elucidate the way in which people process information.

Shapiro and Bonham 1973; Tetlock 1984). Beliefs matter, write Young and Schafer, “because they underlie all political behavior and form the foundation for how both power and interests are understood” (1998: 64). Beliefs affect a leader’s interpretation of his environment and, in turn, the strategies that the leader employs (Hermann 1980).

Some researchers focus not on the *content* of a leader’s beliefs, but on the *structure* of his or her beliefs, based on the leader’s pattern of communication. A *cognitively open system* is one that is receptive to new information, which may, in turn, change one’s beliefs; a *cognitively closed system* is one that fails to assimilate new information, leaving one’s beliefs intact (Finlay, Holsti and Fagen 1967; Rokeach 1960). Similarly, a *cognitively complex system*, which recognizes multiple dimensions in different situations, is associated with more sophisticated and more adaptive behavior than a system lacking in cognitive complexity (Guttieri, Wallace, and Suedfeld 1995; Hermann 1980; Shapiro and Bonham 1973; Tetlock 1984, 1985; Winter 1992).

Others employing political psychological frameworks look not at cognition but at emotion and the motivations of leaders (Barber 1972; Crawford 2000; Etheredge 1978; Janis and Mann 1977; Marcus 2000; Winter 1973). Janice and Mann (1977), for example, study individuals’ “motivational biases,” such as their fears and desires, and how these biases are likely to affect their decisions. Several scholars have recently attempted to combine cognition and emotion into their framework, focusing on how a decision-maker both thinks and feels (Hermann 1980, 1984; Lebow and Stein 1993; Sasley 2007). Brent Sasley (2007), for example, argues that ideological

individuals are more likely to utilize *affect heuristics* in their decision-making processes than adaptable ones. In other words, how they *feel* about a particular foreign policy issue will have a greater impact on their decision-making than what they *think* about it. Sasley argues that these individuals will recall information more quickly and directly due to the stronger affective appeal or repulsion that that information holds for the decision-maker. He shows that this emotional attachment makes the ideological leader less likely to incorporate contradictory information than adaptable individuals, who are less likely to be “emotional” about foreign policy issues.

What all of these scholars have in common is their insistence that individuals matter, and that their personal qualities can significantly affect decision-making and policy. Insights from psychology enable the political scientist to open up the black box of personality and examine the relationship between these personal qualities and their decision-making; scholars utilize varied methodologies to do so.

Methodological Approaches to the Study of Decision-Makers

Various methods have been utilized by scholars interested in demonstrating that a leader’s personal characteristics are important in explaining his or her decision-making. The most frequent methodological approach to the study of political elites has been the qualitative psycho-biographical analysis of particular leaders (Simonton 1990: 671). Important single-case studies of leaders include Erik Erikson’s (1958) *Young Man Luther* and Alexander and Juliette George’s *Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House*.¹⁴ George and George’s (1964) classic study of Woodrow Wilson is

¹⁴ Other presidential psychobiographies include Betty Glad’s *Jimmy Carter: In Search of the Great White House* (Norton, W.W. & Company, Inc., 1980) and Stanley A. Renshon’s *The Clinton*

an original effort at applying the insights developed by psychologists to historical material. The authors use clinical literature on compulsive personality types to analyze Wilson's personality and behavior. In so doing, they demonstrate how certain personality factors influenced Wilson's political actions. They show, for example, that Wilson was prone to emotional defensiveness when father-like figures failed to support him on projects in which he was deeply involved. He thus became particularly obstinate in dealing with the U.S. Senate in 1919, refusing to compromise with Republicans, who controlled Congress. His extreme rigidity, George and George try to demonstrate, largely explains his failure to win the Senate's support for ratification of the Treaty of Versailles and to get the United States to enter the League of Nations.

More recently, Jerrold Post (2004) has developed political-psychological profiles of numerous world leaders in an effort to better inform decision-makers who must deal with them. Post's portraits of Anwar Sadat and Menachem Begin were used by President Carter at the Camp David talks. In recent years, he has done profiles of such leaders as Slobodan Milosevic, Osama bin Laden, Fidel Castro, Saddam Hussein, and Kim Jong Il in an effort to explain why these leaders behave the way they do. He has shown that the war crimes committed by Radovan Karadzic, the leader of the Bosnian Serbs, can be traced back to his earlier years as a psychiatrist and poet obsessed with themes of blood and violence.

Numerous case studies have developed portraits of a leader's style by employing *content analysis* through the use of memoirs, archival evidence and/or

Presidency: Campaigning, Governing, and the Psychology of Leadership (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995).

interviews. These studies explore the personal characteristics of leaders in an effort to explain their thinking on the various issues they come across while in office. Harvey Starr (1980) focuses exclusively on the memoirs of Henry Kissinger. His concern is uncovering methods that can be used to gain “access” to foreign policy decision-makers. In examining Kissinger’s beliefs with regard to a variety of issues, such as dealing with the Soviet Union, Starr finds that Kissinger’s memoirs, *White House Years*, provide us with an important source of data about him. Kissinger’s belief system, which comes across clearly in his writings, explains his views of Nixon, as well as his approach to bureaucracy and U.S. policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. According to Starr, this data source is consistent with previous studies of Kissinger that employed other methodologies, both qualitative and quantitative.

One group of scholars interested in uncovering the general belief system of political leaders focuses on their *operational codes*, a concept developed by Nathan Leites (1951). Leites first employed this method to analyze Soviet bargaining behavior in 1951. The operational code technique was reformulated by George (1969), who incorporated leaders’ philosophical beliefs about the nature of the political universe (e.g., conflictual or harmonious) with their set of instrumental beliefs (e.g., how they believe it is best to deal with enemies). Writes George, “A political leader’s beliefs about the nature of politics and political conflict, his views regarding the extent to which historical developments can be shaped, and his notions of correct strategy and tactics – whether these beliefs are referred to as ‘operational code,’ ‘Weltanschauung,’ ‘cognitive map,’ or an elite’s ‘political culture’ – are

among the factors influencing that actor's decisions" (George 1969: 197).¹⁵ Thus, by uncovering a leader's operational code, the analyst tries to explain the leader's views on various issues.

While this type of methodology has resulted in a rich, in-depth analysis of the subject at hand, it has several shortcomings: it is costly in terms of time; it is difficult to determine the reliability of such analysis, because it uses subjective, interpretive procedures that are impossible to replicate; and it is difficult to compare and contrast the results of the various operational code analyses. Because it is idiosyncratic, very few of these "thick" analyses have been done (Young and Schafer 1998: 71). Writes Schafer of the earlier works on the operational code: "There were no quantitative variables with which to compare and contrast leaders, statistical models could not be generated, intercoder reliability could not be assessed, and results were not generalizable" (Schafer 2000: 520).

Building on the early operational code, Walker et al. (1998) developed systematic coding procedures, which would allow reproducible and directly comparable analyses. Their *Verbs In Context System (VICS)* is designed to measure the foreign policy predispositions of political leaders based on the leader's rhetoric. VICS yields a set of coded verb constructions found in the speaker's rhetoric that reflect his or her thinking. With these data, verb constructions are aggregated into indices that answer the operational code questions (Schafer 2000: 520). For example, how cooperative or conflictual a leader believes he or she ought to act is assessed by

¹⁵ "Cognitive mapping" is used by some researchers to construct mental maps of a decision-maker's belief system. Concepts and variables are coded thematically from the text; the decision-maker's belief system is said to allow him or her to relate an event to policy alternatives and policy objectives (Hudson 2007: 61-62; Shapiro and Bonham 1973).

weighting the verb constructions the leader makes about the self on a 7-point scale (ranging from -3 to +3) and then calculating the mean intensity (Schafer 2000: 521).

The quantitative data that this new-and-improved operational code produces facilitates comparisons among leaders' operational codes, increases the possibility of exploring the links between political actors' operational codes and their political behavior, and makes it easier to study more than one leader at a time. The one obvious shortcoming is its lack of the descriptive richness associated with the qualitative approaches (Young and Schafer 1998: 72).

Given the general problem of access to leaders, *at-a-distance-techniques* have been devised to study them from afar. The most important assumption made with these techniques is that it is possible to assess psychological characteristics of a leader by systematically analyzing what leaders say and how they say it (Schafer 2000: 512). Data gathered at a distance are used not only to provide information on psychological characteristics, but also to compare and contrast leaders and to connect the traits with political variables of interest.

Margaret Hermann (1980, 1983, 1984), a pioneer of *at-a-distance-techniques*, has sought texts containing spontaneous remarks, such as press conferences or interviews, because of what she has referred to as the "ghost writing" effect of public addresses: "The researcher content analyzing these materials [in public addresses] will learn what the ghost writer is like or what image the political leader would like to reflect" (Hermann 1984: 61). Hermann does acknowledge, however, that sources of spontaneous material – diaries, memos, and recordings such as the Watergate tapes to content analyze – are not generally available, particularly not on leaders of countries

other than the United States (Hermann 1980: 70). Hermann's (1983) *personality-at-a-distance (PAD)* technique uses content analysis of spontaneous interview responses, as reflected in written and spoken material by political leaders across differing time periods, audiences, and substantive topic areas, to construct detailed personality profiles of individuals according to eight different traits: need for power, need for affiliation, ethnocentrism, locus of control, complexity, self-confidence, distrust of others, and task/interpersonal emphasis. She has sought to use such indicators to explain particular foreign policies.

Other researchers have used methods that rely on prepared speeches, given that prepared comments are more readily available than spontaneous comments. Scott Crichlow has noted that speechwriters are "functionaries paid to better enable leaders to pursue their policy preferences" (1998: 690). Most speakers, moreover, participate in the speechwriting process to some extent. Schafer and Crichlow (2000) studied Bill Clinton's operational code, based on a random selection of 19 of his prepared speeches and 20 spontaneous remarks made during his first term in office. They used the quantitative VICS to measure his operational code, followed by an *analysis of variance (ANOVA)* to test for statistical differences between the two sets of measurements and over time. Their findings showed that Clinton's spontaneous remarks revealed a more conflictual worldview, one that favored fewer cooperative strategies and tactics, and was more risk-averse and controlling (Schafer and Crichlow 2000: 559-570).

Similarly, Dille (2000) explored whether prepared remarks are valid sources for at-a-distance measures of psychological characteristics, examining the

spontaneous and prepared remarks of Presidents Reagan and Bush in the domain of U.S.-Soviet relations at the end of the Cold War. Using VICS, he coded both types of remarks for both presidents. He found that scores obtained from prepared remarks contained significant systematic differences. However, he also found that if the leader is involved in the preparation of his or her speeches, then these speeches are as valid an indicator of the leader's psychological variables as are spontaneous remarks from interviews (Dille 2000: 573-585).

Some at-a-distance research on leaders combines qualitative and quantitative approaches. Preston and Hart (1999) used Hermann's PAD coding technique in their detailed case study of two critical episodes in U.S. decision-making in the conduct of the Vietnam War in 1965 and 1968. The data obtained for such a large number of leaders not only allowed them to set out the range of each characteristic, thereby demonstrating what constitutes high and low scores for leaders, but also to provide the means to compare empirically and interpret the scores for American presidents across these traits. By developing an additional measure to reflect factors such as the nature of each leader's previous policy positions, the degree to which leaders focused on specific policy areas, and the extent to which they had other relevant policy experience, PAD provides a strongly empirical measure of Lyndon Johnson's individual characteristics.

One innovation in quantitative methodology aims to combine the rigor of survey research or content analysis with the richness of psychobiography. Kowert (1996) uses the *Q-methodology* in his research, which correlates people rather than tests; it "administers" people to a sample of test items. It attains its validity by posing

many questions to a few subjects rather than by posing a few questions to many people (Kowert 1996: 425). One of its advantages is that it does not presuppose consistency of questions or item meanings across people; i.e., it does not presume that everyone sees the world in the same way or uses the same conceptual categories. Indeed, Q-methodology is often used deliberately to identify and understand interpersonal differences.

In short, scholars who study the role of personalities in shaping decisions have issued an important challenge to the field's traditional neglect of the impact of individuals and their personalities. Explanations that account for only systemic factors are largely deterministic and unsatisfactory. By using any one of the many methods described above, scholars have shown that a leader's personal qualities are important factors in explaining foreign policymaking. This is particularly the case with regard to foreign policy change.

International Relations Theory and Foreign Policy Change

The Inadequacy of Systemic and Domestic-Level Theory

The systematic study of foreign policy change is a relatively recent development in international relations scholarship.¹⁶ It had been largely ignored prior to the early 1980s, which were witness to a number of attempts by several prominent authors in the field to address this lacuna (Boyd and Hopple 1987; Gilpin 1981;

¹⁶ I adopt the definition of foreign policy change offered by Hagan and Rosati (in Rosati, Hagan, and Sampson III 1994: 266) as referring to "some kind of major or profound reorientation in the state's pattern of foreign policy."

Goldmann 1982, 1988; K.J. Holsti 1982; and Rosenau 1978, 1981).¹⁷ The failure to address foreign policy change in a systematic manner led James N. Rosenau to point out that “in our search for recurring patterns – for constancies in the external behavior of nations – we tend to treat breaks in patterns as exceptions, as nuisances which complicate our tasks” (1978: 371). It was the epochal events that took place between 1989 and 1991 that highlighted the importance of foreign policy change to the field of international relations, which had failed in predicting the extraordinary changes that accompanied the end of the Cold War. Although foreign policy change remains understudied, several important works have been published since the early 1990s that aim to explain this phenomenon (C. Hermann 1990; Rosati, Hagan, and Sampson 1994; Welch 2005).

While no consensus exists as to what causes states to alter their foreign policy, a general trend in the recent literature is to question the utility of systemic-structural approaches like neorealism in explaining states’ foreign policy behavior in general and foreign policy change in particular.¹⁸ According to some realists, system-level variables, such as the distribution of power, explain the variation in foreign policy (Mearsheimer 2001).¹⁹ Of neorealism, Robert Keohane writes: “The link between system structure and actor behavior is forged by the rationality assumption, which

¹⁷ For a useful review of the key arguments made in these earlier works, see Jerel A. Rosati, Martin W. Sampson III, and Joe D. Hagan, “The Study of Change in Foreign Policy,” in Rosati, Hagan, and Sampson, eds., *Foreign Policy Restructuring: How Governments Respond to Global Change* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994): 3-21.

¹⁸ Although this approach is now out of favor, earlier works on foreign policy change employed a largely systemic framework. See, for example, R.J. Barry Jones, “Concepts and Models of Change in International Relations,” in Barry Buzan and Barry Jones, eds., *Change and the Study of International Relations: The Evaded Dimension* (New Cambridge University Press, 1981) and John Gerard Ruggie, “Continuity and Transformation in the International Polity: Toward a Neorealist Synthesis,” in Robert O. Keohane, ed., *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986): 131-57.

¹⁹ As noted in the previous section, not all realists support this notion.

enables the theorist to predict that leaders will respond to the incentives and constraints imposed by their environments” (1986: 167). Thus, neorealists would explain foreign policy change by pointing out that states adjust their behavior in response to perceived changes in characteristics of the international system. Yet as Voss and Dorsey (1992) point out, “one of the most central criticisms of the realist and structuralist interpretations of systems theory has been their inability to cope with change in a state’s policies, whether those changes occur in terms of domestic or foreign policies.” They further argue that “to confront the significant implications of these changes, a singularly causal explanation that sees change as deterministically and environmentally derived would not appear to be adequate” (Voss and Dorsey 1992: 24).

Indeed, recent research on foreign policy change finds that systemic structural explanations are underdetermined; at best, they are partial explanations. Such criticism has come from scholars employing a similar rationalist framework – for example, those analysts emphasizing domestic-level variables (Rosati, Hagan, and Sampson 1994) – as well as those favoring non-rationalist approaches like cognitive and/or motivational psychology (Farnham 2003; Lebow and Stein 1993; Levy 1994, 2003) and prospect theory (Welch 2005).²⁰

A major recent attempt to explore systematically the phenomenon of foreign policy change is the edited volume by Jerel A. Rosati, Joe D. Hagan, and Martin W. Sampson III (1994), *Foreign Policy Restructuring*. The authors suggest that internal sources of change are at least as important as external ones. David Skidmore (1994),

²⁰ The failure of realism to predict the end of the Cold War might be said to not only have called into question realist notions but also to have provided the major impetus for the development of constructivism (e.g., Wendt 1992).

for example, argues that a country that has a strong centralized state domestically and a weak position internationally is more likely to restructure its foreign policy than one that is powerful internationally yet is decentralized and must contend with strong societal interests. Whereas realism suggests a close relationship between international change and policy response, Skidmore, combining realist theory with institutional models, posits that adaptation to environmental change is conditioned by both external power and internal state strength.²¹

Several contributors to this volume suggest that leadership – that is, the individual level of analysis – might also be an important factor in foreign policy change. Martin Sampson, in his chapter on Libya, finds that Libyan foreign policy change (and continuity) cannot be explained by neorealist theory. Both King Idris and Gaddafi, he argues, were able to produce important economic gains by transforming Libya into a major oil exporter – contrary to the desires of the major multinational oil companies that were opposed to additional Middle East production. Thus, leadership, he shows, can be an important factor in producing foreign policy change. Peter Schraeder, in his contribution to this volume, reaches a similar conclusion with regard to crisis situations, in which, he argues, the president and his advisers are likely to have a particularly big role.

Notwithstanding the inclusion of the leadership factor in a few of these chapters, the authors of this volume, mirroring a broader trend among international relations scholars, stop short of developing a coherent causal mechanism that adequately accounts for leadership. Domestic-level theorists, like their systemic-

²¹ Separate chapters by Rosati, Hagan, Sampson, and Greffenius come to similar conclusions about the need to combine domestic and international factors to explain the dynamics of foreign policy change.

structural counterparts, have yet to develop theory that systematically accounts for the role of leaders in foreign policy change. They, too, avoid opening the “black box” of a decision-maker’s personality.²²

A Loss-Aversion Theory of Foreign Policy Change

An alternative approach to explaining foreign policy change, using a non-rationalist framework, is posited by David Welch (2005) in his recent book, *Painful Choices*. Welch develops a “loss-aversion” theory of foreign policy change, based on prospect theory, in which he posits that states will alter their foreign policy to avoid losses.²³ Leaders, for Welch, are not motivated to change policy in order to realize marginal gains, as rational choice theory would predict, but rather to avert losses. Hence, decisions to alter the course of foreign policy are seen as “painful choices.” Welch’s theory appears to be robust; in only one of his seven cases – the Northern

²² Similar criticism applies to scholars of American politics who tend to focus on institutional jurisdictions as an explanation for policy change. Write Baumgartner and Jones: “Dramatic changes in policy outcomes are often the result of changes in the institutions that exert control” (1993: 33). They point out, for example, that the New Federalism of the Reagan years, by shifting various issue assignments from the federal level to the states, resulted in a number of significant policy shifts. They focus, as well, on how governmental institutions have changed over time – for instance, congressional procedures and resources – resulting in changed spending patterns (1993: 54-55). Kingdon (1997) shows how policy change can result from “change in the political stream,” which can mean a change of administration, a shift in the partisan or ideological distribution of seats in Congress, or a shift in the national mood. While Kingdon notes that change could result, also, because a new problem captures the attention of governmental officials and those close to them, these American politics scholars – much like most scholars of international relations – fail to open up the black box of personality in their explanations of policy changes. Their explanations are useful for understanding policy shifts that result from a change in the administration, but much less helpful in understanding why a particular decision-maker would opt, mid-career, to significantly alter a particular policy.

²³ Developed by two cognitive psychologists, Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky (1979), as an alternative to expected-utility theory – a major variant of rational choice theory – prospect theory posits that people frame problems around a reference point, giving more weight to losses from that reference point than to comparable gains. They tend to be risk-averse with regard to gain and, in contrast to what rational choice theory would predict, risk-prone with regard to losses. Thus, whereas expected utility theory posits that people choose to maximize their expected utility – that is, they will go for the choice that offers the highest absolute value – prospect theory sees choice as being influenced not on absolute value, but by how a problem is framed; i.e., how they perceive gains and losses given a reference point. Welch’s *Painful Choices* is the most recent attempt to apply prospect theory to foreign policy and is arguably the most significant given his ambitious goal of developing a general theory to explain foreign policy change. See also Davis (2000); Farkas (1996); Farnham (1994); Jervis (1992); Levy (2000/1997/1992); McDermott (1998); and Stein and Pauly (1992).

Territories/Southern Kurils dispute – is there insufficient evidence to either confirm or disconfirm his theory, as this is an example of a change that did *not* happen. However, the theory’s parsimony comes at the price of leaving out factors that may be germane to explaining foreign policy change. Like the other theories discussed above, this explanation does not account for the personality of leaders themselves in foreign policy decision-making. Welch’s statement that “people everywhere process information in more or less the same way” (2005: 7) is misguided because different individuals can perceive the same event quite differently. A theory such as Welch’s may be elegant in that it is parsimonious, but, like the rationalist approaches, it seems to sacrifice a potentially important part of the explanation.

Cognitive Psychology and Foreign Policy Change

The disparate explanations of foreign policy change reviewed thus far have at least one element in common: they marginalize the role of the decision-maker involved in the policy change. In contrast to the rationalist theories discussed above, and notwithstanding Welch’s theory, cognitive psychologists writing about foreign policy change tend to emphasize the role of leaders, thus focusing on the oft-neglected individual level of analysis. Cognitive psychology offers important insight about how, why, and when individuals decide to revise their beliefs. This insight can, in turn, help us to better understand foreign policy change.

Cognitive psychologists posit that people are consistency seekers and thus do not readily revise their beliefs (Conover and Feldman 1984; George 1969, 1980; Jervis 1976; Lau and Sears 1986; Little and Smith 1988; Suedfeld and Rank 1976; Suedfeld and Tetlock 1977; Tetlock 1985; Vertzberger 1990). According to theories

of cognitive consistency, people are “cognitive misers”: they have a tendency to accept information that is consistent with their prior beliefs, rather than information that challenges those beliefs. A person’s belief system plays a critical role in enabling him or her to cope with potentially overwhelming environmental uncertainty. Yet, there are inherent limits to the amount of flexibility anyone can afford in the face of this uncertainty. People are thus highly unlikely to change their beliefs in light of discrepant information. Whereas rational choice theorists would posit that people update their beliefs based on new information, cognitive psychologists would expect leaders to discount systematically new information and resist change in fundamental beliefs (Little and Smith 1988; Stein 2002: 293). Leaders may be particularly disinclined to change their beliefs given that it is difficult to explain such a change to the public, which is rarely fully aware of the informational basis of the currently held beliefs; nor is the public necessarily aware of new information the leader may have come across. Thus, leaders, to protect their credibility with the public, may choose to avoid information that challenges their beliefs (Vertzberger 1990: 122, 137-8). In short, changing one’s belief in light of new information is the exception, not the rule.

Like theories of cognitive consistency, attribution theories emphasize that people’s schemata – cognitive structures that represent knowledge about a concept, person, role, group, or event – are generally resistant to change once they are formed (Stein 1994: 163; see also Vertzberger 1990). And, like cognitive consistency theorists, attribution theorists argue that people tend to discount information that is discrepant with existing schemata, a factor that also helps to explain cognitive stability (Stein 1994: 163; Stein 2002: 293).

Psychologists point to a number of biases and heuristics that impact the way people process information. The *availability heuristic*, for example, occurs when people estimate the likelihood of an outcome based on information that is easy to recall – it is readily available – ignoring other alternatives or procedures that may be harder to understand (Tversky and Kahneman 1973). Another heuristic that helps to explain why people are slow to change their beliefs is referred to as *anchoring and adjustment*, whereby people make judgments by starting with a reference point (the “anchor”) and make adjustments to it to reach their estimate. Their initial estimate thus affects their final estimate, even after the adjustments they make. To the extent that individuals update their beliefs, this heuristic shows that they do so more slowly and less efficiently than a rational Bayesian model would predict; people do not quickly change their beliefs in response to new information regardless of initial prior beliefs (Levy 2003: 265; see also Tversky and Kahneman 1974).²⁴

People adopt such heuristics, or “cognitive shortcuts,” to help simplify and provide order in a complex, ambiguous and uncertain world. While they may assist in processing information, they also lead to common biases, which can produce, in turn, errors in judgment. For example, the *fundamental attribution error* is a bias that occurs when people exaggerate the importance of dispositional over situational factors in explaining the behavior of others by attributing greater meaning to others’ behavior than reality warrants. Their own behavior, on the other hand, tends to be seen as affected by situational causes; i.e., external environmental constraints (Levy

²⁴ Other common heuristics include *representativeness* and *decision framing*. See Amos Tversky and David Kahneman, “Judgment Under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases,” *Science*, 185 (1974): 1124-1131.

2003: 266; Stein 2002: 294; Vertzberger 1990: 161). Hostile imagery is particularly difficult to change due to such biases in cognitive processes (Stein 2002: 294).

Yet images people hold sometimes *do* change. People do not *always* hold on to their beliefs; their schema *can* change. In analyzing a leader's pursuit of a different foreign policy direction, it is important to identify the *level* of change the new policy represents. After all, a small, incremental change may indicate merely a change in a leader's *tactics* to pursue a particular goal – not necessarily a change in the actor's beliefs. Charles F. Hermann (1990) has suggested a useful typology of graduated levels of foreign policy change:

(1) ***Adjustment Changes*** occur in the level of effort and/or in the scope of recipients; what is done, how it is done, and the purpose for which it is done remain unchanged.

(2) ***Program Changes*** are made in the methods or means by which the goal or problem is addressed; what is done and how it is done changes, but the purposes for which it is done remain unchanged.

(3) ***Problem/Goal Changes*** entail the replacement of the initial problem or goal; the purposes themselves are replaced.

(4) ***International Orientation Changes*** involve the redirection of the actor's entire orientation toward world affairs. Such a change involves a basic shift in the actor's international role, whereby many policies change simultaneously.

For analytical purposes, the kind of foreign policy change that interests Hermann – as well as this writer – is one that would fall under any of the last three

forms of change; i.e., changes in means, ends, or overall orientation. These are the more significant kinds of foreign policy shifts that entail a greater or lesser change in the leader's beliefs.

Learning Theory and Foreign Policy Change

A subset of cognitive psychology that has sparked interest among scholars interested in explaining foreign policy change is *learning* theory. Jack Levy defines "learning" as "a change of beliefs (or the degree of confidence in one's beliefs) or the development of new beliefs, skills, or procedures as a result of the observation and interpretation of experience" (1994: 283).²⁵ In other words, learning is a change of beliefs at the cognitive level. Unlike schema theory, it is an active process (Levy 1994: 283; Stein 1994: 170). Learning is an analytic construction, whereby people interpret historical experience through their own "frames," which they apply to that experience. This helps to explain why different leaders draw different conclusions from similar experiences.

Learning theorists note that learning takes place at different levels. "Simple learning" occurs when new information leads to a change in means but not in the ends sought, whereas "complex learning" takes place when conflicts among values lead to a change of both means *and* goals (Levy 1994: 286). Applied to Charles Hermann's typology, simple learning would constitute a "change in program," while complex learning could fall under either the "goal changes" or "international orientation changes" categories. The literature on learning suggests that most learning takes place

²⁵ There is no unified theory of learning, and learning theorists do not even agree on a set definition for "learning" (See Levy 1994: 283; Breslauer and Tetlock 1991: 3-19.)

at the tactical level (Tetlock 1991: 28).²⁶ Fundamental learning, according to Tetlock, is so psychologically difficult that, if it does occur, it will do so only in conjunction with massive personnel shifts (Tetlock 1991: 31).

Tetlock notes a number of problems that can come up in assessing whether learning has occurred. First, if a government changes course in a mechanistic manner and in a way that does not entail a reassessment of beliefs and goals, then it is questionable whether actual learning has taken place.²⁷ A second potential problem is that policy shifts may be mistaken for learning when they are best explained by political competition among rivals. A third danger is to confuse learning with the “garbage can model of organizational choice,” which describes a situation in which choices are made quite randomly, depending on who happens to attend particular meetings, who controls the agenda, and who decides what counts as a solution. A fourth problem noted by Tetlock is the danger of falsely concluding that learning occurred because of what policymakers may have said publicly. They may, after all, say one thing in public and quite another in private. Writes Tetlock, “Shifts in public statements over time more often reflect shifts in impression management goals and tactics than they do shifts in ways of thinking” (1991: 50). A final problem Tetlock highlights is the danger of allowing one’s own political biases to color one’s judgments of when learning has occurred (1991: 51-53).

²⁶ Banning N. Garrett (1988) reaches a very different conclusion. He writes, “In U.S. policymaking toward China, learning has not been primarily the result of repeated failures at the tactical level leading to a search for a new strategy or reconsideration of basic goals. On the contrary, a perceived need or opportunity for a change in goals and strategies has led to a willingness to engage in cognitive-structural learning – developing a more nuanced, differentiated, and integrated view of one’s environment – and then to consideration of tactical policy shifts as a means of implementing a new strategy or achieving new strategic objectives” (1991: 242).

²⁷ Indeed, some scholars, such as Ernst B. Haas (1990), refer to such a scenario as *adaptation* rather than learning.

Significantly, learning is not the same thing as policy change, nor is it necessary for policy change. As Levy writes: “States alter their foreign policies because of changes in the external environment, a change in political leadership, a realignment of coalitions at the bureaucratic or societal levels, or a change in individual beliefs about policy goals or the optimal means to achieve them” (Levy 1994: 289-90). Only the last refers to learning. For individual learning to lead to policy change, institutional and political processes must intervene so as to build political support for change (Stein 1994: 180).

Learning – certainly the “complex learning” variant – entails the restructuring of one’s schemata. Yet how can we reconcile an actor’s change in beliefs with our knowledge that people are basically consistency seekers? What leads leaders to overcome their cognitive biases and alter their long-held beliefs and to change, in turn, the course of their state’s foreign policy?

Cognitive Openness and Cognitive Complexity

Cognitive psychologists have highlighted a number of factors that explain schema change. For the purpose of the research question – what leads hawkish strategists to pursue dovish policies – it is worth expounding on two related factors mentioned above: cognitive openness and cognitive complexity. These indicators of cognitive style have been shown to hold the greatest promise in explaining the dramatic foreign policy shifts of various leaders.²⁸

²⁸ To be sure, cognitive psychologists have posited a number of other assumptions for schema change, although some of these factors seem nebulous and/or difficult to operationalize. Vertzberger, for example, argues that that the centrality of the schema to the individual will impact the probability of schema change: the more central the schema or beliefs, the less adaptive they will be to dissonant information (1990: 123). Other proposed factors concern the mode and rate in which discrepant information is received by the decision-maker: when discrepant information appears across many instances – as opposed to a few isolated examples – people are said to be more likely to change their

Milton Rokeach, in his classic work *The Open and Closed Mind*, investigates the differences between an open and a closed belief-disbelief system. Rokeach points out that open and closed systems are ideal types, convenient for purposes of analysis. In reality, however, people have systems that are neither completely open nor completely closed (1960: 66). At the closed extreme, a person tampers with new information from the environment in a way that leaves the belief-disbelief system intact. At the open extreme, on the other hand, a person assimilates new information as is, resulting in genuine changes in the belief-disbelief system (1960: 50). Thus, a person with a more open system is more likely to alter his or her views than one with a more closed system. Writes Rokeach: “A basic characteristic that defines the extent to which a person’s system is open or closed is the extent to which the person can conceive, evaluate, and act on relevant information received from the outside on its own intrinsic merits, unencumbered by irrelevant factors in the situation arising from within the person or from the outside” (1960: 57). Such irrelevant factors might include external pressures of reward and punishment arising from authority figures or social, institutional, or cultural norms. Irrelevant internal factors would include one’s motivational pressures driving a person to act in a particular way (e.g., inner requirements of logical consistency). Vertzberger similarly notes that the more closed the system, the more decision-makers are convinced that they do not need additional

schema; a similar outcome is likely when discrepant information is transmitted and considered bit by bit rather than all at once (Jervis 1968; Stein 2002). Finally, attribution theorists posit that change occurs when people attribute inconsistent information to dispositional rather than situational factors (Stein 2002). In other words, if a decision-maker in State A witnesses a foreign policy change in State B (an enemy state), he or she is more likely to change his hostile view toward State B if he or she thinks State B’s leader pursued this shift as a result of a change in attitude or beliefs rather than because environmental factors forced that change. Attribution theorists tend to be vague, however, about what would cause people to attribute inconsistent information to dispositional rather than situational factors. The level of a leader’s cognitive openness and complexity would appear to offer a hint as to his or her inclination to do so and is thus worth exploring.

information and the less intensive is the search, therefore, for additional information; similarly, those with closed systems will be less likely to pay attention to new information (1990: 134).

Significantly, the extent to which one's belief-disbelief system is open or closed impacts the extent to which one views the world as threatening. Those whose system is relatively closed will tend to see the world as a more threatening place, while those whose system is relatively open will tend to see the world as a more friendly place (Rokeach 1960: 62). Rokeach explains this phenomenon in terms of the closed system's propensity to be highly attuned to irrelevant internal and external pressures, thereby encountering difficulty in evaluating the information independent of the source. Thus, regardless of whether the new information contradicts a cognitively closed person's beliefs, he or she will likely use this information to reinforce his or her sense of isolation in a friendless world. David J. Finlay, Ole R. Holsti and Richard R. Fagen find this to be the case with regard to John Foster Dulles's behavior as Secretary of State. They show how he was highly selective of information about the Soviet Union, skewing such information to fit his pre-conceived ideas. While he did not originate the Cold War, they are careful to point out, his cognitively closed system led to heightened U.S.-Soviet antagonism (1967: 233-235).

If Dulles is an example of a cognitively closed leader, Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev are both cases of cognitively open Cold War leaders. Although Reagan was a staunch anti-Communist, who once branded the Soviet Union as "the evil empire," he is seen as being "strikingly open-minded," a good listener who was

open to others' ideas (Farnham 2003). New information he received concerning the dangers of nuclear war in the fall of 1983 – for example, a military briefing Reagan described as a “most sobering experience” – resulted in a shift in perceived threats: the nuclear threat now superceded the Soviet threat, thus softening Reagan's hard-line stance vis-à-vis the Soviets (Farnham 2001, 2003; Fischer 1997).

Like Reagan, Gorbachev has been described as a cognitively open individual. Though a lifelong Communist, he proved to be very receptive to information that challenged traditional Communist dogma. As soon as he became General Secretary of the Communist Party in March 1985, he held numerous meetings with representatives of foreign countries, foreign leaders and statesmen, and members of the international scientific community (English 2000: 212-215; Stein 1994: 178-180). Through these meetings, Gorbachev became convinced that the confrontation of European blocs needed to be radically transformed in order to develop his goal of normal political and economic relations with the West (English 2000: 203). According to Gorbachev aide Anatoly Chernyaev, Gorbachev's main source of domestic support – the new-thinking intellectuals – forced him to come to terms with their liberal-integrationist *weltanschauung* (English 2000: 215). At the same time, he became convinced of the need to strike a *modus vivendi* with America, which he came to believe was critical to bringing about predictability in Soviet foreign affairs (Lynch 1992: 32).

Cognitive complexity, like cognitive openness, refers to the structure (rather than the content) of thought and involves the number and combination of dimensions applied to characterize objects or situations. The level of an individual's cognitive complexity is discerned by the degree of differentiation he or she shows in describing

his or her environment. As with cognitive openness, cognitive complexity should be seen in terms of a continuum, where cognitively complex and simple individuals are ideal types. Those at the simple end of this continuum tend to interpret new information on the basis of only part of that information and in a one-dimensional manner. Those at the complex end tend to interpret new information in multidimensional terms and to examine all of the pieces of information (Tetlock 2004). Cognitively complex individuals will possess multiple judgment dimensions and will tend to possess rules of abstraction that are conducive to alternative interpretations of new information. Individuals with low cognitive complexity, on the other hand, will tend to produce absolute, rigid judgments (Stein 2002: 295-6; Vertzberger 1990: 134-7). Cognitive psychologists tell us that, due to these differences in the way people process information, the more complex the cognitive system, the more capable the leader will be in revising his or her schema or beliefs when confronted with new information, displaying more adaptive behavior than his or her cognitively simple counterpart (Stein 1994, 2002; Tetlock 1985; Winter 1992: 90). Thus, cognitively complex individuals are more likely to change their beliefs than individuals who are cognitively simple.

Philip E. Tetlock has conducted numerous studies demonstrating a strong relationship between a leader's level of complexity and the decisions he or she takes.²⁹ He uses an "integrative complexity coding system" to analyze American and Soviet foreign policy statements issued between 1945 and 1983. Statements are coded on a 7-point scale. Integrative complexity is defined in terms of both conceptual differentiation and integration. *Differentiation* refers to the number of evaluatively

²⁹ Tetlock's preferred term for cognitive complexity as "integrative complexity."

independent dimensions of judgment that an individual uses to interpret events. Whereas an undifferentiated statement classifies events in dichotomous, good-bad categories, a highly differentiated statement classifies events into a multidimensional category system. For example, arms control proposals differ on many dimensions: their verifiability, their domestic political acceptability, and their effects on each side's first- and second-strike capabilities. According to Tetlock, differentiation is a necessary condition for *integration*, which refers to the development of conceptual connections among differentiated idea-elements. A statement characterized by high integration is one in which differentiated idea-elements are perceived to exist in elaborate, contingent relationships (making a decision requires balancing several objectives against each other), each of which needs to be weighted somewhat differently depending on the circumstances. By contrast, a statement characterized by low integration is one in which differentiated idea-elements are perceived to exist in isolation.

Tetlock (1985) finds a significant link between integrative complexity and competitive-versus-cooperative policy initiatives. Policymakers who think about U.S.-Soviet disputes in dichotomous, black-white terms tend to be suspicious of cooperation and are prone to resort to pressure tactics to coerce concessions from the other side. By contrast, integratively complex policymakers take into account the other side's vulnerability and seek ways to compromise with the other side. Tetlock shows that shifts in competitive-coordinative foreign policy behavior took place

following the emergence of new leaders with simpler or more complex cognitive styles.³⁰

Other scholars have used cognitive complexity to explain foreign policy change that occurs not from a change in leadership but rather in the middle of a decision-maker's career. Thus, returning to the aforementioned studies on Reagan, Farnham (2003) and Fischer (1997) both attribute Reagan's relatively conciliatory approach toward the Soviet Union at the end of 1983 and beginning of 1984 to what they regard as his relatively high level of cognitive complexity (and openness).³¹

Similarly, Stein's (1994) study of Gorbachev's foreign policy shift emphasizes the complexity of Gorbachev's thinking, which she suggests may be helpful in explaining the development of "new thinking." She compares, for example, Gorbachev's thinking about peaceful coexistence with the approach of a predecessor, Leonid Brezhnev. Examining speeches the two leaders gave to Party Congresses, she finds that Gorbachev's thinking about peaceful coexistence was much more complex in terms of the number of logically distinct arguments that he considered. Whereas Brezhnev focused almost exclusively on the nuclear threat to survival, Gorbachev spoke of global threats to survival that transcended the nuclear threat; he spoke also of the vulnerability of the ecosystem, the disparity between the rich and the poor, and

³⁰ Tetlock has used the integrative complexity coding system to explore the relation between cognitive style and ideology in the U.S. Senate, concluding that cognitively complex politicians tend to be politically left-of-center and more pragmatic than their cognitively simple counterparts, who tend to be either very conservative/right-wing or very liberal/left-wing and think of issues in more ideological terms (1983, 1984). With regard to international cooperation, Crichlow (2002), too, has shown that those with a high level of cognitive complexity – in his case, members of Congress – are more prone to vote in favor of trade votes that promote international cooperation than their cognitively simple counterparts.

³¹ These authors argue that Reagan had greater complexity than had usually been attributed to him. Although Reagan's rhetoric was not necessarily nuanced, he is said to have had a very high level of social intelligence that enabled him to grasp issues in their various dimensions.

the interconnectedness of all of these dimensions (Stein 1994: 167-68). Gorbachev is thus an example of a highly cognitively complex decision-maker.

Are cognitive structures fixed or can they change over time? A person's cognitive complexity is partly static in that it reflects one's baseline complexity, but there also is a variable component that accounts for fluctuations in complexity associated with different decision contexts (Astorino-Courtois 1995: 421). Levels of cognitive complexity may be affected, for example, by stress resulting from political crises (Suedfeld and Tetlock 1977). However, the bulk of the studies focusing on the cognitive structures of political leaders show these structures to be relatively fixed over extended periods of time.³²

Hawkish-to-Dovish Foreign Policy Shifts in Israel

The empirical works discussed above demonstrate the usefulness of studying the cognitive style of decision-makers to explain the phenomenon of foreign policy hawks changing course in mid-career to pursue dovish policies. Reagan and Gorbachev are not the only leaders whose cognitive openness and complexity have been used to explain their dovish shifts. Yael Aronoff (2001) has examined these factors in Israeli leaders in an attempt to show why some hard-liners become soft (e.g., Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres) while others do not (e.g., Yitzhak Shamir and Benjamin Netanyahu). Aronoff focuses on such factors as leaders' ideology (by uncovering their operational code), time horizon (e.g., the percentage of time that each leader devotes to thinking of the past, the present, or the future), and levels of

³² A notable exception is Beth A. Fischer's (1997) claim that President Reagan "became more cognitively complex" toward the end of his first term. While Fischer explains the factors that led to Reagan's changed views regarding the Soviets, she fails to demonstrate how Reagan's cognitive structure was altered by his experiences.

cognitive openness and complexity. She finds that leaders who are less likely to adopt a softer line toward the enemy are leaders whose ideology is fundamentally incompatible with the enemy's central goals; believe that time is on their side; dwell on the past; and are cognitively closed and simple. Shamir exemplifies these traits. By contrast, leaders who are more likely to adopt a softer line toward the enemy are those whose ideology does not clash with the enemy's central goals; believe that time is not on their side; focus on either the present or the future; and are cognitively open and complex. Peres exemplifies these traits. Thus, Peres was able to adopt a softer line toward the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in the early 1990s while Shamir did not budge from his hardline positions.

Aronoff's work on Israeli leaders, like Farnham's research on Reagan and Stein's study of Gorbachev, is based entirely on political psychology. By opening up the "black box" of a decision-maker's personality, these authors have made important strides in explaining foreign policy variation – for example, by showing that leaders with different cognitive makeups will behave differently vis-à-vis an adversarial state or leader. Thus, we can better understand why some hardliners will remain hardliners while others will adopt softer positions. But are individual characteristics alone *sufficient* for explaining a leader's shift in views? Are situational factors not relevant to an actor's adoption of more dovish (or more hawkish) views? After all, it hardly seems plausible that a hawkish leader would pursue a softer approach without a triggering event or series of events in the international environment or at home – regardless of the actor's set of beliefs or cognitive makeup. In the case of Israel, didn't the dovish shifts of Peres, Rabin, and others with regard to the PLO follow

momentous events in the early 1990s – the Persian Gulf War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the first *Intifada*, and the Labor Party victory in the '92 elections? It would seem, therefore, that just as systemic theorists offer inadequate explanations of foreign policy change by failing to consider the role personalities play in decision-making, political psychologists who downplay the role of situational factors likewise fail to provide a robust account of a phenomenon like hawks becoming doves.

The Challenge of Bridging the Gap: Toward an Integrated, Multi-Level Theory

Can these disparate approaches be bridged so as to provide an improved explanation of what leads hawkish leaders to become doves and alter, in turn, their states' foreign policies in a more dovish direction? Is it possible to construct a multi-causal theoretical framework that better accounts for both situational *and* personality factors? Can such a framework also provide a multi-level explanation that takes into account systemic-, domestic-, and individual-level factors? In other words, how does one bridge the gap between rationalist explanations that largely ignore the decision-maker and psychological variables that tend to focus solely on the individual level of analysis while ignoring important situational factors? Scholars who have been at the vanguard of the decision-making approach – in particular, Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin (1954), Rosenau (1966) and, more recently, Hudson (2007) – have emphasized the need to integrate information from different levels and insight from various disciplines.

It is the aim of this dissertation to take on this challenge so as to provide a more robust explanation of foreign policy change. The empirical chapters provide an in-depth exploration of Shimon Peres's shift from a hawk to a dove as well as the

impact this shift has had on Israeli foreign policy. This dissertation builds on current rationalist *and* psychological research on foreign policy change in an effort to produce a theoretical framework that aims to further elucidate what leads some hawkish decision-makers to pursue dovish policies.

CHAPTER 3

COGNITIVE STRUCTURE: A COMPARISON OF FOUR ISRAELI PRIME MINISTERS

Evaluating Levels of Cognitive Openness and Cognitive Complexity

In the previous chapter, I cited research from cognitive psychology showing that while people are generally consistency-seekers who are slow to change their beliefs, schema change does occur in certain individuals. I discussed how cognitive psychologists have been able to show that two related traits – cognitive openness and cognitive complexity – are particularly useful in determining a leader’s propensity to part with even deeply engrained beliefs.

To reiterate, *cognitive openness* refers to the extent to which an individual is amenable to new information from another person or from the environment. Applying this insight to leaders, a closed cognitive system will cause a leader to ignore new information; as far as he/she is concerned, additional information is not necessary and will thus have no bearing on the actor’s beliefs. By contrast, a cognitively open system will lead a person to factor in new information that may, in turn, lead him/her to reassess his/her beliefs; in fact, he/she may seek additional information in the hopes of preparing him/her to make the right decision – even if that means that the additional information will alter his/her beliefs in a given issue area (Goldmann 1988; M. Hermann 1984; Stoessinger 1979).³³ As noted in the previous chapter, decision-

³³ Cognitive openness is closely related to what some writers refer to as a leader’s “sensitivity to the environment.” An actor who is sensitive to his environment will be inclined to reassess his/her beliefs in light of new information, whereas an actor who is insensitive to the environment will ignore or reject additional information.

makers will actually fall somewhere in between these two ideal types of cognitively open and cognitively closed systems.

Related to cognitive openness is *cognitive complexity*, which refers to the number and combination of dimensions an individual applies to characterize a given situation. A cognitively simple leader will generally view the world in black-and-white terms, while a complex leader will tend to see many dimensions in his/her surroundings. The more cognitively complex a leader is, the more capable he/she is of making new distinctions, thus revising his/her beliefs when confronted with new information (Tetlock 1985: 1565-1585).

As discussed in the previous chapter, recent works focusing on particular leaders' foreign policy shifts have indeed employed these concepts (Aronoff 2001; Farnham 2001; Fischer 1997; Stein 1994).³⁴ I am interested in determining *whether* and *how* these concepts might be used to explain why Peres's views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict changed so profoundly while the views of other Israeli leaders who were witness to the same events were either slow to change or did not change at all. In chapter 6, I demonstrate that Peres's shift in views occurred sooner than did Rabin's, his Labor Party colleague and rival. Ultimately, however, both figures became convinced of the need to negotiate a deal with the PLO that would eventually lead to a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. By contrast, the leadership of the right-leaning Likud throughout the 1990s remained steadfast in its opposition to negotiations with the PLO and the concept of a Palestinian state. Peres began his career as a hawk who opposed the very notion of territorial compromise and even

³⁴ Some analysts do not distinguish cognitive complexity from cognitive openness, treating them as one analytical unit (Cottam, Dietz-Uhler, Mastors, and Preston 2004: 29).

supported the construction of some of the first settlements in the West Bank. In the late 1970s, as the opposition leader, he reversed his positions on these issues while Prime Minister Menachem Begin remained firmly supportive of the settlement enterprise and did not change his mind on the sanctity of the West Bank. Begin died in 1992, a year before the historic Declaration of Principles reached between Israel and the PLO. It is highly doubtful he would have supported this agreement given his unwavering opposition to negotiating with the PLO and parting from any part of the West Bank. Yitzhak Shamir, who succeeded Begin as Likud Chairman and Prime Minister, likewise remained consistent on these issues and, indeed, fervently opposed the Oslo agreements in the 1990s. Shamir's replacement, Benjamin Netanyahu, also opposed what became known simply as "Oslo" but, as Prime Minister from 1996 to 1999, implemented agreements signed by the previous Labor government. Only in the current decade has a Likud prime minister, Ariel Sharon, expressed support for a Palestinian state, though it remains unclear how much territory in the West Bank Sharon, who became incapacitated while in office, would have been willing to cede to the Palestinians.

In this chapter, I compare Peres's cognitive structure – specifically, his levels of cognitive openness and complexity – with that of three erstwhile rivals: Rabin, Begin and Shamir. I choose these particular leaders because each was prime minister for a certain period of time during the years of Peres's transition from a hawk to a dove. Each was thus a witness to the same events yet came to quite different conclusions or, in the case of Rabin, reached similar conclusions as did Peres but did so somewhat later. In chapters 4 through 6, I attempt to determine the extent to which

cognitive structure was an important factor in Peres's shift (and other leaders' non-shifts or slow shifts); indeed, I show in these chapters that it is a critical factor.

Assessing each leader's level of cognitive openness and complexity cannot be done on the basis of the dependent variables I have identified; namely, the decision-maker's position on territorial compromise, settlements, negotiations with the PLO, and Palestinian statehood. Doing so would create a tautology that would undermine the falsifiability of my model. Instead, I examine each leader's outlook on *other* issues and *before* the behavior in question has taken place.³⁵ Thus, for example, I look at such matters as the leaders' receptivity to advice from political aides, attitude toward former adversaries (e.g., Germany and Great Britain during the Mandate period), and handling of an assortment of controversial decisions (e.g., Rabin's approach toward manufacturing the Lavi jet fighter planes).

To that end, I do discourse analysis as well as content analysis on statements each decision-maker has made on issues *other than* the Palestinian question. I examine interviews, speeches, memoirs and secondary source material where I can expect to find such statements. Discourse analysis is particularly useful in helping to evaluate an individual's level of cognitive complexity. A leader who is on the lower end of the complexity continuum will tend to describe an object or situation in black-and-white terms, using absolutist language to convey a thought – words like *always*, *never*, or *without a doubt*. Little or no ambiguity can be discerned from such a leader's statements on decisions taken, even highly controversial ones. By contrast, a

³⁵ This is precisely how other political scientists who focus on the individual level of analysis have gotten around the potential tautological problem involving personal characteristics of leaders. The outcome must not be the same as the evidence used to explain it. See, for example, Brent Sasley's dissertation (2007).

cognitively complex leader will tend to avoid absolutist language, crafting thoughts in a more subtle or ambiguous manner, thereby leaving some wiggle-room for an altered position in the future. The cognitively complex thinker, when discussing a controversial issue, will generally convey the impression that the issue under discussion is not cut-and-dry but rather complex, involving multiple dimensions. Such thoughts are often conveyed by employing conditional language (e.g., *if, as long as*, etc.), a certain level of ambiguity, or by explicitly acknowledging (though not necessarily endorsing) alternative points of view. The latter is indicative not only of cognitive complexity – the recognition of different dimensions to an issue – but also of the extent of an individual’s openness. Does the leader recognize that there are other valid viewpoints? Or, as in the case with a cognitively closed person, does the leader view his/her perspective as the *only* legitimate one? Indicative in this respect is the manner in which the leader regards those with a differing perspective. Are they seen merely as misguided individuals, or are they viewed as so obviously wrong, perhaps even traitorous?

Discourse and content analyses are supplemented with relevant insight about these leaders’ cognitive styles from individuals familiar with their personalities, such as political aides, colleagues (and political rivals), diplomats, biographers, and journalists who have covered them closely. By reading descriptions of these leaders’ *modi operandi* in published works as well as poring through transcripts of my own set of interviews, a clear picture emerges concerning the cognitive structure of each leader I examine.

Prior to my interpretive account of each leader's cognitive structure, I include a brief description of each leader's background and political career.

Yitzhak Shamir

Yitzhak Shamir was born in 1915 in Poland, where much of his family perished in the Holocaust. At the age of 20, he emigrated to British Mandatory Palestine, where he joined the underground *Irgun Zvai Leumi*, which simultaneously fought British rule and the Arabs in Palestine. The militant group, founded on Ze'ev Jabotinsky's ideology of nationalist Revisionist Zionism, split into two groups in 1940. Shamir, a disciple of Avraham "Yair" Stern, left the Irgun to join the more extreme *Lehi* (or "Stern Gang"), which opposed the Irgun's decision to collaborate with the British in their fight against the Nazis.³⁶ Following Stern's assassination by the British in 1942, Shamir emerged as one of the three leaders of the organization. The Lehi remained an uncompromising group, its members viewing the mainstream, semi-legal Haganah – the predecessor to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) – and underground Irgun organizations as too soft on the British. Its activities under Shamir's leadership were marked by militancy and acts of violence. Shamir is reported to have played a key role in the 1948 Deir Yassin massacre and in the assassination of individuals whom he viewed as traitors to the Zionist cause. In 1955, he joined the secret intelligence service, the Mossad, and in 1973 he was elected to the Knesset as a member of the right-wing Likud party. As Foreign Minister (1980-1983) and later Prime Minister (1983-1984, 1986-1992), he was known as an uncompromising hawk, a leader who never softened his views on the territorial

³⁶ The group was referred to as the "Stern Gang" by the British authorities.

dispute with the Arabs. Shamir's premiership was marked by a violent Palestinian uprising (the Intifada), an aggressive expansion of settlements in the occupied territories – supported and encouraged by Shamir and his Likud colleagues – and the launching of Arab-Israeli peace talks at Madrid in 1991.³⁷ At no point has Shamir ever wavered in his opposition to territorial compromise with the Palestinians, believing that the West Bank and Gaza must be annexed to Israel.

Shamir, I argue, is the least cognitively open and complex of the four Israeli leaders examined here. Ironically, as closed as Shamir was to information that challenged his beliefs, he did not discriminate against colleagues who disagreed with his politics. In his autobiography, Shamir writes that when he replaced Moshe Dayan as Foreign Minister in Menachem Begin's government, he made it a point to work with the staff already in place rather than replace the staffers with people who shared his more hardline worldview. He writes of the staff's loyalty, "even though my policies (and the phraseology that went with them) were not what they were accustomed to, liked or could easily identify with" (Shamir 1994: 110-111). Indeed, a former aide relates that when Shamir offered him the post of Director-General of the Foreign Ministry, he told Shamir that he was neither connected in any way to Shamir's Likud party nor was he a Likud sympathizer. "Shamir, to his everlasting glory," recalls David Kimche, "said to me, 'David, I'll ask you one question. Do you

³⁷ Shamir never had any intention of meeting the minimal demands of Arab leaders concerning the ceding of territory. As he later told an interviewer: "In the Madrid Conferences, I stated in my opening speech that they should not expect any territorial compromises. That's not on our agenda. We can find different ways to live together. But with regards to territorial issues, these are things that cannot be changed" (Misgav 2000: 156). Shortly after his defeat in the 1992 elections, Shamir made the following revelation to an Israeli reporter concerning his intentions at Madrid: "I would have carried on autonomy talks for ten years and meanwhile we would have reached half a million Jews in Judea and Samaria." See Yosef Harif, "Interview with Yitzhak Shamir," *Ma'ariv*, 26 June 1992.

love Eretz Yisrael [the State of Israel]?’ I said, ‘Of course!’ And he said, ‘That’s enough for me.’”³⁸

It would be tempting to conclude from this anecdote that Shamir’s acceptance of aides whose views differed starkly from his own is indicative of cognitive openness.³⁹ However, this is, in all likelihood, not the case because Shamir was very secretive and tended to confide his thoughts with only a small number of people with whom he felt truly comfortable.⁴⁰ Describing his own *modus operandi* as prime minister, Shamir writes: “The people who worked with me understood my priorities and I didn’t care much about the opinions of anyone else, or whether I was perceived by critics as ‘detached’ or ‘blinker’ – the two adjectives most frequently applied to me even then by non-admirers” (Shamir 1994: 157). He has been described by both friends and foes as an extremely stubborn man, rigid in both style and ideology. Even his former spokesman has been quoted as saying of his boss: “He is stubborn. Once he has made a decision it’s very difficult to get him to change his mind, if not impossible. But he is a realistic politician.”⁴¹ Thus, while his aides may have been free to speak their mind, the evidence does not suggest that Shamir was amenable to what they had to say on matters in which he had already established an opinion.

Shamir’s autobiography is filled with examples of his obstinacy on everything from high policy to the most mundane of matters. On one occasion, for instance, the State Department had informed his office that the upcoming president’s dinner in his

³⁸ Interview with David Kimche, 8 November 2006, Tel Aviv.

³⁹ It is worth noting that unlike some of his colleagues, Shamir lacked his own “camp” of supporters within his party and probably would not have been able to easily (or quickly) replace members of Dayan’s staff with his own people. Indeed, he acknowledges that he had none of his own people in any case (Shamir 1994: 110).

⁴⁰ Interview with Dennis Ross, 25 July 2007, Washington, D.C.

⁴¹ Allyn Fisher, *AP*, 10 October 1983.

honor was to be, as usual, a black-tie affair. He relates that when the State Department protocol people were informed that the Prime Minister would rather wear a dark suit, they replied that they were reluctantly forced to be adamant. “But I too know how to be adamant,” writes Shamir, “and I didn’t want to wear a tuxedo” (Shamir 1994: 199). Indeed, he did not.

Politicians rarely acknowledge past mistakes, but in reading Shamir’s autobiography, one is struck by his insistence that he had been consistently right on seemingly every decision he had ever taken. He expresses no regret, for example, for the assassination of Count Folke Bernadotte, a man who saved Jews during World War II and later became the first Arab-Israeli mediator to try to broker peace.⁴² Nor does he express any lament over his decision to kill Eliahu Giladi, a fellow Jew and comrade-in-arms whom Shamir saw as “far too dangerous to the movement” (Shamir 1994: 43, 75). His reflection on his role in the Lebanon War, widely regarded in Israel as deeply flawed in its execution if not in intent, is quite telling: “...I neither disclaim nor minimize my role in the Government decision that initiated Operation Peace for Galilee, nor, even now, have any doubt that it was a justified and urgently needed campaign though, undeniably, subsequent mistakes and miscalculations of a most serious nature were made and cost precious lives” (Shamir 1994: 135). Not surprisingly, a reviewer of Shamir’s autobiography concludes that Shamir’s “...single-mindedness also makes for a flat, one-dimensional book in which the

⁴² Shamir’s Lehi decided to assassinate him following his proposal to divide up Jerusalem.

author is always right, people who opposed his ideas are always wrong, and always – always – there is only one way to do things.”⁴³

Shamir’s choice of words – that he neither then nor today has “any doubt” about his decision – is typical of his rhetoric. Indeed, discourse analysis of Shamir’s written and oral statements reveal a man who is neither open to the ideas of others – if they contradict his own – nor complex in terms of seeing situations in multiple dimensions. In *Conversations with Yitzhak Shamir*, author Haim Misgav discusses an array of topics with the ex-prime minister, ranging from his days in the underground to his tenure as prime minister. Shamir, almost methodically, attaches the words “there is no doubt” to a large proportion of his replies. This is indicative of a self-assuredness that denies even the appearance of ambiguity or doubt about his expressed opinions. The following are four examples that vividly illustrate this point:

- Asked which ideology prevailed in the end – that of Shamir’s Lehi movement or that of the mainstream Labor movement – Shamir replies, “*there is no doubt* that our thesis prevailed in the end” (Misgav 2000: 25-26).
- Asked if he saw the British as somewhat responsible for the Holocaust for having limited Jewish immigration to Palestine, Shamir says, “*There is no doubt about it*. Four months before the war broke out, when the burning inferno in Europe threatened to sweep into it millions of Jews, the British published a new ‘White Paper’ which determined that within the next five years, only 75,000 Jews would be allowed to settle in the country. In

⁴³ Benjamin Frankel, “A Life of Action, Controversy and Commitment,” *The Washington Post*, 11 December 1994.

addition to settling this absurdly small number, they also requested the removal of the ‘illegal immigrants’...” (Misgav 2000: 28)

- Asked if Jews in France are facing life-threatening danger, Shamir says: “*Without any doubt*. We have to listen closely to what Le Pen is saying: ‘We need to get rid of the foreigners who are eating our bread and usurping our riches. France has to be for the French and not for foreigners.’ He doesn’t mention Jews, but the implication is, to a large extent, towards Jews as well” (Misgav 2000: 135).
- Asked if the religious camp in Israel will vote for a candidate from the Right, Shamir says: “*Without any doubt*. It is also very logical because, within the Left, there are too many who oppose Judaism. The Right will never oppose the religious heritage of the Jewish people” (Misgav 2000: 152).

Shamir’s lack of cognitive openness and complexity is manifested, also, in his dismissal – even de-legitimization – of perspectives that challenge his preconceived beliefs. Thus, for example, although not every Jew is a Zionist, to Shamir, “a man has no right to consider himself a part of the Jewish people without also being a Zionist, because Zionism states that in order for a Jew to live as a Jew he needs to have his own country, his own life and his own culture. Without this, the Jewish people cannot exist” (Misgav 2000: 68-69). As far as Shamir is concerned, therefore, Jews who do not identify with Zionism are not real Jews.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ This is an idea that is antithetical to those Jews who practice Judaism but do not regard themselves as Zionists. It is an idea that is also at odds with traditional Jewish law, which states that a Jew is anyone born to a Jewish mother. Shamir disregards such details.

Perhaps an even clearer example of Shamir's black-and-white universe can be seen in his attitude toward political philosophies other than his own. Despite the pluralism of the Israeli political system and the diversity of views, Shamir insists that "there are no different philosophies," but rather "only false solutions. It is a mistake to think that we have achieved what we needed to achieve and that now we can live in peace and quiet and that no one will disturb us as long as we do not disturb others" (Misgav 2000: 69). As Avi Shlaim points out, Shamir has difficulty comprehending any point of view except his own. He sites the following example, taken from Shamir's autobiography:

It wasn't a happy moment for me; I remained unhappily convinced that if we had held out united we could have kept Taba – without forfeiting anything – and I thought it was ironic that I, and those who like myself resist handing over bits of land to Israel's enemies, should be castigated for 'fanaticism' while no one at all protested or even paid any attention (except the Likud) when the Egyptians, risking peace itself, clutched at Taba solely for reasons of national prestige. Of course nothing changed after Taba; it was as though nothing had happened (Shamir 1994: 172, quoted in Shlaim 2001: 429).

Shamir has often shown little tolerance for criticism, holding critics with a certain amount of disdain. American Jews who were critical of Israel's handling of the first Intifada, for example, were considered betrayers (Frankel 1994: 225). For Shamir, Jewish critics are self-haters, while gentile critics invariably harbor anti-Semitic feelings. As Foreign Minister, he writes, "I sometimes even suspected that those who tried hardest to trip Israelis up with leading questions and inaccurate statistics were unconsciously revealing the way they themselves felt about Jews – or about being Jewish – rather than about the State of Israel or the Middle East as such" (Shamir 1994: 116). In other words, he does not appear to distinguish between

legitimate criticism of his country's policies – including criticism by supporters of Israel – and outright hatred of Jews.

Nor does Shamir distinguish between the Nazi evil and British policies during the Second World War. The Holocaust left an indelible imprint on his character and political career. He views the world through the prism of the Holocaust, with the Jews as victims or would-be victims who need to defend themselves against their enemies – virtually everyone else. In his eulogy of Menachem Begin, Shamir said that during the Second World War, “the Jewish nation was left to be ground between the two belligerent blocs equally hostile toward the Jews and indifferent to their bitter fate.” Analyzing his speech in the Israeli daily *Ma'ariv*, Amnon Abramovitz took Shamir to task for failing to differentiate between the Axis Powers – the Nazis – and the Allied Powers:

What does it mean that ‘the Jewish nation was thus left to be ground between the two belligerent blocs?’ It can only mean that the two sides in World War II had the same moral qualities, while we, the Jews, were being ground as they fought each other. Is it possible that the news of extermination of 6 million Jews by the Germans hasn't yet reached Shamir's notice? What does it mean that ‘both [were] equally hostile toward the Jews and indifferent to their bitter fate?’ It can only mean that Nazi Germany was merely indifferent to our bitter fate. Does Shamir mean to say that Churchill and Hitler treated us in the same way? Yet it is not hard to conjecture what Shamir had in mind. In his view, the entire world has always been against the Jews and so it remains. In this respect, Churchill is no different than Hitler, George Bush is no different than Saddam Hussein and Mitterrand no different than Gaddafi.⁴⁵

This chronic mistrust of others led Shamir to express his fear of being sold out by the United States, Israel's top ally, during the Persian Gulf crisis of 1990. In a

⁴⁵ Amnon Abramovitz, *Ma'ariv*, 10 April 1992.

speech he gave in New York, Shamir said, “Israel in 1990 is not Czechoslovakia of 1938. We shall not acquiesce to any deal with enemies who wish to destroy us.”⁴⁶

Neither time nor circumstances have altered Shamir’s crude, often harsh depictions of other nations. At one point during his premiership, he caused a storm by remarking that Poles suck in anti-Semitism with their mother’s milk. When asked by a Polish journalist if he would retract his comment, Shamir refused, saying: “I do not withdraw my statement. I am sure there are many Poles, anti-Semites, many, many...”⁴⁷ Avi Shlaim points out that it is evident from Shamir’s reflection on the dispute over Taba, quoted above, that he continued to view Egypt as an enemy despite the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. After all, Shamir writes of resisting “handing over bits of land to Israel’s enemies” during the Taba negotiations, which took place *after* the two countries were at peace. Nor does Shamir distinguish among the Arabs in general. “The Arabs are the same Arabs, and the sea is the same sea,” he would often say (Shlaim 2001: 426).

In sum, Shamir holds an extremely narrow, undifferentiated worldview.⁴⁸ In his black-and-white depiction of the universe, Jews must constantly be on guard as the Arab world threatens Israel’s destruction, while the Western world remains indifferent to Israel’s fate. To Shamir, the Jewish people have no friends, neither

⁴⁶ Cal Thomas, “Israel’s Shamir Fears Sellout by U.S. at U.N.,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 19 December 1990. His reference point was the Munich Pact, reach by Neville Chamberlain with Hitler, an agreement that sealed the fate of Czechoslovakia.

⁴⁷ P. Krien, “Shamir stands by his claim on Polish,” *Herald*, 9 January 1990.

⁴⁸ To mitigate the methodological danger of selecting only those data that illustrate anecdotes, remarks, and descriptions that fit my argument, I have searched thoroughly for counter-examples, poring over Shamir’s spoken and written words, yet evidence to the contrary was not found. Indeed, the examples described above are highly representative of Shamir’s rhetoric. Moreover, my analysis of Shamir’s certitude, lack of openness towards those with other viewpoints, and undifferentiated worldview is in harmony with the general interpretation of others who have written about him (Frankel 1994; Margalit 1992; Shlaim 2001).

among Arabs nor among other nations. Throughout his life, Shamir has stubbornly stuck to his views. Not even his closest aides have been able to get him to change his mind. Neither cognitively open nor complex, Shamir could always be counted on to stay true to his beliefs, which have never changed despite other people's efforts to change them and situational factors on the ground.

Menachem Begin

Menachem Begin was born in Poland in 1913, two years prior to Shamir's birth there. By all accounts, he, too, was deeply affected by the Holocaust, in which his brother and both of his parents were murdered.⁴⁹ Indeed, the Holocaust was a recurring theme in Begin's spoken and written words. And like Shamir, upon emigrating to Israel in 1943, he became active in the Irgun, a logical move given his devotion to Jabotinsky's Revisionist Zionism, to which he had been introduced as a law student at the University of Warsaw. Unlike Shamir, however, Begin became the Irgun's commander and remained with this group until it was disbanded in 1948, with the establishment of the State of Israel. While not as militant as Lehi, Begin's Irgun engaged in a number of violent acts including the bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem.⁵⁰ Begin helped found the Herut movement, a right-wing party based on the teachings of Jabotinsky. After losing every election since 1948, he was elected Prime Minister in 1977, following the stunning defeat of the Labor Party, and he

⁴⁹ See, for example, David Ignatius, "Menachem Begin: Shaped by Holocaust," *The Washington Post*, 10 March 1992. In this piece, Ignatius relates that Begin had told him of his plans to write a book entitled "The Generation of Holocaust and Redemption."

⁵⁰ The King David Hotel served as the site of the British military command.

remained in power until his resignation in 1982.⁵¹ The key foreign policy decisions marking Begin's premiership were the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty – Begin became the first Israeli prime minister to sign a peace agreement with an Arab leader – the bombing of Iraq's nuclear reactor, and the War in Lebanon.⁵² Until the day he died, Begin, like Shamir, never wavered in his opposition to ceding territory to the Palestinians.

Like Shamir, Begin appears to have had relatively low levels of cognitive openness and complexity. To be sure, there are some notable differences between the personalities of these two men. Begin was significantly more charismatic and a far superior orator to the low-key Shamir. Unlike Shamir, Begin was not dismissive of human rights and even pursued certain policies, as prime minister, that have not been typically associated with the Israeli Right. For example, Begin, a trained lawyer, valued the rule of law, even when it proved inconvenient. Shamir, though himself honest and seemingly incorruptible, did not concern himself much with human rights or the rule of law if such factors threatened policies he deemed important. Whereas Shamir, as one of the leaders of the Lehi, approved of assassinating fellow Jews he considered dangerous or treacherous, Begin, as leader of the Irgun, steadfastly opposed violence against other Jews (though not against the British or the Arabs). Avishai Margalit characterizes their contrasting approach in the following manner:

Begin had inner conflicts. In the Knesset, he was a liberal; he was against imposing military government on Arabs inside Israel, and while he was Prime Minister, he

⁵¹ Herut merged with another party (the Liberals) to form Gahal, which subsequently became the Likud party.

⁵² According to Yechiel Kadishai, head of the Prime Minister's Office under Begin, notwithstanding Begin's decision to relinquish the Sinai peninsula to Egypt under the terms of the peace agreement, Begin never had any intention to cede parts of the West Bank or Gaza Strip, which were an integral part of the Jabotinsky vision of a Greater Israel. See interview with Kadishai, 26 November 2006, Tel Aviv.

stopped systematic torture by the Shin Bet. But when he addressed crowds in the street he revealed himself as a ferocious demagogue. In Shamir's case, on the other hand, one finds no such conflicts. He's made of different stuff.⁵³

Begin was thus somewhat more cognitively open and complex than Shamir.

The two leaders, however, share far more similarities than differences in terms of their cognitive styles. Neither man was particularly open to the influence of others, save for Vladimir "Ze'ev" Jabotinsky, the father of the Revisionist movement whom both deeply revered and whose philosophy they both adopted.⁵⁴ Begin had referred to Jabotinsky as "our teacher, master, and father" (Shlaim 2001: 353). Once Shamir and Begin shaped their worldviews, they clung to them for the remainder of their lives. Their aides had little sway over their boss. In Begin's case, we are told by his biographer that as leader of Herut, Begin consulted only with his close associates from the Irgun, such as Haim Landau and Amihai Paglin. Begin even continued to address these men by their underground code names decades after the group disbanded (Haber 1978: 231-2).

If Begin was selective with regard to those with whom he chose to consult, limiting himself to a small political circle of advisers, he was even less inclined to seek out the views of foreign leaders. More broadly, he purportedly was a poor listener who displayed little interest in what others had to say, even on non-political matters. A former U.S. diplomat who participated in the Camp David accords relates the following anecdote:

After he left government, I was talking to Carter one time. He was talking about his life in Plains, his religious beliefs, etc. I said: 'Did you ever talk to Sadat and Begin

⁵³ Avishai Margalit, "The Violent Life of Yitzhak Shamir," *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. 39, No., 9, 14 May 1992.

⁵⁴ As noted above, Shamir later split from Jabotinsky's Irgun to join Avraham (Yair) Stern's more radical group. Thus, in Shamir's case, both men played a critical role in shaping his views.

about those?’ With Sadat, the answer was yes. He said, ‘I listened to Begin and all of his experience with great attention because I wanted to learn and understand.’ I said, ‘Did you tell him about life in Plains under segregation?’ He rather ruefully said, ‘He didn’t seem to want to listen.’⁵⁵

Like Shamir, Begin was known for his stubbornness. Until his dying day, for example, Begin refused to admit that the Dir Yassin massacre of April 1948, in which over 100 innocent Arab villagers were killed by Begin’s Irgun forces, had been a tragic mistake. Writes Amos Perlmutter, Begin’s biographer: “To admit to the massacre [of Dir Yassin] was tantamount to admitting that he had no control over Etzel’s forces in Jerusalem, or that he was not an informed military commander” (Perlmutter 1987: 217). Begin’s militancy can be traced back even earlier, to the 1930s, when rifts within the Zionist leadership threatened to tear apart the Zionist enterprise. When fellow Revisionist Abba Ahimeir called for a truce within the Zionist movement, Begin reportedly told a friend, “we cannot accept his view. It is a serious breach of movement discipline” (Haber 1978: 43-44). This was one of many instances in which Begin, when faced with a decision, would reject any kind of compromise. It is this dogged adherence to his positions that once earned him the designation as “probably one of the most consistent politicians of significance in the world today.”⁵⁶

As with Shamir, the Holocaust played a crucial role in shaping Begin’s uncompromising approach to politics. He regularly lectured foreign leaders on the Holocaust, invoking it whenever he felt the need to justify a particularly controversial

⁵⁵ Interview with Harold Saunders, 18 July 2007, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁶ William Claiborne, “Long Road to Treaty Matches Tenacious Leaders; Begin Refuses to Compromise Principles,” *Washington Post*, 25 March 1979; see also Meir Merhav, “The Constancy of Menahem Begin,” *Jerusalem Post International Edition*, 23 August 1977, pp. 7 & 14.

decision to a foreign leader.⁵⁷ One classic example of this tendency concerns Begin's decision to destroy Iraq's nuclear reactor in Osirak. According to then-Chief of Staff Rafael Eitan, during the planning of the operation Begin vowed that "he will not be the man in whose time there will be a second Holocaust."⁵⁸ Indeed, following international condemnation of this event, including a severe reprimand from the Reagan administration, Begin sent President Reagan a letter replete with references to the Holocaust:

A million and a half children were poisoned by the Ziklon gas during the Holocaust. Now Israel's children were about to be poisoned by radioactivity. For two years we have lived in the shadow of the danger awaiting Israel from the nuclear reactor in Iraq. This would have been a new Holocaust. It was prevented by the heroism of our pilots to whom we owe so much (Shlaim 2001: 387).

Another controversial act in which the Holocaust was invoked concerns the Begin government's decision in June 1982 to strike Lebanon. When Begin made the proposal to his cabinet, he reportedly said: "Believe me, the alternative to fighting is Treblinka, and we have resolved that there would be no more Treblinkas" (Shlaim 2001: 404).

Begin's obsession with the Holocaust led him to see nearly any threat and every possible danger to Israel as a precursor to another Holocaust. He thus failed to make distinctions in assessing Israel's adversaries. To Begin, "the PLO are Nazis, Arafat is Hitler." (Perlmutter 1987: 13; Rowland 1985: 6). And, like Shamir, Begin saw the British as "Hitlerites" during the Second World War (Perlmutter 1987: 137). Notwithstanding the fact that British Prime Minister Winston Churchill led his

⁵⁷ Edward Walsh, "Reagan, Like Jimmy Carter, Learns Begin Can Be Tough," *The Washington Post*, 16 August 1982, A14. Interestingly, Shamir, in his autobiography, suggests that Begin tended to annoy his listeners by preaching to them about the Holocaust (Shamir 1994: 90).

⁵⁸ http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/osirak1.html#_ftn14

country in the fight against Hitler and rescued a substantial number of Jews during the war, to Begin, the British were no better than the Nazis.

Even West Germany's democratic leaders were, according to Begin, no different than their Nazi predecessors. When Prime Minister Ben-Gurion decided to accept reparations from West Germany in September 1952, Begin, the then-opposition leader, declared: "There is no German who did not kill our fathers. Every German is a Nazi. Every German is a murderer. [Chancellor Konrad] Adenauer is a murderer..." (Haber 1978: 234). Begin's fierce opposition to reparations from Germany is illustrative of his rigidity. As Robert C. Rowland points out, even though Begin was Jabotinsky's disciple, the latter's ideology was much more flexible. In the 1930s, for example, Jabotinsky cooperated with the government of Poland, despite its anti-Semitic policies, because he believed that the Polish officials might be persuaded to aid Jewish emigration to Palestine (Rowland 1985: 50).

Like Shamir, Begin did not take well to criticism. For example, when Begin decided to extend Israeli law to the Golan Heights in 1981, he complained that U.S. criticism of this controversial move was motivated by anti-Semitism (Rowland 1985: 6). And just as Shamir viewed Jews willing to compromise as traitors, Begin also regarded them with disdain, referring to them alternately as "cowards," "synagogue clerks," "slaves and Yahoood" (Perlmutter 1987: 137). In Begin's writings, he accused the moderate pre-state Yishuv leaders of appeasing foreigners and thus leading the nation astray (Perlmutter 1987: 137). In opposing Ben-Gurion's decision on the reparations deal, Begin stated that "a Jewish government that negotiates with

Germany can no longer be a Jewish government” (Haber 1978: 234). Begin is thus similar to Shamir in his tendency to de-legitimize points of view other than his own.

In conclusion, Begin can be seen as slightly more complex than Shamir as illustrated, for example, in his recognition that the rule of law in a democracy triumphs over sectarian interests. For Begin, human rights were not to be trampled on, even if this meant a setback for his cause. In most respects, however, Begin’s cognitive makeup was quite similar to that of Shamir. Neither man was open to considering other viewpoints; neither tolerated criticism of his policies; and neither was able to see much complexity in people or situations.

Yitzhak Rabin

Unlike the other Israeli leaders reviewed here, Yitzhak Rabin was born and raised in Israel in 1922. In 1940, he joined the Palmach, the elite fighting unit of the Haganah, and fought in the 1948 War of Independence. By 1964, he became Chief of Staff, commanding the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) during the 1967 War. He retired from military service the following year and, after a stint as Ambassador to the United States, he was elected a Labor Party Member of Knesset in 1973. He served as Prime Minister from 1974-1977, and again from 1992-1995.⁵⁹ He also served as Minister of Defense in the two “National Unity” governments (1984-1990). Rabin was widely regarded as a tough, straight-talking ex-General, yet a pragmatist, whose views on any given issue were not constrained by dogma (Inbar 1999; Kurzman

⁵⁹ Rabin was assassinated by an Israeli right-wing extremist in November 1995.

1998; Slater 1996).⁶⁰ Throughout much of the 1980s and early 1990s, Rabin was identified with the hawkish wing of the Labor Party. While he had always supported some form of territorial compromise, he had long opposed Palestinian statehood as well as the party doves' calls for holding direct talks with the PLO. In 1993, however, he dramatically changed Israeli policy by authorizing backchannel negotiations with the PLO, which led to mutual recognition followed by the Oslo Accords.

Yitzhak Rabin's cognitive structure can be described as both moderately open and moderately complex – somewhat less open and complex than his longtime Labor Party rival Shimon Peres, but much more so than either Begin or Shamir. In at least one respect, however, Rabin does resemble the *modi operandi* of Begin and Shamir: failure to consult with more than a few people before making key decisions. In Rabin's case, he avoided doing so in part because of his introverted, reserved manner, but also because he was suspicious by nature, and trusted very few individuals. According to a biographer of Rabin, a former Rabin colleague notes that even the few people he would listen to “knew they were suspect” and that, despite the fact that Rabin was in the army for thirty-five years, “he couldn't name one man he could call for advice” (Kurzman 1998: 35). Rabin's wife acknowledges that “people were one of Yitzhak's weaknesses. He never had a kitchen cabinet and relied almost exclusively (with some reservations and some criticism) on the people in the official chain of command, behavior consistent with his rigorous military background...” (L. Rabin 1997: 222). Rabin's biographer concurs with this assessment, noting that “he had few close advisers, thinking like a general. He might listen to aides but he would

⁶⁰ See also Clyde Haberman, “Yitzhak Rabin: Pragmatist Leading Israelis from Isolation to New Peace,” *The New York Times*, 12 September 1993.

give credence only to his own views, based on intricate analysis.” (Kurzman 1998: 392). Rabin’s circle of advisers was thus very limited, and it is very likely that much of the advice he did receive failed to challenge his own views on various issues, particularly since those who dared disagree with him would often incur his wrath (Kurzman 1998: 344).

Rabin’s lack of openness to other people was seemingly compensated, however, by his openness to information from the environment. In this respect, he proved to be quite different from Shamir and Begin whose ideological convictions trumped environmental circumstances. Dennis Ross, the former U.S. Middle East peace envoy, offers the following description of Rabin:

Rabin trusted his own assessments more than those of others. He drew information from others, and it was possible to influence him if you could do so before he had thought an issue through. Once he had made his analysis, though, you would not move him; only events would. For example, Rabin’s analysis told him that it was both possible and desirable to do a deal with Asad before doing one with Arafat. When it became clear that this was not the case, Rabin turned to Arafat; he did not give up on a deal with Asad, but he altered his assessment accordingly (Ross 2004: 92-92).

As Ross puts it, “Rabin was certainly more open to a kind of analysis that might counter his own, but it might be something he would read as opposed to what someone would say.”⁶¹ Rabin was thus able to display flexibility in light of changed circumstances.

Another example of his flexibility concerns his stance on the Lavi fighter bomber, which was developed in Israel in the 1980s. Rabin changed his position on whether to pursue this costly aircraft not once, but twice! Originally, he opposed the project. As defense minister, however, he changed his mind, arguing that 3,000

⁶¹ Interview with Dennis Ross.

workers would lose their jobs if the project were cancelled. However, by 1987, he came to the conclusion that other military equipment was more pertinent to Israel's defense needs than the Lavi. In light of these latest relevant facts, he thus changed his mind again, opting to buy planes from the United States rather than manufacture the Lavi in Israel (Kurzman 1998: 396). These examples of Rabin's flexibility demonstrate a certain level of cognitive openness.

An evaluation of Rabin's level of cognitive complexity leads to similarly mixed results. On the one hand, Rabin tended to make simplistic judgments about people and certain situations. As Yehudit Auerbach (1995) observes, Rabin would make clear-cut distinctions between those he perceived to be "good guys" versus those he deemed to be the "bad guys." The former included his former comrades in arms from the Palmach; comrades in arms from the Israel Defense Forces; and his two closest political aides, Eitan Haber and Shimon Sheves; the latter included Jewish settlers (whom he once labeled "crybabies") and political rivals like Shimon Peres, whom he called "an indefatigable schemer" (Auerbach 1995: 304-305). In the words of former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, Rabin "hated ambiguity" (Kissinger 1979: 355).

As Auerbach points out, Rabin's two-dimensional perception of people transcended the internal environment. During the Cold War years, Rabin saw the international system as under the total control of the United States and the Soviet Union, carrying the bipolar division to absurdity (Auerbach 1995: 305). As a result, he tended to be dismissive of other powers. For example, after being appointed Chief of Operations Branch – the second-highest position in the IDF at the time – Rabin

opposed efforts to procure arms from Western Europe, preferring to fulfill Israel's defense needs by dealing with the United States. While the United States did eventually become Israel's main supplier of arms, France proved to be instrumental in supplying Israel with arms that enabled Israel to win the 1956 and 1967 Arab-Israeli wars. The United States, by contrast, refused to supply Israel with major weaponry during the 1950s and early 1960s, in spite of no small effort on Israel's part to convince the Eisenhower Administration to change its policy.

It would be mistaken, however, to equate Rabin's tendency to engage in oversimplification with Begin and Shamir's inability to see shades of gray in nearly any situation. While Rabin sometimes saw people and situations in binary terms as they did, he often proved willing to revise antiquated views in light of changed circumstances (e.g., his reversals on the Lavi project). He viewed the political arena as a complex place that required constant analysis. Dennis Ross describes Rabin as having

...a first-class mind. More than any leader I have dealt with, Rabin was an analyst. His thinking was structured and highly organized. He would summarize in a staccato fashion what were the regional developments as he saw them. He might offer four or five points to capture the strategic reality, always presenting them in sequence and literally saying first, second, third, fourth, and fifth (Ross 2004: 90).

According to Ross, "Rabin was someone who wanted to see things as they were, even if the facts might be uncomfortable with what he wanted [to believe]."⁶² While Auerbach is correct to note that Rabin was not as politically open to Europe as he was to the United States, he did not view the world as the enemy of the Jewish people, as did Shamir and Begin.

⁶² Interview with Dennis Ross.

Nor did he view with alarm America's relations with the Arab world, seeing no necessary contradiction between positive U.S. relations with Israel and with Arab countries. After becoming prime minister in 1974, he stated in an interview that he had "never believed that an improvement of the relationship between the U.S. and the Arab states has to come about at Israel's expense."⁶³ He also was able to view certain multifaceted concepts in their various dimensions. A classic example is his complex view of security, which he expounded in his acceptance speech following his election victory in 1992:

Security is not only a tank, an aircraft, a missile ship. Security is also, and perhaps foremost, men and women – the Israeli citizens. Security is also a man's education, housing, schools, the street and the neighborhood, the society in which he grew up. And security is also that man's hope. Security is the peace of mind and the means to live for the immigrant from Leningrad, the roof over the immigrant from Gondar in Ethiopia, the factory and employment of the citizen born here, of the demobilized soldier. It is in integration and participation in our experience and culture. That, too, is security...(L. Rabin 1997: 215).

In short, Rabin was considerably more cognitively open and complex than were Shamir or Begin. An introvert who distrusted people in general, he tended not to look to others for decision-making advice. Nevertheless, he was open to revising his beliefs and corresponding decisions in light of new information he received from the environment. And despite his tendency to dichotomize people, he was able to view certain concepts and situations in their complexity. He was thus able to display flexible thinking on an assortment of issues.

Shimon Peres

Shimon Peres was born in Poland in 1923 and moved to Israel in 1934. Active in the Labor Zionist youth movement, he was handpicked by Labor Zionist leader

⁶³ Interview with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on Israel Television, 7 June 1974.

David Ben-Gurion in 1947 to purchase arms for the Haganah. In 1952, he was appointed Deputy Director-General of the Ministry of Defense, becoming the ministry's Director-General the following year. In that capacity, he was involved in secret arms purchases from France and the construction of a nuclear reactor, with French assistance, in the town of Dimona. As Minister of Defense in Rabin's first government, Peres was known as a hawk, who did not share his Labor Party colleagues' support for territorial compromise and who advocated the establishment of Jewish settlements throughout much of the West Bank. Over the years, Peres has held every major cabinet post including the premiership, which he held from 1984-1986, and again from 1995-1996. In 1977, Peres underwent a dovish shift, becoming a devoted supporter of territorial compromise and a champion of the peace process. By the late-1980s, he had become a strong opponent of settlements, and he began to lay the groundwork for a shift in Israeli policy vis-à-vis the PLO. In 1993, as Foreign Minister in Rabin's second government, he threw his full political weight behind the Israel-PLO talks in Oslo and, together with Rabin and Arafat, received the Nobel Peace Prize for his role in the Declaration of Principles agreement. In 2005, Peres left the Labor Party, defecting to Ariel Sharon's newly formed Kadima. In June 2007, he was elected President, a largely ceremonial post, by the Knesset.

Peres can be seen as a paradigmatic case of a cognitively open individual. Numerous interviews conducted for this research back the finding by Yael Aronoff (2001) that Peres is significantly more cognitively open than other Israeli leaders.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ In her study, Aronoff examines Prime Ministers Shamir, Rabin, Peres and Netanyahu. (She does not focus on Begin.) See Yael S. Aronoff, "When and Why Do Hard-Liners Become Soft? An Examination of Israeli Prime Ministers Shamir, Rabin, Peres, and Netanyahu," in Ofer Feldman and

Those who know him well invariably describe him as “open,”⁶⁵ “pragmatic,”⁶⁶ or “adaptable.”⁶⁷ Superlatives are sometimes used to emphasize his pragmatic disposition. He is commonly described as the “ultimate pragmatist.”⁶⁸ “I don’t know anyone as open as he is,” says a former adviser.⁶⁹ A prominent journalist who has covered every prime minister since Ben-Gurion views Peres as “much more open” than were Rabin and Golda Meir – two of Peres’s predecessors as Labor Party leader.⁷⁰ Comparing Peres with Rabin, one academic who has worked with both men describes Peres as “more open, more attuned to voices from the outside, from the West, from Europe, from America, from intellectuals. He is more open to this kind of thing. That is why he is aware of others. His mind is not locked.”⁷¹ Peres is “a great listener,” says a former aide.⁷² Former U.S. officials and high-ranking diplomats concur, viewing Peres as “a much more open person,” “more open to listening to others,” than the other leaders discussed in this chapter.⁷³

Linda Velenty, Eds., *Profiling Political Leaders and the Analysis of Political Leadership: The Cross-Cultural Study of Personality and Behavior* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2001), pp.185-201.

⁶⁵ Interviews with Beilin, 6 December 2006, Tel Aviv; Yael Dayan, 16 December 2006, Tel Aviv; Aliza Eshed, 19 November 2006, Jerusalem; Moshe Maoz, 18 April 2007 (telephone interview); Israel Peleg, 21 December 2006, Shfayim; Tom Pickering 16 July 2007, Washington, D.C.; and Dennis Ross.

⁶⁶ Interviews with Yishayahu Ben-Porat, 17 November 2006, Herzliya Pituach; Avraham Katz-Oz, 3 December 2006, Tel Aviv; Nimrod Novik, 23 October 2006, Herzliya Pituach; Alon Pinkas, 17 October 2006, Tel Aviv; and Gad Yaacobi, 9 October 2006, Tel Aviv.

⁶⁷ Interviews with Ben-Porat; and Ron Pundak, 31 October 2006, Tel Aviv.

⁶⁸ Interviews with David Landau, 21 November 2006, Tel Aviv; Pinkas; Ephraim Sneh, 22 January 2007, Tel Aviv; and Yaacobi.

⁶⁹ Interview with Israel Peleg.

⁷⁰ Interview with Ben-Porat.

⁷¹ Interview with Moshe Maoz.

⁷² Interview with Aliza Eshed.

⁷³ Interview with James Schlesinger, 27 April 2007, Washington, D.C. See also interviews with Dennis Ross; Tom Pickering; and Harold Saunders, 18 July 2007, Washington, D.C. One notable exception is Martin Indyk, who claims that “Peres wouldn’t listen at all” to what he had to say. On this point, Indyk’s assessment runs counter to the widespread view of Peres as an especially good listener. Indyk himself notes that Peres was actually quite attentive to Yasser Arafat, although he listened to him so that he could “out-manipulate” him. See author’s interview with Martin Indyk, 28 August 2007, Washington, D.C.

Similarly, a former Knesset Member who has known Peres her entire life describes him as far more receptive to others' opinions than other Israeli decision-makers:

He was more open to the world, and the world liked him for it, and he listened. The other people we mentioned, including Begin, their attitude was Ben Gurion's "Um Shmum." [a reference to Ben-Gurion's derogatory comment about the UN ("um" in Hebrew).] Peres gave great importance to each hand in the UN and each country, and he would spend hours listening to what the Norwegians and what the Indonesians and what this and that would think and he was really attentive. And he would ask them: 'What do you suggest? What do you think?' Other politicians would lecture about what they thought. Peres would ask – and I was with him on so many of these occasions – and I think this affected him greatly. He really understood.⁷⁴

Peres's critics also acknowledge his openness, although the implications of this trait are, as far as they are concerned, not necessarily positive. Says Gad Yaacobi: "He's a good listener, a good collector of ideas, of initiatives, and he uses them later for his needs and raises them as if they are his ideas."⁷⁵

Peres is not merely open to hearing other people's views, he consistently has sought them out. He has been known to surround himself with young, highly educated, and ambitious advisers who are not afraid – and are even encouraged – to challenge his views and, in fact, often do so (Ross 2004: 235-236).⁷⁶ He continues to consult regularly, sometimes in an unofficial capacity, with current and former aides including his longtime aide Yossi Beilin, who years ago parted ways with Peres politically.⁷⁷

Peres has generally made it a point to consult with professionals before making key decisions. In 1974, after he was chosen to be Minister of Defense in

⁷⁴ Interview with Yael Dayan.

⁷⁵ Interview with Gad Yaacobi.

⁷⁶ See also Ilan Kafir, "A Year Alongside Shimon Peres," *Yedioth Ahronoth, Seven Days* [Hebrew weekly magazine], 9 January 1976, pp. 5-7; Michael Miron, "Peres's Boys," [Hebrew] *Ma'ariv*, 16 December 1980, pp. 17-19; and interview with Tom Pickering.

⁷⁷ In 2003, Beilin left the Labor party for the leftist Meretz party.

Rabin's first government, for example, his main objective was to rehabilitate the defense establishment, which had been badly damaged in the Yom Kippur War. To that end, he met day and night with scientists, soldiers, and defense-industry executives to find solutions to the defense establishment's numerous problems (Lau-Lavie 1998: 321). Two years later, as Peres studied a military plan to rescue the Israeli hostages at Entebbe, he made it a point to consult with Moshe Dayan, his predecessor in the defense ministry (who was no longer in the government), prior to pushing for the plan's implementation (Lau-Lavie 1998: 333).⁷⁸

A more recent example of Peres's consultative approach concerns his conduct prior to Israel's second Lebanon war in the summer of 2006. On the eve of the Olmert government's decision to declare war on Hezbollah, Peres – a senior minister in the government – took the initiative to call his archrival, Ehud Barak, Israel's most highly decorated soldier (and a former prime minister), to hear out his views of the impending war. Barak provided Peres with his professional military opinion of the problems that the army would likely run into during the war, leading Peres to ask the toughest questions of the senior military officials who addressed the cabinet.⁷⁹

As Prime Minister from 1984 to 1986, Peres mobilized the knowledge elite, forming a circle of academically trained aides who consulted regularly with scientists, economists, and experts in academia, government, and the business world (Keren 1995: 7-8). He declared an "intellectual struggle against the habits of the population

⁷⁸ See also interview with Yishayahu Ben-Porat. "Shimon did not go to Entebbe until he consulted with Dayan – something people did not know," recalls Ben-Porat. "He invited Dayan to dinner prior to the decision on the operation and was not confident in himself until Dayan told him to go for it." In chapter 5, I show that the Dayan-Peres alliance disappeared after Dayan became foreign minister in Begin's Likud government following Labor's debacle in the 1977 election.

⁷⁹ "Breakfast Rice," *Mideast Mirror*, 27 March 2007. While the cabinet ultimately voted in favor of the war, Peres was one of three ministers who abstained in the vote.

and the inertia of this country” (Keren 1995: 23). An example of this struggle that Peres did not shy away from during his premiership was his implementation of the economic stabilization program in July 1985. Faced with triple-digit inflation when he took office, this plan introduced a rigorous set of market-oriented structural reforms, which challenged some of the traditional socialist dogma of Peres’s Labor Party. Peres succeeded in large part because he made it a point to listen to the concerns of various sectors of society, while coordinating his efforts with members of the business community, economists, and the leadership of the Histadrut labor federation. The result was a reinvigorated economy in which inflation was reduced to under 20 percent followed by record growth in the decade that followed.

Peres’s high degree of openness – openness to what others tell him and openness to new information from the environment – appears to be a critical factor in explaining his propensity to update his views. Says Ron Pundak, one of two academics who initiated the Oslo process and who today serves as Executive Director of the Peres Center for Peace, “Peres is somebody who is not stuck at any point with an ideology. He adapts, he learns, he listens, he upgrades himself. This is a man who on a linear line always moves forward.”⁸⁰ One former Peres aide, Israel Peleg, describes how, in the 1990s, he helped prepare then-Foreign Minister Peres for a meeting with then-U.S. Vice President Al Gore. According to Peleg, when he briefed Peres on the value of desertification, Peres, at first, appeared rather indifferent. He nonetheless allowed Peleg to proceed with the briefing on its potential. By the time Peres returned from his visit in the United States, “he became Al Gore’s representative on the issue of desertification. That’s all he talked about,” recalls

⁸⁰ Interview with Ron Pundak.

Peleg.⁸¹ Similarly, after consultations with various experts on nanotechnology, he has emerged, in recent years, a strong proponent of this minute technology for Israel's defense needs. "He didn't get to nanotechnology out of the blue," says Peleg. "Someone sat with him and showed him the potential, the future...He then transformed it into a central issue."⁸² In 2006, Peres presented some of his ideas to high-ranking U.S. officials in an effort to interest them in cooperation with Israel in developing weapons of the future based on nanotechnology.⁸³

Peres's cognitive openness is related to the high degree of his cognitive complexity in the sense that his openness has facilitated his ability to view situations in multiple dimensions. A former aide to Peres, who served together in the first "national unity government" during Peres's premiership, compares his former boss's multi-dimensional outlook with the lower complexity of Peres's predecessors:

The man [Peres] sees so many more variables and dimensions of any issue simultaneously and has no problem negotiating them in his mind simultaneously than any of them. Rabin was two-dimensional. Shamir was one-dimensional. Shimon is endless-dimensional...He has a complex view of reality – very nuanced, very detailed. The driving forces are from the formative years, and the ability to negotiate many, many variables simultaneously is almost a mark of the man. He likes to launch many balls into the air. I've never seen him lose one, not knowing which one of them will produce results but not losing sight of any. He keeps his eyes on all the balls simultaneously...⁸⁴

In contrast to the other leaders reviewed here, Peres sees value in ambiguity, both in terms of public posturing and as a tactic to provide Israel's decision-makers with the maximum leverage to pursue different policies in accordance with different needs. As a young aide to Prime Minister Ben-Gurion, Peres extolled his mentor's

⁸¹ Interview with Israel Peleg.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Itamar Eichner, "A Bionic Wasp and a Steve Austin Glove," *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 17 November 2006, p. 4. See, also, Shimon Peres, "Upgrading War, Privatizing Peace," *Haaretz*, 31 August 2006.

⁸⁴ Interview with Nimrod Novik.

subtle, ambiguous method, which he contrasted to the unequivocal and bluntly straightforward approach of then-opposition leader Menachem Begin: “If Begin were prime minister,” Peres noted, “every Jew and every American would know what would happen. That Ben-Gurion is prime minister of Israel and tomorrow he can be as sharp and as aggressive as Begin, and on the day after he can be battling for peace...this is one of the sharpest political cards that Israel holds toward the outside world.”⁸⁵ Aliza Goren, an adviser to Rabin and later to Peres, notes that what impressed people about Rabin was that “what they saw and heard was what they got,” whereas with Peres, “it’s always packaged, sophisticated; he is multilayered and multifaceted” (Bar-Zohar 2007: 296).

Also distinguishing Peres from the other leaders is his tendency to avoid making simple dichotomies that often lead to dead ends in terms of policymaking. “If you have two unacceptable alternatives,” Peres says, “the way out is to select a third one that nobody has thought about.”⁸⁶ As far as Peres is concerned, people needlessly limit their options by presenting a dichotomy that does not necessarily exist. He states:

I never thought that – when people analyze something, they think in terms of two alternatives: black and white. I believe that two alternatives never exist, because the minute they’re becoming known they mobilize armies for and armies against, and they are useless. So when you have two alternatives look for a third one – the hidden one, the unknown one, the creative one that may surprise everybody, and enter a land where you have neither supporters nor opponents but you can operate freely.⁸⁷

This unconventional approach to decision-making has, at times, been a source of frustration for aides and colleagues seeking straightforward answers to problems they

⁸⁵ Peres lecture on 22 January 1956, IDF Archives, File #13, Batch #101042, 1965.

⁸⁶ Kim Willenson with Milan J. Kubic, “An Israeli Innovator,” *Newsweek*, 18 April 1977, p. 39.

⁸⁷ Interview with Shimon Peres, 3 November 2006, Tel Aviv.

are tasked with solving. It also has led his rivals to ridicule Peres as a man detached from reality. According to writer Amos Oz, Peres has paid a personal price for his creativity:

This is Peres's major problem; without it he would have reached lofty heights. His grasp of events, his endless creativity, his talent to open a window in a wall where there are no windows, to find a crack where others see only a concrete wall, to tie things together that others believe could never be tied together, all the things because of which people ridiculed him and called him a man of fantasy – that's his greatness. He has more vision and imagination than Ben-Gurion or any other Israeli politician had (Bar-Zohar 2007: 350).

Peres's multi-dimensional thinking is illustrated in the following excerpt from an interview he gave concerning his support of a national unity government with Ariel Sharon's Likud in 2001 – a move strongly opposed by many in his party:

Interviewer: To tell you the truth, there was a lot that made sense in the speeches of those opposed to the unity government.

Peres: Certainly. But when you make a decision it is never 100 percent good against 100 percent bad. It is 65 percent good to 45 percent bad. Even now I can give you a list of disadvantages and doubts. When I was a boy I thought that a king can only do good things. But as you grow up and see there are constraints and dilemmas and difficulties and choices have to be made.⁸⁸

Peres's response to the interviewer concerning a controversial decision he made – in this case, bringing Labor into a right-leaning government – demonstrates his acceptance of the legitimacy of alternative viewpoints. He also is careful to acknowledge that his decision is imperfect. Typical of Peres's discourse, it is a nuanced reply, free of the absolutist language that typifies the rhetoric of Begin and Shamir.

In short, Peres is the most cognitively open and complex leader reviewed here. His willingness to listen to different perspectives, to incorporate the insights of others and update his beliefs accordingly, and to characterize situations in multi-dimensional ways distinguish him from other decision-makers. This openness and complexity

⁸⁸ Michael Kafra, "I am an Indefatigable Schemer and Proud of It," *Ma'ariv*, 2 March 2001, p. B4.

release him from being wedded to a particular position, allowing him to revise his beliefs and support changes in policy accordingly.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to demonstrate that Peres is cognitively open and complex; Begin and Shamir's cognitive structure is far more closed and simple; and Rabin is somewhere in-between – more open and complex than either Begin or Shamir, yet not as open or complex as Peres. I have done so by following in the footsteps of cognitive psychologists who have used these criteria to help explain why certain individuals are more – or less – likely to undergo schema change; i.e., why some people are more prone to alter their beliefs than others. By qualitatively analyzing oral and written statements made by four Israeli prime ministers over a course of several decades, and corroborating this data with expert testimony about these leaders' personalities, a clear picture emerges as to the level of each leader's cognitive openness and complexity. To avoid tautology, I have steered clear of the leaders' positions on the Palestinian issue; in this way, my outcome is not the same as the evidence I use to explain it.

Having established these leaders' cognitive makeup, I next explore their positions on territorial compromise, settlements, negotiations with the PLO, and a Palestinian state. In the chapters ahead, I explore Peres's hawk-to-dove shift and try to show that his high levels of cognitive openness and complexity help to explain why he underwent a dramatic change in views – and why he did so sooner than others – and why, in turn, he was successful in affecting foreign policy change in Israel.

CHAPTER 4

PERES: THE HAWKISH YEARS (1953-1977)

The purpose of this chapter is twofold: (1) to show that Shimon Peres, in the earlier part of his career, was an uncompromising hawk; and (2) to demonstrate that, despite his status as a secondary political actor – he was merely a civil servant in the 1950s and became a senior minister only in 1974 – he had a profound impact on Israel’s foreign policy in the period covered here (1953-1977). It is important to establish that Peres was a hawk in order to then explain his decision to change course and pursue dovish policies (the objective of the next two chapters). This chapter comprises two periods in Peres’s political career, separated by the 1967 War: the first covers Peres’s stint as Director-General of the Defense Ministry and leadership in the Rafi party; the second begins with Israel’s victory in the 1967 War and concludes with Peres’s tenure as Minister of Defense in the first government of Yitzhak Rabin, until the latter’s resignation in April 1977.⁸⁹ These periods, it will be shown, constitute Peres’s “activist” and hawkish years, respectively.⁹⁰ The criteria used to assess one’s level of hawkishness – one’s post-June 1967 positions on territorial compromise, Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, negotiations with the PLO, and the establishment of a Palestinian state – are used to demonstrate that Peres was a hawk throughout this entire period.

⁸⁹ Peres was still in the Rafi party in 1967. While it is conceivable to divide up Peres’s career differently, this particular division makes sense in terms of explaining the hawk-to-dove shift, which occurs after 1977, as I argue in the next chapter. The 1967 War is a logical place to divide the two earlier parts of Peres’s career, since it is after Israel’s victory in this war that the terms “hawk” and “dove” became part of the Israeli political lexicon.

⁹⁰ As will be shown, “activists” were precursors to “hawks” in pre-1967 Israel.

The latter objective – to demonstrate that Peres was an important foreign policy player – is significant as well, as it could easily be assumed that the views of an individual who is neither a head of state nor even a senior cabinet official (which Peres did not become until 1974) are inconsequential to that state’s foreign policy. This dissertation focuses, however, not merely on an ordinary individual who later changes his views on political matters, but rather on a highly influential decision-maker whose views and actions have helped to shape his country’s foreign policy. In this regard, both this chapter and the next one can be seen as attempts at a corrective to international relations explanations that downplay the role of decision-makers. Chapters four through six thus, taken together, provide an in-depth look at Peres’s approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the various ways in which his evolving views have impacted Israel’s policies.

1953-1967: The Activist

Although the terms “hawk” and “dove” did not become part of the public discourse in Israel until the aftermath of the 1967 War, there were nevertheless clear inter- and intra-party divisions with regard to the Arab-Israeli issue – divisions between hardliners and those who adopted more moderate positions. The *Revisionists*, represented by Menachem Begin’s Herut party, were followers of right-wing Zionist firebrand Vladimir “Ze’ev” Jabotinsky. They maintained an uncompromising stance toward the Arabs, preaching Jabotinsky’s vision of *Eretz Yisrael Hashlema* (a “Greater Israel”), an Israel encompassing both sides of the Jordan River. The Israeli Left, represented by the Communists and *Mapam*, rejected the notion of extending

Israel's borders and advocated, instead, a more conciliatory approach toward the Arabs including territorial concessions.

The mainstream *Mapai* (forerunner to the Labor Party), the party that dominated Israeli politics until Labor's defeat in the 1977 elections, had a greater diversity of views within its rank-and-file. The *Ahdut Ha'avodah* faction, while holding leftwing socioeconomic views, shared the Revisionists' dream of a Greater Israel. Within Mapai itself, the majority of its members did not rule out future compromises with the Arabs, but only a minority, led by Moshe Sharett, believed that peace talks with the Arabs was a feasible option at the time. Most Mapai members held what today would be considered hawkish positions (though not as hawkish as supporters of Ahdut Ha'avodah or the Revisionists).

Within Mapai, as against the moderate Sharett line, stood the so-called "activist" approach, led by Prime Minister Ben-Gurion and his young protégés, Moshe Dayan and Shimon Peres. Like General Dayan, Peres was seen as a *bitchonist* – a man of security, who placed Israel's military interests ahead of Israel's international standing, or any other factors that were of concern to moderates like Sharett.⁹¹ As "activists," both Dayan and Peres adopted a generally hard-line policy toward the Arabs. Frustrated by the intensity of hostile rhetoric from Arab leaders and by terrorist infiltration from Arab countries into Israel (e.g., the *Fedayeen* from Egypt), the "activists" pushed for an aggressive policy of counter-terrorism measures, such as retaliatory strikes. They also sought to redress what they viewed as the gross

⁹¹ In Hebrew, *bitachon* means security. In Israel, the Ministry of Defense is, in essence, also the Ministry of Security. For more on Peres as a *bitchonist*, see author's interview with Zeev Schiff, 10 November 2006, Ramat Aviv Gimel.

imbalance of arms flowing into the Middle East by seeking to procure arms from any country willing to sell them to Israel.

In December 1953, at the age of 29, Peres was appointed Director-General of the Ministry of Defense by Prime Minister and Defense Minister David Ben-Gurion. Throughout the decade and into the next one, Peres did not deviate from his hardline attitude toward the Arabs. Although he did not technically become a politician until 1959, the year he was first elected to the Knesset, Peres neither hid his political views from Ben-Gurion nor from the general public. He passionately voiced his support for counter-terrorist operations, seeing them not as acts of revenge but rather as acts of defense.⁹² He rejected Sharett's call for a policy of restraint, arguing that "it was very important to emphasize that 'crime does not pay.'"

He also rejected the moderates' talk of peace, which he viewed as "an admission of weakness."⁹³ Peace would only come about, he insisted, if Israel were prepared to fight:

Only if we demonstrate that we are a nation that has physical strength, military preparedness, military manpower to win or bend the Arabs in a war, and if we will have statesmen and leaders willing to use this strength – not for conquering, not for war, but to protect what we have attained – maybe that is the only way in which we can ensure peace that does not entail indefinite concessions. Because Israel is not interested in just any kind of peace. Israel is not interested in a peace without the Negev, and peace alone is not an end.⁹⁴

Given the hostile intentions of Arab leaders toward Israel, he saw no room for accommodation with Israel's Arab neighbors:

⁹² "We Expect Developments that will Burden the Security Situation of the State," Peres interview in *Davar*, 18 May 1962.

⁹³ Peres's article in the Kibbutz journal *Niv Hakvutza*, June 1954, File #2, Batch #101042, 1965, IDF Archives.

⁹⁴ Peres's lecture in Yifat, 8 September 1955, IDF Archives, File #10, Batch #101042, 1965, IDF Archives.

If the Arab countries were to extend their hands in peace, we would welcome the extended hand, although the alternative to this is not for us to extend our hand alone. Gandhi already said: 'When a dog chases a cat it would not be a wise policy on the part of the cat to declare its intention to make peace – the dog will continue to chase it.'⁹⁵

Peres was concerned primarily with the hostile attitude of Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser, whom he saw as the ringleader of Arab rejectionists yet, at the same time, the leader whose country was essential for an eventual Arab-Israeli peace. "The key to peace, just as in the danger of attack, is to be found somewhere near the shores of the Nile," Peres argued. "Egypt is the biggest and the oldest of the Arab countries. It sets the tone, and without it – if I can express myself like this – there is no concert."⁹⁶ Convinced that Nasser's political goal was the destruction of Israel, Peres argued that, more than anyone else, it was Nasser who was responsible for perpetuating "the situation of no peace."⁹⁷ In one lecture, Peres even compared Nasser to Hitler.⁹⁸ Yet in that very talk, it should be noted, Peres was careful to distinguish Nasser from the Egyptian people, who wanted peace.

For Peres, the idea of negotiating peace agreements with Arab leaders under the circumstances prevailing at the time was futile. Not merely were these leaders highly antagonistic towards Israel, what they really aimed for, argued Peres, was nothing less than the destruction of the Jewish state. This was a theme Peres would repeat again and again during this period, in private and public forums alike. He insisted it was pointless to even consider conceding parts of the country to the Arabs,

⁹⁵ Peres article in *Niv Hakvutza*, June 1954, IDF Archives, File #2, Batch #101042, IDF Archives; see also Shimon Peres, "Present and Future in Franco-Israel Relations," *The Jerusalem Post*, 12 June 1957.

⁹⁶ Peres speech, "A Day that is Close and a Day that is Far Away," 19 July 1966, File #5-008-1965-56, Labor Party Archive.

⁹⁷ Shimon Peres's lecture to trade association *Moadon Hamischari*, 16 November 1956, File #26, Batch #101042, 1965, IDF Archives.

⁹⁸ Peres's lecture at the Mugrabi Hall, 16 November 1956, File #27, Batch #101042, 1965, IDF Archives.

as some on the Left were prepared to do. The notion that Israel's policies were needlessly belligerent – an idea voiced by some on the Left as well as by the international community – was misguided, Peres maintained. “In the eyes of the Arabs, our very existence represents aggression,” he remarked in closed-door sessions of the Ministry of Defense.⁹⁹

Just as he opposed the Sharett line throughout the 1950s, Peres continued to voice his opposition to dovish demands in the 1960s. When Nahum Goldmann, the well-respected president of the World Jewish Congress, called for a demilitarized region, urging Israel to dismantle its arms under international supervision, Peres rejected it out of hand. “The only alternative to the situation of no-peace is to strengthen the IDF's military might,” Peres said in response to Goldmann. What Israel needed, he said, was a military deterrent force.¹⁰⁰

Significantly, however, while this view did not differ much from the prevailing view in Israel at the time, Peres's conclusions were particularly consistent with Ben-Gurion's view that conciliation with the Arabs was a necessary political objective, but one that was simply not an available option at the time. Peace would be possible only once Israel managed to convince the Arab world that there was no other way, that Israel could not be wiped out.¹⁰¹ This was a belief that the hostility displayed toward Israel in the Arab world was not an ineluctable destiny to which

⁹⁹ See Shimon Peres's Lecture, “The Arms Program for the Year 1955-56,” 19 June 1955, File #30, Batch #101042, 1965, IDF Archives. See also “Shimon Peres, Deputy Defense Minister: The Missile Race Began Before ‘Shavit 2’,” *Ma'ariv*, 27 July 1962.

¹⁰⁰ See “Goldmann: Israel must demand a demilitarized region; Peres: Only the strengthening of the IDF will prevent war,” *Hamishmar*, 23 April 1963; Naphtali Lavie, “Dr. Goldmann demands Israeli campaign to demilitarize region; Shimon Peres: Needed is a military deterrent force,” *Haaretz*, 23 April 1963.

¹⁰¹ Interview with former Ben-Gurion aide and veteran journalist Elkana Galli, 5 July 2001, Tel Aviv.

Israel had to be subjected eternally. Israel, Ben-Gurion believed, had the ability to help shape the future of Arab-Israeli relations. Peres shared that belief, declaring:

I believe that we have the power to convince the Arabs that war is not only undesirable, but also unacceptable in terms of the chances of a military [victory]...From an Israeli perspective, it is important that we do three things: (a) to develop a scientific ability capable of convincing the Arabs that if they will want modern weapons, Israel will be able to neutralize this strength...(b) we must ensure that the next ten years will not feature any war...(c) we must also develop initiatives for peace everywhere and at every possible opportunity.¹⁰²

Peres was implying more here than merely a note of optimism for which he is famous – a characteristic that has long been attributed to him and which he accepts as an accurate reflection of his personality.¹⁰³ Peres may have rejected the Left’s talk of restraint and compromise, but, like his mentor, he also rejected the sense of determinism – even defeatism – that gripped supporters of the Right as well as members of his own party. Approaching the Arabs from a position of strength may indeed have been a widely held view, but revisionists and others doubted this would lead to Arab acceptance of Israel in their midst. They did not accept the view expressed by Peres that “it is possible to rid Nasser of his aggressive stance – to do so, Israel must be strong.”¹⁰⁴ Thus, from the perspective of Ben-Gurion and Peres, Israel had the ability to take steps that would influence Arab attitudes in a positive direction.

To do so, Israel would need to enhance its military strength in terms of both conventional and unconventional weaponry. It is the latter that Peres had in mind when he spoke of the need to develop a scientific capability of deterring Israel’s

¹⁰² Peres Speech, “A Day that is Close and a Day that is Far Away,” 19 July 1966, File #5-008-1965-56, Labor Party Archive.

¹⁰³ Interview with Shimon Peres, 3 November 2006, Tel Aviv.

¹⁰⁴ Shimon Peres’s lecture to senior defense ministry officials on his trip abroad, 30 April 1956, File #37, Batch #101042, 1965, IDF Archives.

enemies. Peres shared Ben-Gurion's faith in the power of science and technology to alter the course of human events. Ben-Gurion had always been attracted to science and, in particular, the idea of nuclear power, seeing in it a potentially useful alternative to oil and coal with regard to producing electricity and, more generally, a way to catapult Israel into an advanced industrial state (Peres 1995: 115-116; Shlaim 2001: 175-176). Before Israel could even consider going nuclear, however, it would need to find a reliable source for conventional arms.

The French Connection

In the 1950s, the U.S. embargo on arms sales to the Middle East had prevented Israel from acquiring much-needed arms for its defense. The embargo began on 5 December 1947, and was reinforced by the Tripartite Declaration of 25 May 1950, whereby the United States, Great Britain, and France committed themselves to maintain an arms balance in the region. The western powers agreed not to supply weapons to states harboring aggressive designs. In effect, Israel was denied arms while Arab countries continued to receive them due to previous commitments or understandings. Under the Anglo-Jordanian Treaty, Jordan continued to receive weapons and training from Great Britain; a treaty between the United States and Saudi Arabia served as the basis for continued arms sales to the Saudis; and Egypt was able to continue purchasing arms from France and Italy (Peres 1970: 34). Israel, however, was not included in any treaty and was thus left without a major arms supplier in its formative years. During the 1948 War (the War of Independence), Israel was able to purchase modest quantities of relatively outdated – including damaged – armaments from a small number of countries. For example,

Czechoslovakia provided Israel with rifles, *Messerschmitts* (German World War II planes), and heavy machine-guns (Peres 1970: 33, 39). But the small quantities of these largely obsolete weapons left Israel vulnerable.

That Israel stood virtually alone in defending itself was an important factor in Peres's reluctance to endorse the dovish calls for peace. At that time, the United States was not the close ally of Israel that it is today, and Great Britain was practically hostile. Peres feared that peace talks would invariably entail Western pressure on Israel to surrender its vital interests to the Arabs:

We are saying that we are ready to conduct negotiations for peace with the Arabs. We are not willing to conduct negotiations for peace with the Arabs, with the British and with the Americans. Because either before or after we will agree to conduct negotiations with the Arabs, we will find ourselves with the Arabs plus the British plus the Americans, etc. It is difficult for us to stand up to the Arabs, it will be even more difficult to stand up to Arabs getting advice and guidance from other nations.¹⁰⁵

Fearing the possibility that a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict might be imposed upon Israel by other countries, Peres was adamant that Israel pursue peace only from a position of strength. Israel would need to find a way to circumvent the arms embargo in order to overcome the growing disparity of arms. For Ben-Gurion, modernizing the Israeli army in preparation for the "next round" of conflict was of the highest priority. To this end, he argued that Israel would need to obtain the backing of at least one major power that could supply it with a steady stream of quality weapons (Golani 1998: 7; Karpin 2006: 64).

Peres had witnessed first-hand the consequences of the embargo. In January 1950, Ben-Gurion sent him to the United States to head the Israeli purchasing mission. Tasked with obtaining arms, Peres found a way to clandestinely purchase

¹⁰⁵ Shimon Peres's lecture in Yifat, 8 September 1955, File #10, Batch #101042, 1965, IDF Archives; see also Peres's article in the kibbutz journal *Niv Hakvutza*, October 1956.

surplus World War II equipment from various suppliers. The parts were then assembled in a small plant in Burbank, California, by its owner, Al Schwimmer, who repaired and built Mosquito aircraft – small, wooden bombers – for Israel (Golan 1989: 22-23). It was clear to Peres, however, that Israel would need to look elsewhere for a steadier supply of arms of both greater quality and quantity. A more practical way would have to be found, in other words, to bypass the arms embargo.

Peres looked to France as an alternative source of arms. His position was highly unpopular with the Israeli Foreign Ministry, which held an Anglo-Saxon orientation. Israel's Ambassador to the United States, Abba Eban, doggedly pursued formal diplomatic contacts with officials in the Eisenhower Administration (Bar-On 1995: 137). While the Israeli Foreign Ministry tried, in vain, to persuade the Americans to change their minds, Peres was adamant that France – not the United States – was the address to which Israel needed to turn. Writes Peres:

My personal experience of France in those days prompted my feeling that despite the refusals which Israel's requests had encountered and which had been properly noted by our own Foreign Ministry, there was still the chance of a change in French thinking which could lead to a change in attitude towards Israel (Peres 1970: 47).

To overcome the objections of the foreign ministry, he pushed hard to persuade his boss, Prime Minister and Defense Minister Ben-Gurion, of the futility of attempting to acquire armaments from the Americans and the wisdom of trying to do so from the French. Winning over Ben-Gurion on this matter proved to be a daunting challenge given the deep reservations he held regarding France. "Why did they surrender to the Nazis?" he would often ask (Peres 1995: 103). Ben-Gurion's diary and archival documents of Mapai Central Committee meetings demonstrate that, time and again, he would express private misgivings about Israel's relations with France

(Levey 1993: 204-207). Only reluctantly did he come around to accepting Peres's view that only from France would Israel be able to acquire the arms it needed. As Sylvia Crosbie notes, "It was largely because of Peres' insistence that Israel opted for French weapons rather than following the tortuous path of endless negotiations for American arms," as the Foreign Ministry preferred to do (Crosbie 1974: 45). Once he overcame his hesitation, Ben-Gurion gave Peres complete authority to pursue what would become known as the "French connection" (Crosbie 1974: 46; Golan 1989: 25-26, 32, 37; Peres 1970: 47, 61; Peres 1995: 103).

A confluence of mutual interests, historic events and recent political developments led Peres to be optimistic that France would agree to assist Israel. First, both Israel and France held bitter feelings toward Great Britain; the former from their experience in Palestine under the British Mandate, the latter due to Britain's support for Arab nationalist movements between 1943 and 1946, which undermined France's influence in Syria and Lebanon. Many French naval officers and bureaucrats admired the Israeli army, which had defeated both the Arabs and the British (Bar-Zohar 1964: 23; Crosbie 1974: 39; Sachar 1998: 77).

A second factor concerns not *realpolitik* but rather sentimentality on the part of a significant segment of France's population. Post-World-War II France was exceedingly self-conscious about its role during the war and, as a result, its leadership and the media tended to be sympathetic towards the Jews. Some of France's leading politicians in the 1950s had been involved in the Resistance during World War II;¹⁰⁶ others were prisoners in the very concentration camps that held Jews, a fact that

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Jean Frydman, 12 November 2006, Jaffa.

forged strong bonds between them (Bar-Zohar 1964: 21-22; Peres 1970: 44-45; Sachar 1998: 77-78). Peres writes:

It was natural that the people of post-war France, who had themselves tasted the bitterness of Nazi horror, should feel a kinship with the victims of Nazism who had suffered the greater losses, and should wish to help the pioneers of Israel create conditions in which another holocaust would never again be possible (Peres 1970: 44).

Elsewhere, Peres writes of a conversation he once had with French Defense Minister Bourges-Maunoury, in which the latter remarked that “sentiments play a great role, not only in human relations, but also in political relations. I can’t describe France without a deep feeling for the Jewish people and for Israel” (Peres 1990: 144).¹⁰⁷ These factors help to explain France’s decision to assist Israel immediately after Israel’s declaration of Independence on 15 May 1948. Although France did not recognize Israel until 21 May 1949, the Israeli Army received illegal shipments of weapons from France, and volunteers left French ports to assist the fledgling Jewish State (Bar-Zohar 1964: 28-30).

A third factor for establishing French-Israeli ties was shared economic interests: Peres was attracted to the idea that French planes were cheaper than equivalent American planes – assuming, of course, that a deal over American planes could even be worked out. For their part, the French military establishment sought to promote arms sales as a way to support its military industries and ease its balance of payments (Crosbie 1974: 40-41).

In addition to these factors, two developments in the mid-1950s further convinced Peres that Israel would be able to do business with France. The first was

¹⁰⁷ In an interview Peres gave to an Israeli newspaper in 1962, he characterized France’s relationship with Israel as one based on friendship, rather than mere interests. See “We Expect Developments that will Burden the Security Situation of the State,” *Davar*, 18 May 1962.

the 1955 Baghdad Pact, a mutual defense treaty initiated by the United States and NATO and signed by Great Britain, Turkey, Pakistan, Iran and Iraq. Aimed to keep the Soviet Union at bay, the pact pointedly excluded France due to its involvement in Indo-China's colonial wars. Israel, for its part, felt threatened by an agreement that would provide Iraq access to British and American military resources, thereby threatening the Middle East arms balance. For France, support for Israel was a way to enhance its role in regional and international developments; moreover, support for Israel was a means to stabilize the balance of power in the region (Crosbie 1974: 15, 46-48; Sachar 1998: 25-26, 79).

Above all, however, it was France's tensions with Egypt over Algeria that presented a golden opportunity for closer French-Israeli ties. The Algerian War of Independence began on 1 November 1954. Israel's sworn enemy, President Nasser of Egypt, openly supported the Algerian rebels while promoting his pan-Arabism movement, actions that served to undermine France's hold on Algeria. Nasser's support for the National Liberation Front (FLN) took the form of broadcasts from Radio Cairo, arms shipments, and military training of Algerians at al-Azhar (Crosbie 1974: 17, 58). In April 1955, he persuaded the participants at the Bandung Conference – the meeting of leaders from Africa and Asia representing nonaligned states – to adopt a resolution siding with the rebels (Golani 1998: 40). Under these circumstances, Peres believed that, by stressing their common interests, Israel had a unique opportunity to bring its relationship with France to a new level. At one point, Peres bluntly remarked that “every Frenchman killed in Algeria, like every Egyptian killed in the Gaza Strip, is a step toward strengthening the ties between France and

Israel” (Golan 1989: 31).¹⁰⁸ Indeed, in the years ahead, the Israelis eagerly shared their intelligence on Nasser’s involvement in the Algerian rebellion, often exaggerating his role in aiding the rebels (Golani 1998: 41, 44; Karpin 2006: 75; Levey 1993: 189). French General Augustine Guillaume would later aver that France’s decision to arm Israel in 1954 was taken as part of the struggle against Nasser and the Algerian rebels (Crosbie 1974: 46).

With Ben-Gurion’s blessing, Peres therefore embarked on a mission to establish a strategic alliance with France. Due largely to his efforts, France evolved throughout the 1950s into Israel’s first and most important ally.

A turning point in Israel’s relations with France came about in August 1954, when Peres arranged a visit to France for Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan. In Paris, Dayan met with Defense Minister Pierre Koenig and the heads of the French army, paving the way for arms shipments that included AMX-13 tanks, 75 mm. guns, radar equipment, and Ouragan jet fighter planes, which were superior to any Arab planes at the time (Bar-Zohar 1964: 61; Love 1969: 7, 139). While no formal alliance with France existed, France emerged as the one power on which Israel could count for building up its armed forces.

Peres faced numerous obstacles in his efforts to procure arms from the French. Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett aptly described France’s official approach toward Israel at the time as “cold and calculating” (Levey 1993: 185). It did not take long for Peres to conclude that France’s Fourth Republic was weak and highly

¹⁰⁸ According to Elkana Galli, the retired journalist who became acquainted with Peres as well as French officials during his stint in Paris, it was Peres who drew this connection between France’s Algeria problem and Israel’s problems with Nasser. It was this connection, according to Galli, that ultimately convinced Prime Minister Mollet that France stood to benefit from aiding the Israelis. See author’s interview with Elkana Galli.

unstable; cabinet crises were the norm. Indeed, in its twelve years of existence, 26 governments rose and fell. Thus, an agreement with one government did not guarantee that it would be kept by the one that replaced it. For example, towards the end of 1953, Peres reached an understanding with Paul Reynaud, a key figure in the government of Joseph Laniel. A few weeks later, however, the government fell. This episode, writes Peres, “showed us that direct contact with government leaders could be made and maintained through unofficial channels, and that when one got to meet them, one found that they were people one could talk to, even about delicate matters, and even bring them round to our point of view” (Peres 1970: 48).

In what emerged as a most unorthodox form of diplomacy, Peres took it upon himself to cultivate personal relationships with French politicians, bureaucrats, and military officials. He methodically met with key figures in the French leadership as well as the opposition leaders, senior as well as junior officials. He also met with unofficial, non-governmental contacts in parallel to his diplomatic efforts to expand his network of contacts in Paris (Bar-Zohar 1964: 65; Peres 1970: 48-49). After befriending an aide to the French Prime Minister, the aide arranged for Peres to work out of the Prime Minister’s office, which Peres proceeded to utilize for mailing letters and making phone calls (Bar-Zohar 1964: 92).¹⁰⁹ He left no stone unturned. During one campaign rally, for example, he conferred with General Pierre Billotte, the then-Defense Minister, inside his campaign sound truck (Love 1969: 144). On the eve of another election campaign, Peres insisted on meeting with Guy Mollet, the Socialist Party leader who was regarded as a long-shot by the Israeli Embassy in Paris. In their meeting, Mollet expressed strong support for Israel and spoke of his admiration for

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Jean Frydman.

the socialist society Jews had built there. Peres responded by reminding Mollet that Jews had suffered many disappointments from socialists, such as Ernest Bevin, the former Foreign Minister of Britain, once they reached power. Mollet went on to win the election. Once he assumed office, he invited the Israeli team in Paris to his official residence at the Hotel Matignon, and assured Peres and his colleagues that he will not be a Bevin (Peres 1970: 58-60). Indeed, not only did Mollet not become a Bevin, he proved to be among the most ardent supporters of Israel, providing backing to massive arms deals with the Jewish state.

Peres skillfully exploited the structural weaknesses of France's Fourth Republic in other ways as well. In his meetings with French officials, Peres observed major internal divisions and policy inconsistencies. The governments of the Fourth Republic tended to be fragmented and diffused in terms of their authority structure. Particularly evident was the wide chasm between the Quai d'Orsay (the French Foreign Ministry) and the Defense Ministry (Crosbie 1974: 35-37). The former sought to boost France's image in the Middle East by improving its relations with the Arab world; the latter tended to be staffed by officials who were sympathetic to Israel and who saw in Israel a useful ally in exerting French influence in the Middle East. Peres orchestrated direct contact between the French and Israeli defense ministries, bypassing the foreign ministries of both countries. "When you are struggling for your life it's not necessary to stick to formal diplomacy," Peres would later recall. "Every foreign office represents the prudence of its nation and prudence doesn't necessarily promote aid to Israel" (Love 1969: 138). Peres thus developed particularly close relations with a number of officials from the defense and interior ministries including

General Pierre Koenig, who served as Minister of Defense from June-August 1954, and again in 1955; Maurice Bourges-Maunoury, who held a number of key positions including Minister of Interior (February 1955-January 1956), Minister of Defense (February 1956-June 1957), and Prime Minister (June-November 1957); and Abel Thomas, the longtime senior aide to Bourges-Maunoury. In coordination with these officials, he and his French counterparts agreed to bypass the Quai d'Orsay and the Israeli Foreign Ministry in their secret dealings (Bar-On 1995: 164-167; Bar-Zohar 1964: 64; Crosbie 1974: 32, 35-41, 45-46; Karpin 2006: 57-58, 61, 77; Peres 1970: 61).

Peres's unorthodox methods proved effective in securing the arms deals, in contrast to the futile efforts of Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett and his successor, Golda Meir, both of whom tried to obtain the arms through conventional channels (i.e., between the two countries' foreign ministries). Motti Golani sums up the differences in outcome between Peres and Sharett, stating: "Sharett, the Foreign Minister (and ex-Prime Minister), could not deliver the goods, quite literally, whereas Peres could and did" (Golani 1998: 24).¹¹⁰

Indeed, Peres was conducting an independent foreign policy in Israel's behalf despite the fact that he was neither Prime Minister nor Foreign Minister. He was not

¹¹⁰ Sharett's diary contains a number of entries in which he expresses his frustration at not receiving any credit for the arms deals secured by Peres. For example, after Peres was congratulated by Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan for the successful conclusion of a deal involving the purchase of Mystere jets – an agreement reached between the two defense ministries – Sharett wrote that it was as if "Tzur [the Israeli Ambassador in France] had not lifted a finger and as if the whole great episode had not commenced with my meeting with Faure at the end of October [1955]" (Levey 1993: 198). Golda Meir was even more vociferous than Sharett in criticizing Peres's methods. Time and again, she would accuse him of conducting his own foreign policy, leaving her in the dark about his arms purchases, thereby undermining her authority as Foreign Minister (Crosbie 1974: 46; Golan 1989: 36, 84-86; Peres 1995: 98-101).

even a cabinet official or an elected member of the Knesset (Israel's parliament). Yet Ben-Gurion accepted Peres's rationale that the acquisition of armaments from France would be doomed if the foreign ministry insisted on interfering in the negotiations over the arms deals. From the perspective of French defense officials, like Bourges-Maunoury and Able Thomas, it was imperative that these deals be conducted in secret (Golan 1989: 37). Peres relates that in their very first encounter, Thomas concluded the meeting by exhorting him to "keep away as far as possible from the diplomatic crowd – they don't make foreign policy, but policy that is foreign" (Peres 1970: 57). Relations between the various ministries in France during the Fourth Republic often bordered on animosity. Ben-Gurion typically defended Peres's clandestine activities, much to the chagrin of Foreign Ministry (and Finance Ministry) officials. While he preferred that Peres inform the Foreign Minister and the Israeli Embassy in Paris of his dealings, Ben-Gurion did not accept their demand that they be included in the decision-making process with the French. On 18 March 1956 he wrote the following to the Israeli embassy in Paris:

Some of the things between us and the French have been done, and will be done in the future, in an unorthodox manner, on occasion bypassing one minister or another, often the finance minister. For this reason, members of the French government choose to talk informally, on a one-to-one basis. I am sure that you value arms acquisition above ceremony, and if the French can waive protocol, so can you" (Golan 1989: 86).

In fact, at a meeting on 3 April 1956, after the Mystere jet deal was concluded, the Chief of Staff demanded that the Israeli Embassy in Paris be excluded entirely in future arms-related matters, a suggestion that was supported by Ben-Gurion (Levey 1993: 198).

The Egyptian-Czech arms deal, announced by Nasser on 27 September 1955, was a watershed event in the Middle East and served as a catalyst for Peres to intensify Israel's arms procurement from France. The deal included 100-150 MiG jet fighters of both the MiG-15 and MiG-17 varieties; 50 Il-28 (Ilyushin) bombers, which had the capacity to reach almost any point in Israel from the Sinai; 70 il-14 transport aircraft; anti-aircraft guns; training and liaison aircraft; 230 T-34 tanks, 200 armored personnel carriers (APCs) and 600 artillery pieces including Russian semi-automatic rifles, self-propelled guns, field howitzers, medium guns, and anti-tank guns; and, for the Egyptian Navy, destroyers; submarines; and torpedo boats (Golani 1998: 13).¹¹¹

The deal was a disaster for the western powers, as well as for Israel. For the former, it signified growing Soviet influence in the Middle East. Israel was deeply concerned because it shifted the arms balance dramatically in Egypt's favor. Egypt's arsenal would now be three times larger than that of Israel, while the 3-to-1 ratio that had existed between the Arab countries and Israel would now rise to 9-to-1 (Bar-On 1995: 15; Sachar 1998: 76). At least as significant as the quantitative disparity was the qualitative imbalance resulting from this deal. While the Egyptians were to get some of the best and the latest of Soviet arms, Israel's dated arsenal was, by comparison, dreadfully inadequate. Israel had no submarines and no tanks that could counter the T-34s, and the MiGs were far superior to Israel's Meteors and Ouragans (Bar-On 1995: 18; Golani 1998: 13).

¹¹¹ There is a discrepancy among historians concerning the precise numbers of each type of arms received by Egypt under this deal. For alternative lists of figures, see, for example, Mordechai Bar-On, *The Gates of Gaza: Israel's Road to Suez and Back, 1955-1957* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin: 1995): 16-17 and Howard M. Sachar, *Israel and Europe: An Appraisal in History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998): 75-76.

Under these circumstances, Israel's political echelon feared that their country faced real and imminent danger from a stronger, more confident enemy. Peres describes a "backs to the wall" feeling in Israel following Nasser's announcement (Peres 1970: 55). The Israelis perceived the immense arms deal to signify that Egypt was preparing to go to war with Israel. Moshe Dayan would later write:

It was clear to us in Israel that the primary purpose of this massive Egyptian rearmament was to prepare Egypt for a decisive confrontation with Israel in the near future. The Egyptian blockade, her planning and direction of mounting Palestinian guerrilla activity against Israel, Nasser's own declarations, and now the Czech arms deal left no doubt in our minds that Egypt's purpose was to wipe us out, or at least win a decisive military victory which would leave us in helpless subjugation (Dayan 1976: 225).

In the wake of the Czech arms deal, Israel's "inner staff" – Ben-Gurion, Dayan, and Peres – began preparing for a war with Egypt (Bar-On 1995: 1-81; Golani 1998: 5, 14-20). Ben-Gurion made it clear to his colleagues that he saw the subject of arms as the "main problem" and insisted that "all efforts [be] concentrated on this" (Golani 1998: 23-24). Accordingly, Peres redoubled his arms procurement efforts. Over the next year, he would purchase an assortment of armaments: light tanks, artillery, Sherman tanks, cannons, and, most importantly, the Mysteres (Mark IV). The latter was a critical acquisition for Israel, which needed to upgrade its Air Force in light of the Czech MiG sales to Egypt. After numerous delays, the planes finally arrived in Israel on 11 April 1956.

The Sinai Campaign

Relations between Israel and France reached a new level in the summer of 1956. Peres had suggested to Bourges-Maunoury that France sell Israel large numbers of tanks and artillery pieces, and additional Mysteres, which would be disguised as old ones returning from repair in France (Bar-On 1995: 167). Bourges-Maunoury was

open to this idea, particularly since he was seeking a client for French arms in order to help balance his country's defense budget. Peres thus initiated a conference with senior Israeli and French defense and intelligence officials so that his idea could be implemented. The participants met secretly in Vermars, outside Paris, on 22 June 1956, without the knowledge of the two countries' foreign ministries. During the conference proceedings, Peres linked Israel's concerns about Nasser to France's Algeria problem, a strategy that led to an agreement on the need to work together to topple Nasser (Golani 1998: 27, 184). In addition, the two sides discussed Peres's idea of a large-scale arms procurement deal. Peres presented a long list of requests that included 72 Mystere jet fighters, 200 AMX tanks, 10,000 antitank missiles, and large quantities of ammunition. The French agreed to sell every one of the items and commence their first delivery by July; the final one would take place in September (Bar-On 1995: 172; Golan 1989: 39; Golani 1998: 28; and Peres 1995: 105). The colossal deliveries over the following months would be referred to, in jest, as the "French invasion" of Israel. The Vermars conference represented an important watershed in Israel's relations with France. The unsigned pact signified an alliance between the two countries: Intelligence concerning Nasser's activities would be shared, and the two countries would work together to thwart his initiatives. This agreement set the stage for the Sinai Campaign that would follow shortly thereafter. As to the so-called "French invasion," it would help to redress the arms imbalance in the region, particularly in light of the Czech arms deal. As Bar-On states, "The Vermars arms transaction changed Israel's military capability overnight" (Bar-On 1995: 170).

A month later, on 26 July 1956, Nasser announced Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal, providing Israel, France, and Britain with a pretext for war. For the Israelis, the blockade of the Straits of Tiran was unacceptable, as it restricted their shipping. Ben-Gurion had long regarded this potential act as a *casus belli*. Moreover, he feared that Nasser, who less than a year earlier concluded the arms deal with Czechoslovakia, was preparing for war with Israel and thus needed to be deterred. For Britain, the nationalization of the Suez Canal was a further erosion of its once-prominent position in the Middle East. The French were also eager to stop Nasser, who was undermining their presence in Algeria. For the French, therefore, failure in the Suez was tantamount to failure in Algeria (Golani 1998: 39).

The day after Nasser's big announcement, French Defense Minister Bourges-Maunoury called Peres in for consultations. France and Britain had been discussing a plan of joint action against Nasser – code-named “Operation Musketeer” – in which Israel, upon Britain's insistence, was to be excluded. (The United States opposed military action.) When the Israeli visitor arrived, Bourges-Maunoury, disregarding British objections, asked Peres how long it would take the IDF to cross the Sinai Peninsula and reach the canal. “In two weeks,” was Peres's reply (Peres 1995: 106). Bourges-Maunoury then asked if Israel would be willing to cross the Sinai in a tripartite military operation, to which Peres responded affirmatively. When Yossef Nahmias, the Israeli Defense Ministry's representative in Paris, afterwards admonished Peres for lacking authority to promise Israel's participation in such an

adventure, Peres replied that he would rather risk his neck than risk missing such a unique opportunity (Golan 1989: 42-43; Peres 1995: 107).¹¹²

At the behest of Peres, Prime Minister Ben-Gurion agreed to explore the possibility of French-Israeli military action against Nasser's Egypt. The formal talks concerning Israel's role in such a joint operation took place on 30 September in St. Germain. Israel's delegation consisted of Prime Minister Ben-Gurion, Foreign Minister Golda Meir (who had recently replaced Moshe Sharett), Transportation Minister Moshe Carmel, Moshe Dayan, and Shimon Peres. Prior to departing to France, Meir had expressed serious doubts about Peres's claims of French interest in a French-Israeli military alliance vis-à-vis Egypt. That Prime Minister Mollet backed out of the conference at the last minute only deepened her suspicions that Peres had sold Ben-Gurion a bill of goods (Peres 1995: 98).¹¹³ The conference concluded with a decision to send a French military delegation, headed by Gen. Maurice Challe, to Israel to evaluate the military options (Bar-On 1995: 198). It was this visit that led the French to propose to Britain that Israel be included in the much-discussed operation against Nasser, a plan that would materialize at the Sevres conference (Bar-On 1995: 223).

The secret tripartite talks at Sevres, an affluent suburb of Paris, convened on 22 October. The three days of talks were fraught with tension – particularly between the Israeli delegation and British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd. In the end, though, the participants agreed on a joint plan of action. Short of the full-scale war that Britain had initially demanded, it was agreed that Israel would attack the Egyptian

¹¹² See also interview with Yossef Hahmias, 18 October 2006, Tzhala.

¹¹³ To mollify her concerns, Peres hastened to arrange a private meeting between Meir and Mollet.

army near the Suez Canal, an action that would appear to threaten the canal. This event would serve, in turn, as the pretext for an Anglo-French military intervention. The written agreement even included a paragraph assuring the Israelis that they could retain the captured Straits of Tiran, thus ensuring freedom of navigation to Eilat (Bar-On 1995: 242). Ben-Gurion had made it clear to his French and British counterparts that “Israel’s Suez Canal is the Straits of Tiran” (Golani 1998: 133).

Throughout the Sevres conference, it was far from clear to any of the participants – including the Israelis – whether Ben-Gurion would actually sign on to the proposed tripartite war. According to Bar-On, he ultimately lent his support to the “collusion” at Sevres due to four factors: (1) The future of French-Israeli ties would be hinged by his fateful decision; (2) France and Britain agreed to a limited Israeli attack rather than a full-fledged war, a fact that cut down the number of potential casualties while limiting the political damage to Israel for its act of aggression; (3) Britain’s signature would serve as insurance against potential duplicity; and (4) a military pact with great powers would lessen international pressure on Israel (Bar-On 1995: 246-247).

To these factors must be added one other critical element: the relentless pressure on, and manipulation of, Ben-Gurion by his protégés, Peres and Dayan. In the weeks preceding the Sevres conference, Dayan and Peres had fervently lobbied their mentor to participate in a joint French-Israeli military venture against Egypt. As Motti Golani demonstrates in *Israel in Search of a War*, Dayan and Peres viewed a preemptive war as necessary to forestall the existential threat represented by Nasser. They – and ultimately Ben-Gurion – were convinced that it was only a matter of time

before Egypt would be strong enough to attack Israel again. To Dayan and Peres, it was crucial that the opportunity to collude with France (and, by extension, Britain) not be missed. That Ben-Gurion had not yet given a green light to such a scheme did not prevent Peres from expressing his enthusiasm for it to his French interlocutors at various junctures in June and July (Golani 1998: 65). The gaps between Britain and Israel were overcome to a large degree by creative ideas put forth by Dayan and Peres. Their bridging proposals included, for example, reducing the time interval between an Israeli operation near the Suez Canal until the start of the Anglo-French operation (Golani 1998: 122-123). Above all, though, it was the alliance that Peres and his team had been building with France since 1953, and the personal relationships with top French officials, that persuaded Ben-Gurion that Israel had the support of a major power to go to war with Egypt.¹¹⁴ In his memoirs, Peres writes of the “wave of relief” that washed over Dayan and himself when it became clear to them in the course of the negotiations that Ben-Gurion would support the war (Peres 1995: 112).¹¹⁵

The Sinai Campaign began on 29 October with the IDF drop of paratroopers near the Mitla Pass. As planned, Britain and France then issued their joint ultimatum for both sides to withdraw from the Canal zone. Egypt, as predicted, refused to do so,

¹¹⁴ According to Golani, at one point during the Sevres conference, Ben-Gurion concluded he could not accept the French-British proposal, and he thus prepared to head back to Israel. Peres then conspired with Colonel Louis Mangin, an aide to Defense Minister Bourges-Maunoury, to fabricate a mechanical problem with the presidential DC-4 plane put at the disposal of the Israeli delegation; they informed Ben-Gurion that, due to this mechanical problem with the plane, he would not be able to leave before the 25th (Golani 1998:121).

¹¹⁵ Isser Harel, the then-Director of the Mossad, Israel’s secret intelligence agency, would later accuse Peres of “maneuvering Ben-Gurion, misleading him, and endangering the state in an international intrigue” (Karpin 2006: 75). According to Shulamit Aloni, Peres indeed played an important role in convincing Ben-Gurion of the need to go to war with Egypt. See author’s interview with Shulamit Aloni, 1 November 2006, Kfar Shmaryahu.

providing the British and French with the pretext to invade Egypt and gain control over the Canal zone. American and Soviet demands – including threatening messages to Britain, France, and Israel from Soviet Prime Minister Nikolai Bulganin – led to a cease-fire on 6 November (Bar-On 1995: 268; Golani 1998: 191). By March 1957, in response to overwhelming international pressure, including threats of sanctions by President Eisenhower, Israel concluded its withdrawal from the Sinai.

Historians generally view both Egypt and Israel as victors in this war.¹¹⁶ Nasser not only survived, but his prestige in the Arab world (and among non-aligned states more generally) rose considerably. Israel scored an impressive military achievement by successfully capturing the Sinai peninsula, although it was forced to relinquish this territory. The success of the military campaign boosted the morale of the IDF. Israel reaped other important benefits as well: the removal of the British threat, a decade of peace – including tranquility from terrorist (*Fedayeen*) raids from Gaza – freedom of navigation in the Straits of Tiran, and a strengthened alliance with France. The latter was a topic that received a significant amount of attention in the Israeli press in the months – even years – following the Sinai Campaign.¹¹⁷ The

¹¹⁶ By contrast, the Sinai War was, by all accounts, a disaster for Britain and France. They failed in their objectives to remove Nasser from power, to retain control of the Suez Canal, and to remain great powers with influence in the region. The war, furthermore, was widely criticized both domestically and internationally, generating a rift with NATO. It was so unpopular in Great Britain, that Prime Minister Eden was forced to resign. For France, it was a major blow to its hold on North Africa. Historian Avi Shlaim sums up the international damage done to Britain and France as a result of the war: “The Suez War undermined the cohesion of the Western alliance, caused the collapse of British and French influence in the Middle East, and paved the way to further Soviet advances in the region” (Shlaim 2001: 186).

¹¹⁷ See “Israel-French Alliance,” *Haaretz*, 7 December 1956; Uri Dan, “The First Arms Deal with the French,” *Ma’ariv*, 29 October 1957; “Peres: French Aid is Promised in the Event of Sanctions,” *Davar*, 8 February 1957; Shimon Peres, “Present and Future in Franco-Israel Relations,” *The Jerusalem Post*, 12 June 1957; Edwin Eitan and Yishayahu Ben-Porat, “Informal Alliance with Important Consequences was Established Yesterday between France and Israel,” *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 7 June 1961; “France to Provide Essential Needs of Israel’ – Opinion of Observers in Paris,” *Haaretz*, 8 June 1961.

closeness of Israeli-French relations was the most important achievement of all, because it facilitated Israel's acquisition of a nuclear reactor from France.

Several months following the Sinai Campaign, Elkana Galli, the Ben-Gurion aide-turned-correspondent for the Israeli paper *Davar* in Paris, published a piece entitled "A Song of Praise to One Man." In his article, Galli credited a certain man "in a blue suit" who operated in an unconventional manner, differing in style from the traditional diplomat. Thanks to his unique approach, wrote Galli, French-Israeli relations reached their peak during the Sinai Campaign.¹¹⁸ This anonymous individual was, of course, Shimon Peres. Fifty years later, Galli elaborated on this approach. At one point, Galli recalls, he asked Prime Minister Mollet why he responded to Peres's request for arms, but not to repeated entreaties of the Israeli Ambassador to France, Ya'acov Tzur. Mollet responded that when the Israeli Ambassador visited him, he based his request on Israel's precarious situation in a region surrounded by enemies who wished to do it harm. By contrast, Peres spoke of mutual interests: by arming Israel, Peres argued, Israel would be able to assist France in its efforts against a common enemy (Nasser). Thus, whereas Tzur asked for help, as a beggar asks for charity, Peres proposed a partnership. And that was what ultimately led to the French-Israeli alliance that was formed during Mollet's premiership.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Elkana Galli, "A Song of Praise to One Man," *Davar*, 18 January 1957.

¹¹⁹ Interview with Elkana Galli, 5 July 2001. Peres's longtime French friend Jean Frydman, who was well acquainted with the French leadership in the 1950s, was also witness to the impression Peres made on these officials. "They looked at him with big eyes, listening to the professor," recalls Frydman. See author's interview with Jean Frydman. Galli's and Frydman's accounts are consistent with other accounts of Peres winning over his interlocutors by focusing on interests, rather than sentiment. When Peres met with U.S. President John Kennedy in April 1963, Kennedy was reportedly impressed with Peres's practical approach. According to one report, Peres's "analysis of the Middle East situation was logical and based on facts without sentiment, and without any attempt to speak in the name of justice and the human conscience," as had happened at a previous meeting between Golda

The Dimona Project

David Ben-Gurion had long been convinced that science could provide Israel with the ultimate weapon that would guarantee its security (Cohen 1998: 11-13, 42-43; Karpin 2006: 33, 95; Peres 1995).¹²⁰ Ben-Gurion and his protégé, Shimon Peres, believed that, given the numerical superiority of the Arabs and the high costs of purchasing conventional arms, Israel would not be able to keep up with the conventional arms race indefinitely (Cohen 1998: 236-237; Shlaim 2001: 205). Moreover, that neither the United States nor France was willing to give Israel a security guarantee only reinforced their idea that Israel's security based on conventional means alone could not be assured in the long run (Yaniv 1987: 81). It was imperative, therefore, that Israel arm itself with a nuclear deterrent, which would serve as a "great equalizer" and the ultimate security guarantee (Feldman 1997: 95-96; Yaniv 1987: 81).

Meir and Kennedy. See "The Americans are pleased with the Kennedy-Peres conversation," *Hatzofe*, 12 April 1963.

¹²⁰ Israel's decision to become a nuclear power must be seen in the context of Ben-Gurion's preoccupation – even obsession – with national security, which was shaped, in turn, by the trauma of the Holocaust (Cohen 1998: 10; Karpin 2006: 28, 34). He was determined never to allow Jews to be threatened with annihilation again. The violent deaths of Jews and Arabs in Palestine resulting from the 1929 Disturbances and the Arab Revolt of 1936 likewise would haunt him years later (Karpin 2006: 20). These experiences convinced Ben-Gurion that Jews would have to be self-sufficient. They could not, he believed, allow their survival to be placed in the hands of any other nation or government. "The future of Israel was not dependent on what the gentiles would say," he insisted, "but on what the Jews would do" (Cohen 1998: 43). Years later, when Ben-Gurion witnessed the United States disregarding its defense pact with Britain and France following the Sinai Campaign, his worldview – states are essentially selfish actors that pursue their own interests – became more deeply entrenched. Israel would have to look out for its own interests rather than count on assurances from others, he concluded, just as Britain and France were unable to rely on U.S. commitments (Shalom 2005: 4-5). The days of Jewish vulnerability were supposed to have been over with the establishment of a Jewish state. Yet, with the constant threat of destruction by Israel's Arab neighbors, this was far from being the case. Ben-Gurion was very concerned about the potential formation of a pan-Arab war coalition against Israel, a coalition that would attempt to defeat "the Zionist entity." He is said to have once told an aide, "I could not sleep at night, not even one second. I had one fear in my heart: a combined attack by all the Arab armies" (Shlaim 2001: 205). He was particularly concerned about perpetually hostile Arab official attitudes and declared policies (Aronson 1978: 43). Feeding such fears, Gamal Abdul Nasser, the president of Egypt, the most powerful Arab country, made repeated public threats to destroy Israel (Aronson 1992: 92).

Ben-Gurion therefore took the decision to give Israel an atomic bomb in 1955, following his return to government as Minister of Defense after his brief retirement in the kibbutz of Sde Boker.¹²¹ He placed Peres in charge of the entire nuclear project, a role Peres fulfilled from its inception in 1955-56 until his departure from the Ministry of Defense following the breakup of Mapai and the formation of Ben-Gurion's Rafi faction in 1965 (Cohen 1998: 18; Peres 1995: 117). Cohen writes:

From the time the program was set up, built on a number of interrelated but independent projects, real authority for the program had been closely held in Peres's hands. Accepted as Ben-Gurion's long-time and trusted executor, Peres's authority was accepted by all the leaders of the bureaucracy involved. Peres personally selected the leaders of the bureaucracies involved (Cohen 1998: 225).

A key challenge for Peres's mission was that the United States was even less eager to supply Israel with a powerful nuclear reactor than it was with conventional weaponry. In 1955, when Ernst David Bergmann, the head of the Israel Atomic Energy Commission, met with his American counterpart, Admiral Lewis Strauss, he requested "something like a real reactor." Strauss reportedly responded, "You could not do anything that would provide you even the slightest quantities of plutonium" (Cohen 1998: 45). It could not have been clearer to Peres, therefore, that it would be useless to attempt to persuade the Eisenhower administration to provide Israel with the technology it needed for building a "real reactor" (as opposed to the small research reactor it agreed to build for Israel).

¹²¹ Ben-Gurion established the Israel Atomic Energy Commission on 13 June 1952. Shortly thereafter, centers for nuclear research were established at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Weizmann Institute (Evron 1994: 2). Under President Eisenhower's Atoms-for-Peace program, the United States and Israel signed a nuclear cooperation agreement on 12 July 1955, whereby the United States supplied Israel with a small research reactor, located in *Nahal Soreq*, the purpose of which would be to train scientists and produce radioactive isotopes for medicinal and industrial use (Cohen 1998: 44; Karpin 2006: 53; Spector 1984: 118).

Peres believed that only the French would be likely to assist Israel in its efforts to build a significant nuclear reactor. As with procuring ordinary arms, Ben-Gurion gave Peres complete backing to utilize his French contacts for this purpose. Indeed, it was Peres's French connection that would enable him to transform Ben-Gurion's nuclear vision into reality. Historian Avner Cohen writes:

Of Peres's many indispensable contributions to making Israel a nuclear power, none is more important than his forming and cementing the nuclear relationship between France and Israel. More than any other Israeli decision maker, Peres grasped that a unique opportunity emerged for such cooperation. In the face of stiff opposition and bitter criticism, he proceeded, indefatigably and single-mindedly to exploit this opportunity. Peres was the architect of the Franco-Israeli alliance that made the Dimona deal possible (Cohen 1998: 19).

Peres's initial attempts to buy a nuclear reactor from France were met with hesitation on the part of the French, who were engaged in internal debates about their own nuclear future (Cohen 1998: 53; Pean 1982: 57-76; Pinkus 2002: 106-109). Yet just as Peres was determined to persuade the French that selling sophisticated conventional arms to Israel would be mutually advantageous, he was prepared to make every effort to persuade them that nuclear cooperation, as well, would serve the interests of both countries. Several factors led him to be optimistic in this regard. First, it would be in the best interest of France to secure an international client for their fledgling nuclear industry (Cohen 1998: 54; Peres 1995: 118). Second, France could benefit from the expertise of international nuclear experts, many of who were Jewish and sympathetic to Israel (Pean 1982: 64-67; Pinkus 2002: 110-111, 121). There was evidence, for example, that Edward Teller had spent considerable time consulting with Israeli scientists, and that he and Robert Oppenheimer met with Ben-Gurion in Tel Aviv in 1952 and convinced him that Israel could succeed in its efforts to become a nuclear power (Karpin 2006: 289-290). French officials, moreover,

expressed eagerness to tap into the knowledge of these Jewish scientists (Pinkus 2002: 121). Third, Israel itself had world-class scientists who had the potential to contribute to France's nuclear efforts. One such scientist, Israel Dostrovsky, who later became the Director-General of the Israel Atomic Energy Commission, led a team in the early 1950s that discovered a new, cheap method of producing heavy water, which is a critical component in the operation of a nuclear reactor. Dostrovsky's discovery, in fact, would come in handy in convincing the French to engage in nuclear cooperation with the Israelis, as revealed later by Bertrand Goldschmidt, a French scientist who played a major role in the two countries' nuclear cooperation (Peres 1995: 116; Pinkus 2002: 116). Fourth, and perhaps the most important factor in securing French nuclear cooperation, was the intelligence concerning Nasser's activities in the region that Israel was prepared to share with the French (Cohen 1998: 53; Golan 1989: 38; Pean 1982: 31). Israel could thus serve as a useful ally to France as it struggled to deal with the volatile situation in Algeria.

As far as Peres was concerned, the Suez crisis provided Israel with a golden opportunity to secure the long-sought nuclear deal. France, after all, needed Israel's assistance in overthrowing Egypt's Nasser. On 17 September 1956, Peres initiated an agreement between the French Atomic Energy Commission (CEA) and the Israel Atomic Energy Commission (IAEC) on the sale to Israel of a small research reactor to be located at Rishon Le-Zion, a city south of Tel Aviv (Cohen 1998: 54). There is credible evidence to suggest that during the Suez crisis, Peres held talks with Defense Minister Bourges-Maunoury concerning the sale of a much larger reactor, one

capable of producing nuclear weapons.¹²² But it was at the conclusion of the Sevres conference, with the key French and Israeli decision-makers in the room (following the departure of the British officials) – that Peres put forward the request for French assistance in building the large-scale reactor in Israel. According to Dayan’s secretary, who was present in the room at the time, Peres’s suggestion was followed by a handshake between Ben-Gurion and Prime Minister Mollet, signifying an agreement in principle.¹²³ Following the Sevres conference, on 26 October, it was decided in an inner French cabinet meeting to instruct France’s Atomic Energy Commission to enable Israel to attain nuclear capability (Pinkus 2002: 120-121).¹²⁴

To be sure, the nuclear agreement that Peres secured at Sevres was not a condition for Ben-Gurion to lend his agreement to the joint operation against Egypt’s Nasser. As Avner Cohen points out, it would have been insufficient to persuade Ben-Gurion to allow Israel to participate in the French-inspired operation. After all, destroying Nasser’s authority was the primary objective (Cohen 1998: 54). “There were enough good reasons for Ben-Gurion to agree to go to war,” according to Mordechai Bar-On, who was present at the Sevres conference. “We needed the Mysteres [jet fighters]...we believed that the war would bring about a change of government in Egypt.”¹²⁵ The French Prime Minister’s positive response to Israel’s

¹²² Historians disagree on precisely when these talks took place. Avner Cohen (1998) argues that these conversations took place in the June 1956 Vermaars Conference, whereas Binyamin Pinkus claims these discussions were more likely to have taken place during the St. Germaine Conference (See Cohen 1998: 53; Pinkus 2002: 118-120).

¹²³ Interview with Mordechai Bar-On, 16 October 2006, Jerusalem.

¹²⁴ Saint Gobain Nucleaire was to be the designated French company that would build an underground chemical plant attached to the reactor, which was to be established in Dimona.

¹²⁵ Interview with Mordechai Bar-On.

nuclear entreaty ought to be seen, therefore, as a major sweetener (rather than a condition) to the Suez agreement.¹²⁶

As chief administrator of the nuclear project, Peres appointed a three-man planning committee, headed by physicist Amos de Shalit, with Ze'ev (Venia) Hadari Pomerantz and Zvi Lipkin (also physicists) as members. He put Colonel Manes Pratt, an engineer by training who had been Ordnance Corps Chief, and who served in 1956 as Israel's military attaché in Burma, in charge of building the reactor (Cohen 1998: 68). Pratt reported only to Ben-Gurion and Peres.

The domestic opposition Peres met concerning the expense of the Dimona project forced him to seek outside financial assistance to help cover the cost of the reactor, which indeed took up a disproportionate amount of the defense budget.¹²⁷ At

¹²⁶ In the midst of the Sinai campaign, Mollet reportedly told his Chief of Staff, General Eli, "I owe them [the Israelis] the bomb" (Pean 1982: 84).

¹²⁷ Ben-Gurion and Peres were practically alone among the relatively small cadre of Israeli officials who were included in discussions about the establishment of a nuclear program. Their enthusiasm on this matter was met with a great deal of skepticism at home. Leading scientists argued that the costs of building the nuclear reactor were prohibitive. Some questioned whether it would be possible to keep the project secret for an extended period; others believed that the notion that a small country like Israel could build a reactor powerful enough to produce plutonium was a "fantasy" (Cohen 1998: 63; Karpin 2006: 48, 55, 79). In 1957, the disenchantment with the nuclear program would even lead to the resignation of all the members of the Israeli Atomic Energy Commission (IAEC), save for its chairman, Ernst David Bergmann (Shlaim 2001: 205). Two of these scientists later joined the "Committee for the Nuclear Demilitarization of the Middle East" (Evron 1994: 8). Most political figures questioned the validity of the project as well. Detractors included Pinhas Sapir and Abba Eban, who described the reactor as "an enormous alligator stranded on dry land" (Peres 1995: 119). David Hacohen, a leading figure in the governing Mapai, predicted that the nuclear program would be "so expensive that we shall be left without bread and even without rice" (Ibid.). Finance Minister Levi Eshkol, who would later succeed Ben-Gurion as Prime Minister, taking over the reigns of the nuclear program, thought the idea of a nuclear reactor was madness, both in itself and because of the enormous financial cost (Golan 1989: 43). Foreign Minister Golda Meir and *Ahdut Ha'avodah* leaders Yisrael Galili and Yigal Allon were also opposed to the program. Galili warned that nuclear armament would increase the motivation of a first-strike, as well as accelerate the regional arms race (Evron 1994: 6-7). These leading politicians were proponents of the traditional doctrine of conventional deterrence, rejecting the idea that the Arabs would one day overtake Israel in the technological and nuclear spheres (Shlaim 2001: 207). Even Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan, an ally of Peres and an otherwise enthusiastic supporter of the French connection, held serious doubts about the prospects of Israel becoming a nuclear power (Karpin 2006: 79). Only in the mid-1960s did he grow to appreciate its importance in Israel's deterrent strategy (Karpin 2006: 126).

the end of 1958, Peres began a secret fundraising campaign, which lasted for two years (Karpin 2006: 136). Writes Peres: “We set up a discreet fund-raising operation, which raised contributions totaling more than \$40 million – half the cost of the reactor and a very considerable sum in those days. Most of this money came from direct personal appeals by Ben-Gurion and myself to friends of Israel around the world” (Peres 1995: 119). Avner Cohen aptly sums up Peres’s role in managing the Dimona project. Peres, he writes, was “an improvising politician...with the gift of finding and exploiting opportunities. He was able to get the materials, technical experts, and funding needed for the project. Everything depended on him” (Cohen 1998: 69).

In addition to hiring some of the country’s top experts and having to raise exorbitant amounts of money, Peres also had to confront numerous political and bureaucratic obstacles that threatened to destroy the nuclear project. During the first half of 1957, the French appeared to have had second thoughts about their commitment to supply Israel with the technology needed for the construction of the reactor (Pinkus 2002: 124-125). In September 1957, following months of negotiations, Peres, to allay growing French concerns about the deal, pledged that the proposed 24-megawatt reactor would be utilized merely for “scientific research.” Only after promising Foreign Minister Christian Pineau that Israel’s intent was peaceful, and that Israel would consult with France on any international action concerning Dimona, did Pineau agree to pursue nuclear cooperation with Israel (Golan 1989: 53; Karpin 2006: 90). However, Pineau informed Peres that the government of Bourges-Maunoury was in the midst of a crisis, which could

jeopardize any new agreement reached with the Israelis. With Pineau's consent, Peres drove to the parliament building, where Bourges-Maunoury was fighting for his government's survival. Upon Peres's arrival, Bourges-Maunoury excused himself from his intra-governmental deliberations to meet with Peres. In their brief encounter, Peres made sure that Bourges-Maunoury obtained from his cabinet a formal decision to confirm the agreement, for that night the French National Assembly voted to topple the Bourges-Maunoury government. Unrelenting, the following day, Peres met with Bourges-Maunoury again and convinced him to sign the agreement but predate it to the previous day (3 October 1957) so as to assure that the government's fall would not invalidate the agreement (Golan 1989: 53-54; Pinkus 2002: 128-129). The agreement entailed France providing Israel with a large nuclear reactor, enriched uranium and a plant for the extraction of plutonium (Karpin 2006: 91, 109). French investigative journalist Pierre Pean describes the unconventional manner in which Peres operated in France:

At the heart of the ruling force in the Fourth Republic stands the pro-Israel lobby that Shimon Peres has successfully coalesced. The lobby's meetings have become official government sessions. The conspiracy has been transformed into secret meetings of state. The governmental machinery of the two countries seems to have merged. When a problem arises, the Israelis have no qualms about disturbing Bourges-Maunoury [even] in the midst of government sessions (Pean 1982: 89).¹²⁸

Historian Howard M. Sachar characterizes Bourges-Maunoury's commitment as "unprecedented, for it was undertaken three years before France detonated its own atomic bomb, and it was made not to a NATO ally but to a tiny nation with which France had no official alliance of any kind" (Sachar 1998: 110-11).

¹²⁸ This passage was translated by Pinkus (2002: 126).

Notwithstanding the various hurdles with which Peres was faced on the road to his deal with the Bourges-Maunoury government, the greatest threat to the reactor project emerged with the ascendance of President Charles de Gaulle and the Fifth Republic in France on 8 January 1959, an event that marked the end of Israel's special relationship with France.¹²⁹ The new French leader committed himself to ending the war in Algeria, where rebels were fighting for total independence from France. A high priority for de Gaulle was for France to improve its position in the Arab world. In the wake of this new policy, Israel's strategic importance to France diminished.

On 13 May 1960, Foreign Minister Maurice Couve de Murville informed Israeli Ambassador Walter Eitan that France had decided to sever its nuclear ties with Israel (Cohen 1998: 73). The objective of the new French policy, he stated, was to prohibit the production and reprocessing of weapon-quality plutonium in Dimona. France intended to make the Dimona matter public, and it wanted to open up the plant to foreign supervision. Until Israel accepted these conditions, France would not supply it with the natural uranium fuel for the reactor (Cohen 1998: 73-74; Golan 1989: 57-58; Karpin 2006: 173).

The French announcement of its change in policy was not well received in Israel. Ben-Gurion believed Israel had little to lose by fighting the French demands. He sent Peres to Paris to try to thwart de Gaulle's attempts to end Israel's nuclear program. In France, Peres told de Murville that what he was proposing "meant both renegeing on previous French government decisions and robbing Israel of its eventual

¹²⁹ Prior to the creation of the Fifth Republic, de Gaulle served as Prime Minister in the Fourth Republic, from 1 June 1958 until becoming President on 8 January 1959.

reactor and of five years of Herculean effort. No amount of money could compensate us for the wasted work” (Peres 1995: 123).

In the course of several conversations that Peres had with Couve de Murville, Peres did everything he could to save the Dimona project. He told Couve de Murville that Israel did not object in principle to going public with the Dimona reactor but that it should be publicized in the general context of French-Israeli scientific cooperation (Golan 1989: 59). Peres had no problem with describing the reactor as an endeavor for peaceful purposes only, but he was adamantly opposed to opening up the plant for international inspection (Golan 1989: 59). In the end, Couve de Murville accepted Peres’s proposal: Israel would publicize the existence of the project. The alternative, a French or joint French-Israeli declaration, would likely have aroused suspicion that it was a joint project, something the French did not want to do for fear of provoking Arab retribution. According to Peres’s compromise plan, Israel would talk about the research program as a whole, emphasizing scientific research rather than the Dimona reactor itself. As to the issue of international inspection, France would drop the matter and, in return, would be released from its obligation to supply fissile material for the reactor. In this way, Israel could look elsewhere for sources of uranium (Golan 1989: 61-62). And, while Israel would continue the Dimona project on its own, French companies like Saint-Gobain Nucleaire with existing contracts could continue their work on their reactor (Cohen 1998: 75; Karpin 2006: 174).

Peres’s compromise was thus crucial to saving the project and effectively ended the final – and biggest – obstacle to Israel’s efforts at obtaining French

assistance for its nuclear reactor.¹³⁰ Actual construction of the reactor probably began in 1958 (Evron 1994: 4). Israel reportedly became a nuclear weapon state sometime between mid-1966 to mid-1967 (Cohen 1998: 275; Karpin 2006: 268).

A confluence of several factors explains the success of the Dimona project in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds. The shared interests between France and Israel – the desire to undermine Egypt’s Nasser and to prop up each country’s fledgling nuclear industry – coupled with the weak and decentralized nature of France’s Fourth Republic, provided favorable structural conditions for a nuclear deal to take shape. But it is primarily due to Shimon Peres’s ability to exploit these conditions that Ben-Gurion’s vision of a nuclear Israel was transformed into reality.¹³¹ The financial and political obstacles were numerous and grave; any one of these alone could have easily scuttled the entire project. However, Peres’s stubborn determination, intimate knowledge of the inner workings of the French government and willingness to forge close personal ties at all levels of the government, penchant

¹³⁰ By no means, however, did this episode spell the end to the difficulties faced by Israel on its road to becoming a nuclear power. Israel’s nuclear option was of great concern to a number of U.S. presidents, particularly to President John Kennedy, for whom nuclear nonproliferation was a high priority. In a chance meeting with President Kennedy on 2 April 1963 – Peres was in Washington to discuss the purchase of HAWK missiles – he was asked about Israel’s nuclear program. Thinking off the cuff, Peres told Kennedy: “We will not be the first ones to introduce nuclear weapons into the Middle East” (Karpin 2006: 251; Peres 1995: 223). This improvised formulation became Israel’s official stance regarding its nuclear policy. Subsequently, Peres, as the overseer of the project, made sure to deceive the U.S. inspectors by “preparing” the Dimona facility for its visitors (Karpin 2006: 187). Ben-Gurion, not wanting to jeopardize the project, participated in this deception but over time used language in his conversations with U.S. officials that implied that Israel was developing, or at least had not ruled out, a nuclear option (Karpin 2006: 193).

¹³¹ Given that private discussions between Ben-Gurion and Peres over nuclear matters were not recorded, it is difficult to determine with absolute certainty who the real visionary was behind Dimona. The conventional wisdom is that Ben-Gurion conceived of the idea in general terms and, as he often did, relied on Peres to figure out how to make it happen. Others believe that the vision was actually that of Peres and that he sold Ben-Gurion on the idea. See interview with Meir Amit, 10 October 2006, Ramat Gan; see also Margalit (1998: 294).

for improvising solutions to seemingly intractable problems, and uncanny ability to exploit opportunities combined to make the Dimona project materialize.

Dimona is arguably the one project that even Peres's fiercest critics do not deny him the credit. Senior Israeli officials such as Foreign Minister Golda Meir and Mossad chief Isser Harel had continuously doubted the efficacy of the nuclear project and had questioned the credibility of Peres's progress reports to Ben-Gurion; yet time proved them to be mistaken in their negative assessment. As Harel would acknowledge years later: "There is one important thing that Peres achieved...and that's Dimona. As critical as I am of Peres, I always credit him with that" (Karpin 2006: 80-81, 119). Even some of the skeptics in the scientific community would later change their minds. Amos de Shalit, the Weizmann Institute physicist, would declare: "I am happy to admit, without reservations, that a large proportion of my objections and complaints have been shattered by this achievement" (Karpin 2006: 199). By mid-1963, the political establishment in Israel – including figures like Foreign Minister Meir and Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, who had replaced Ben-Gurion – was united behind the nuclear project (Karpin 2006: 228-229). Every prime minister, moreover, has adopted the policy of nuclear ambiguity originally formulated by Peres in April 1963.

The Move to Rafi (1965-1968)

Peres, who had overseen the Dimona project from its inception, left the Defense Ministry just as the nuclear reactor was entering the phase of plutonium extraction (Bar-Zohar 2007: 274; Pean 1982: 120).¹³² In another demonstration of his commitment to Ben-Gurion's "activist" approach (and loyalty to his mentor), he

¹³² The secret test of a nuclear device reportedly took place on 2 November 1966.

bolted from Mapai and joined Ben-Gurion's breakaway Rafi party in June 1965.¹³³ This could hardly be seen as an easy move for Peres, not only because he would not be able to be present at this critical juncture in Dimona's timeline, but also because it meant leaving his post as Deputy Defense Minister and, in leaving the dominant Mapai and joining an untested party, risking the future of his career.¹³⁴ It was thus far from a politically expedient decision for Peres, who probably would have become the Minister of Defense had he stayed in Mapai.

Although Ben-Gurion was the nominal head of Rafi, Peres ran its day-to-day affairs. He was the key spokesperson for the party, representing it in the media, at public forums, and in the Knesset. The unenviable task of raising funds for the new party, which lacked the infrastructure and financial backing of the well-established parties, fell on Peres's shoulders (Bar-Zohar 2007: 275-6).¹³⁵

Rafi was, by all accounts, the "activist" party, a more hawkish version of Mapai. Apart from the left-leaning Yitzhak Navon, its ten Knesset Members adopted an aggressive approach towards the Arabs. During one particularly stormy session of Knesset on 16 March 1966, Peres responded to the labeling of he and his colleagues as "activists" and "the Suez group" by rhetorically asking, "Does the nation of Israel regret the activism in the realm of security, the settlement and the immigration led by Ben-Gurion?" He lambasted those "official apologists" who were assisting "the leftist obsession." Labor's Abba Eban, the then-Foreign Minister, accused Peres of displaying suspicion "toward any revelation of a direction toward peace," an

¹³³ Rafi stands for *Reshimat Poalei Israel* (Israel Workers' List).

¹³⁴ The move was precipitated by Ben-Gurion's split with his successor, Levi Eshkol, in the wake of the Lavon Affair, a political scandal that rocked the political establishment.

¹³⁵ See, also, interviews with Peres's colleague in Rafi, Zalman Shoval, 20 November 2006, Tel Aviv; and longtime Ben-Gurion aide Haim Israeli, 22 November 2006, Tel Aviv.

accusation that elicited the following response from Peres: “Does this direction toward peace come from the Arabs or from you?”¹³⁶ In contrast to Abba Eban, Peres saw no use whatsoever in seeking ways to compromise with those who sought Israel’s demise:

They [the Arab leaders] declare this [their intention to annihilate Israel], they are preparing for this, and they leave no doubt concerning the uncompromising nature of their political goal. This is not a limited goal aimed to gain a political or economic advantage: to annex part of a territory or part of a river, to change a regime or orientation, because their far-reaching eternal goal is to annihilate a nation and a state. This position of the Arab states treats the Arab-Israeli conflict like a biological conflict more than a political conflict.¹³⁷

Peres was thus no more convinced of the Arab world’s readiness for peace in the mid-1960s than he had been a decade earlier. In short, throughout the period leading up to the Six-Day War, Peres held firm to the notion that peace was not an option for Israel at the time given the Arab world’s rejection of the Jewish state.

1967-1977: The Hawk

Opposition to Territorial Compromise

Israel’s victory in the 1967 war is an event of monumental importance in understanding the hawk-dove divide in Israeli politics. Up until June of that year, most Israelis regarded their country as the underdog, a relatively weak nation fighting for its survival. Following Israel’s tremendous territorial gains in this war – the Sinai peninsula and Gaza Strip from Egypt, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria – Israelis began to view themselves in a

¹³⁶ Knesset deliberations during the Sixth Knesset, First Session, 16 March 1966, R.G. 156, File Kaf-10, Israel State Archives.

¹³⁷ Peres Speech, “A Day that is Close and a Day that is Far Away,” 19 July 1966, File #5-008-1965-56, Labor Party Archive.

different light, practically overnight. No longer did Israel appear weak and vulnerable; it had proven itself to be a significant military power in the Middle East.

The newly acquired territories immediately became the focal point in the ensuing national debate concerning the future of Israel's relations with its neighbors. Israelis' attitudes toward the territorial divide emerged as the key issue that distinguished hawk from dove, with the latter favoring partition of some sort. Religious nationalists felt a vindication that land promised by God to the Jewish people had finally been "liberated." They, as well as the mostly secular supporters of Menachem Begin's rightwing Gahal (later Likud) party, were now more determined than ever to realize the dream of a Greater Israel and thus advocated annexing the conquered territories. For them, the territories were Israel's to keep irrespective of Arab attitudes toward Israel. Likud's platform stated that "between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, there can be only Israeli sovereignty."¹³⁸ To Begin and his supporters, therefore, settling the newly acquired territories with Jews was essential, as it would help to ensure that they become integrated into the Jewish state.

By contrast, the governing Mapai (later the Labor Party) saw the territories as potential bargaining chips for an eventual peace agreement.¹³⁹ While it lacked a coherent position concerning the future of the territories, it opposed annexing them.¹⁴⁰ Territorial compromise soon became the party's guiding principle, manifested in the Allon Plan. This plan, proposed by Yigal Allon, a leading figure in the party, aimed

¹³⁸ *AP*, 1 March 1977.

¹³⁹ In 1968, Mapai was joined by Mapam and Rafi, becoming the Alignment. Soon thereafter, Mapai, Ahdut Ha'avodah and Rafi merged into the Israel Labor Party.

¹⁴⁰ It is important to note that while the majority in the Labor movement opposed annexing the territories, a number of prominent personalities affiliated with Mapai – most notably, poets and writers like Natan Alterman, Moshe Shamir, and Haim Gouri – called for retaining the newly conquered territories. Similarly, the Ahdut Ha'avodah faction of the Labor movement supported the notion of a Greater Israel. See interview with Eitan Haber, 21 November 2006, Ramat Gan.

to provide Israel with secure borders by retaining sovereignty in the Jordan Valley while offering to return to Jordan the heavily populated areas in the West Bank.¹⁴¹ Although Mapai's longtime leader, the now retired Ben-Gurion, expressed the view that Israel ought to relinquish all of the territories, save for Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, in return for a real peace, his was a minority view at the time.¹⁴²

Moshe Dayan and Shimon Peres adopted a distinctly hawkish line. Dayan wanted the Israeli government to "establish permanent facts with settlement and military consolidation" (Gorenberg 2006: 199). A mere four months after the 1967 war, Peres tried to shoot down the increasingly popular idea within the party of withdrawing from part of the territories. "There is no reason that Israel should withdraw even one inch from the territories it held," he declared in a Knesset debate, "and it is my impression that those who propose withdrawal play chess with themselves...it is no wonder that in such a game they are the losers" (Agid-Ben Yehuda and Auerbach 1991: 535). As late as the mid-1970s, Peres rejected the very term "occupation," as can be seen from the following excerpt of an exchange he had with a Member of Knesset belonging to the Communist party:

What occupation? Did we attack Jordan? Did we attack Hussein? Stop exaggerating. One can think from your talk that in 1967, Abraham went out nicely, attacked Hussein and conquered the [West] Bank. Is this how it began? And in 1947, did we go out and attack? What are you talking about? What occupation?¹⁴³

Peres's hawkish views seem to have been influenced, to a certain extent, by Dayan, a man Peres admired greatly according to numerous individuals who were

¹⁴¹ Allon served as Deputy Prime Minister in the governments of Levi Eshkol and Golda Meir, and as Minister of Foreign Affairs in the first Rabin government (1974-1977).

¹⁴² See interviews with Eitan Haber; Haim Israeli; and former Labor legislators Shulamit Aloni, 1 November 2006, Kfar Shmaryahu; and Gad Yaacobi, 9 October 2006, Tel Aviv.

¹⁴³ Knesset Deliberations, Eighth Knesset, Second Session, 13 January 1975, Registry Group 215, File Kaf-9, Israel State Archives.

well acquainted with both men.¹⁴⁴ Dayan, eight years his senior, played an important role in mentoring Peres. Their acquaintance began when Peres was a teenager, and the two worked closely together from the early 1950s, as shown in the previous section, until Dayan's resignation from the government in 1974. Even following Dayan's resignation, however, Peres continued to consult with him on matters of defense, as he did, for example, when he wanted Dayan's take on the proposed military plan to rescue Israeli hostages in Entebbe (Lau-Lavie 1998: 333). In his memoirs, Peres devotes an entire chapter to Dayan, whom he refers to as "the most admired Israeli in the world." Peres writes that he saw in him "the unique traits of our evolving nation, its greatnesses and its foibles," and notes that he viewed him as a potentially great leader (Peres 1995: 125, 127).

Only on rare occasions did Dayan and Peres disagree with each other publicly; generally, the two men adopted the same positions and tended to offer similar arguments in support of these positions. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy to point out one of the rare instances of disagreement, because the analysis provided by Peres can be seen as an example of his high level of cognitive complexity. Addressing a Rafi party forum on 3 September 1967, Peres expresses his typically hawkish views about the danger of conceding territory to the Arabs. At the same time, though, he notes that "in the West Bank there are 120,000 refugees" and that, therefore, "we must think about how to maintain Israel's moral standing and not to disregard it." At this early stage in Israel's post-June 1967 borders, amidst the confusion concerning the future

¹⁴⁴ See interviews with Mordechai Bar-On; Yishayahu Ben-Porat; Ruth Dayan, Dayan's widow, 30 November 2006, Tel Aviv; Jean Frydman; Avraham Katz-Oz, 3 December 2006, Tel Aviv; Samuel Lewis, 28 August 2006, Washington, D.C.; Shlomo Nakdimon, 26 November 2006, Ramat Aviv; and Zalman Shoval, 20 November 2006.

of these territories, Peres indicates his appreciation of the issue's complexity; there is a moral issue to be dealt with, in addition to the obvious political and security dimensions. The theme of not wanting to rule over another people is one that Peres would return to years later. After Peres inserts the moral dimension into the debate, Dayan responds negatively. "Ben-Gurion said that whomever approaches the Zionist problem from the moral aspect is not a Zionist," he says, chastising Peres.¹⁴⁵

Dayan and Peres had collaborated for many years to strengthen Israel militarily in the face of continued Arab enmity. Peres's creative methods and dogged persistence had helped to overcome the arms embargo, providing Israel with much-needed arms, while Dayan transformed the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) into a first-class army, preparing it for war. Their joint efforts indeed paid off in impressive victories in both the Sinai Campaign and the Six Day War, eleven years later. As far as Dayan and Peres were concerned, however, these victories had failed to change Arab attitudes toward Israel. The resolution adopted by Arab leaders at the Arab Summit Conference in Khartoum on 1 September 1967 – it declared "no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with it" – solidified their beliefs. The idea gaining momentum in Mapai, of withdrawing from some of the newly conquered territories, was thus utterly rejected by Dayan and Peres. As Peres explained in a party forum, his opposition to territorial concessions stemmed from his continued lack of faith in Arab intentions:

Of course we can withdraw, of course we can yield – but peace will not come even with the crutches of withdrawal and concession. Even when we were not in Judea and Samaria, even when we were not in the Sinai and in the Golan Heights – the Arabs did not accept us. The difference between then and today is not a difference in political character but rather a strategic difference – then, too, they threatened our existence; today it is easier to guarantee it. Moreover, the lack of peace is not a result

¹⁴⁵ Rafi Secretariat Meeting, 3 September 1967, File #5-003-1967-24, Labor Party Archive.

of Israel's policy, but rather the fruits of the Arabs' social structure. The militarism rules Arab society...¹⁴⁶

Peres's view of Arab attitudes toward Israel is expressed even more starkly in his book, *David's Sling*: "No compromise can satisfy them [the Arabs]. It is the Arab goal to abolish Israel, not to change a political situation" (Peres 1970: 10).

In lieu of territorial compromise, Dayan and Peres pushed for what they called a "functional arrangement" (or "functional compromise"), according to which the security responsibility until the Jordan River would be within Israel's purview, whereas the civil and municipal responsibility would belong to the Palestinians.¹⁴⁷ In his memoirs, Peres blames the press for wrongly depicting him as a "hardliner," arguing that he never wavered from the concept of territorial partition. He makes it a point to distinguish himself from the right-wingers who wanted to annex the territories. "After 1967 I never favored annexation of the West Bank and Gaza," he insists (Peres 1995: 145). This much is true. Peres is on record, early on, as opposing annexation.¹⁴⁸ Yet in his memoirs, he also contradicts the notion that he always supported partition:

During the 1970s, I favored the idea of 'functional compromise' – that is, a sharing of power – as an alternative to territorial partition. At that time, the advocates of territorial partition within the government and the Labor movement proposed the Allon Plan. This called for Israel to retain under its own sovereignty and control the Jordan Valley, which is relatively sparsely populated, as well as the area around Jerusalem. However, Dayan and I felt it was more important for us to hold onto the hill range running down the center of Judea and Samaria...I suggested that the West Bank, which was to be demilitarized, could be administered by the Palestinians themselves, under the joint control of Israel and Jordan, at least for an interim period. Israeli control would ensure freedom of movement for Israelis throughout the territories and freedom of worship at the Holy Places. Israel and Jordan, together

¹⁴⁶ Party Forum Entitled "Jewish Ideology and Israeli Policy," 28 December 1967, File #5-008-1966-57, Labor Party Archive.

¹⁴⁷ Interviews with Yossi Beilin, 6 December 2006, Jerusalem; Gad Yaacobi; and Nissim Zvili, 4 December 2006, Tel Aviv.

¹⁴⁸ In one party forum, for example, Peres says that while Israel has a right to all of the land, it must square that right with Israel's desire for peace should that opportunity arise. See Party Forum, entitled "Jewish Ideology and Israeli Policy," 28 December 1967, File #5-008-1966-52, Labor Party Archive.

with this Palestinian entity, would make up a regional unit of close economic cooperation. I certainly did not envisage – nor do I envisage today – a physical or economic separation between Israel and the West Bank-Gaza (Peres 1995: 143-4).

Peres's statements during those days, in fact, give no hint as to his support for partition. As late as January 1977, Peres expressed his opposition to territorial compromise in a party forum:

I do not believe that there is a territorial compromise that would be acceptable to the Arabs. Even if all of the Jews would unite, I do not see the Arabs yielding on Jerusalem, I do not see the Arabs yielding on territorial contiguity. On the other hand, I do see the possibility for political arrangements that will enable the Arabs to conduct their affairs, with their passports, with their laws, their expenses, while Israel – and this is, in my opinion, our main objective in Judea and Samaria – that the defense of the country will begin in Jordan, Jordan is the security border of the State of Israel.¹⁴⁹

In short, while the Labor Party promoted the concept of territorial compromise, Peres argued that “instead of dividing the land, I would prefer to divide the government”; i.e., he saw a functional arrangement encompassing autonomy as preferable to parting with territory.¹⁵⁰

Founder of Settlements in the West Bank

Peres's stated opposition to territorial compromise was buttressed by his actions in the mid-1970s, when he was given an opportunity to do something about it.¹⁵¹ From 1974 to 1977, Peres served as Defense Minister in Yitzhak Rabin's first government.¹⁵² It was in this capacity that he was responsible for the establishment of some of the first Jewish settlements in the West Bank.¹⁵³ The Gush Emunim (Block of the Faithful) settlers' movement, under the spiritual guidance of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

¹⁴⁹ Labor Party Subcommittee on Political Matters, 7 January 1977, File #2-021-1977-133, Labor Party Archive.

¹⁵⁰ Milan J. Kubic, “Peres: The Challenger,” *Newsweek*, 17 January 1977, p. 36.

¹⁵¹ Peres was a junior minister in Golda Meir's government from March 1969 to June 1974.

¹⁵² Rabin's second government began upon his election in 1992 and ended abruptly with his assassination in November 1995.

¹⁵³ The first settlement was Kiryat Arba, near Hebron, which was established in 1968.

Kook, saw the 1967 war as an opportunity to realize the vision of the Whole Land of Israel (or Greater Israel).¹⁵⁴ Its adherents exerted, therefore, a considerable amount of pressure on the government to enable their settlement enterprise to flourish. Its *modus operandi* was to settle a particular site without government sanction, thereby creating “facts on the ground.”¹⁵⁵ Of all the ministers in Rabin’s government, it was Peres who proved to be the most sympathetic to the settlers’ goals – support that was manifested both in word and in deed. Peres was outspoken in his belief that Jews had the right to settle all the land of Israel, including the newly conquered West Bank. If Jews could settle anywhere, Peres asked rhetorically, why couldn’t they settle there?¹⁵⁶

Settler leaders also had unprecedented access to the Rabin government due to Peres’s willingness to meet with them in his Tel Aviv office and engage them in substantive discussions concerning their agenda. “In Peres, we found an attentive listener,” recalls one of the settler leaders. “His door was always open to us” (Bar-Zohar 2007: 307).¹⁵⁷ Indeed, a former Peres aide, Aliza Eshed, recalls how her boss looked forward to such meetings, because he regarded the settler leaders as “the salt of the earth,” “true Zionists, as the new settlers of the land” and was thus “so happy that there was such a group of young settlers around him” (Bar-Zohar 2007: 309).¹⁵⁸

On his very first day as Defense Minister, Peres took a meeting with Rabbi Kook to

¹⁵⁴ Gush Emunim was not formally established as a movement until 1974, in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War. Nevertheless, its leaders actively promoted the establishment of Jewish settlements in the West Bank after the 1967 war.

¹⁵⁵ B’Tselem, “Land Grab: Israel’s Settlement Policy in the West Bank,” May 2002.

¹⁵⁶ See interviews with Shulamit Aloni and Naphtali Lavie, 19 November 2006, Jerusalem.

¹⁵⁷ The settler leader’s characterization of Peres as “an attentive listener” is further testimony to Peres’s cognitive openness, a focal point of the previous chapter. It should be noted here that while Peres displayed a great willingness to listen to what the settler leaders had to say, he was equally accessible to local Palestinian leaders. Despite his hawkishness, he had an essentially open-door policy to Arab officials from the occupied territories, meeting with them in his office whenever they wished to discuss problems or issues of concern to their community. See Ilan Kafir, “A year into the tenure of the Defense Minister,” *Yedioth Aharonoth (Seven Days)*, 9 January 1976, pp. 5-7.

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Aliza Eshed, 19 November 2006, Jerusalem.

discuss the settlers' desire to settle in Elon Moreh, an area located in the hills of Samaria, northeast of Nablus. Although Peres did not commit himself to approving their settlement, he reportedly told Kook that he "identified with [the] goals of the group's members" (Gorenberg 2006: 284). According to Benny Katzover, one of the militant settler leaders, only two prominent figures in the Labor Party were supportive of the Elon Moreh project: "Moshe Dayan, and especially Shimon Peres" (Gorenberg 2006: 243).¹⁵⁹

Peres appointed Moshe Netzer as his settlement coordinator to assist him in the settlement enterprise. In contrast to Prime Minister Rabin's antagonistic attitude toward the settler leaders' agenda, Peres and Netzer supported Jewish settlement on the mountain ridge and thus lent their hands to the establishment of Ofra, located northeast of Jerusalem. Peres and his aide provided permits for wives and children to reside there; hooked up the settlement to the local electricity grid; and agreed to pay for floodlights around the settlement (Gorenberg 2006: 328). Peres's rationale for backing the Ofra settlement was its proximity to Jerusalem. Concerned about the construction of Arab houses near Jerusalem, he saw Ofra as an attempt to counterbalance this trend and thus "fortify Jerusalem." In addition, Peres envisioned Ofra as a place that would provide the army with temporary housing. Years later, Peres says: "I thought that in Ofra, we can build a radar station and the settlers will handle the radar and defend the country."¹⁶⁰

In December 1975, the Elon Moreh group organized a mass rally in Sebastia, a disused railway station from the Ottoman period near Nablus – despite Rabin's

¹⁵⁹ Dayan was then out of the government, having resigned as Defense Minister in the wake of the Yom Kippur War.

¹⁶⁰ Interview with Shimon Peres, 3 November 2006, Tel Aviv.

clear directive to prohibit the rally. When the cabinet met in Jerusalem to discuss the fate of the settlers, the atmosphere in the room was decidedly against the settlers' stance. A former Defense Ministry official recalls that when it was suggested that the settlers be removed from Sebastia by force, Peres sat in silence.¹⁶¹ The cabinet rejected the settlers' demands and demanded that they be removed from the area. Peres subsequently went to Sebastia during the settlers' standoff with IDF soldiers to try to implement the government's decision to block the settlement. When he informed the settlers that they would have to evacuate the place, Rabbi Moshe Levinger, one of the militant settler leaders, tore his clothes as if in mourning. The settlers refused to budge. After protracted negotiations between the settler leaders and the government, a compromise ensued, which enabled the settlers to move to a nearby military base called Kadum (later Kedumim).

The precise nature of Peres's role in the settlers' standoff at Sebastia remains a matter of controversy. In his memoirs, Rabin speculates that Peres may have conspired with the settlers by providing halfhearted instructions to the army to stop the settlers that were on their way to Sebastia (Rabin 1979: 550). Peres flatly denies this charge, suggesting that "someone from the government," without his knowledge, "set up a pseudo-military headquarters in Tel Aviv, from which he transmitted advice and guidance to the settlers on how to dodge the army patrols and reach their designated settlement site in the face of the army's efforts – and orders – to prevent them" (Peres 1995: 147).¹⁶² Notwithstanding the question of how the settlers were able to defy the army at Sebastia, what is clear is that Peres preferred a strategy of

¹⁶¹ Interview with Naphtali Lavie.

¹⁶² See, also, interview with Peres.

accommodation to confrontation vis-à-vis the settlers. While Peres warned his colleagues that forced evacuation could entail bloodshed, Rabin had made up his mind to send in troops (Gorenberg 2006: 335). In the end, Rabin acquiesced to a compromise plan, which essentially enabled the settlers to establish their settlement – just not at the Sebastia location. When Peres signed the deal with the settler leaders, he sweetened the final agreement for them by making a number of significant concessions. The original compromise would have enabled thirty individuals to set up shop in the army camp; Peres changed the wording to “thirty families.” Peres also promised the settlers jobs and assured them that the government would debate the future of settlements in Judea and Samaria in two or three months (Bar-Zohar 2007: 310; Gorenberg 2006: 338-9). In less than six months, the settlers, with the active assistance of Peres’s Defense Ministry, had built a synagogue, a dining hall, and classrooms (Gorenberg 2006: 346).

Peres’s attitude toward settlements differed markedly from that of his colleagues in the Rabin government. Unlike Peres, Rabin opposed Jewish settlement on the mountain ridge (Gorenberg 2006: 312).¹⁶³ Peres was deferential toward the settler leaders, seeking to accommodate them whenever possible, while Rabin was unsympathetic toward them and was prepared to use force in response to their illegal activities (but ended up not doing so). Peres’s cooperative approach with the settlers could not have been more different than the outright hostility shown towards them by Labor’s doves – in particular, Finance Minister Pinhas Sapir, former Secretary-General Arie “Lova” Eliav, and Knesset Member Yossi Sarid. Eliav opposed all

¹⁶³ According to a former aide to the-then Defense Minister, Peres felt it was important that the region not be left Judenrein (free of Jews). This helps to explain why Peres did not object to the settlers’ activities. See interview with Naphtali Lavie.

settlement activity in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip, arguing that these territories would constitute a future Palestinian state (Gorenberg 2006: 234). Sapir, too, opposed settling the West Bank and Gaza, but not the Golan Heights, which he wanted Israel to retain (along with East Jerusalem) (Gorenberg 2006: 62). Sarid, as Sapir's protégé, was even more vociferous in his opposition to settlements, opposing Peres's accommodating attitude vis-à-vis the settlers.

To be sure, the doves were outside the Labor Party mainstream, who supported the notion of settlements but, unlike the rightist opposition, opposed annexing the West Bank. It was Yigal Allon who, in 1968, as Minister of Labor in Golda Meir's government, pushed for Jewish settlement in Hebron, leading to the establishment in 1970 of Kiryat Arba, a settlement just north of Hebron.¹⁶⁴ However, Allon, who was now Foreign Minister in Rabin's government, had become an advocate of territorial compromise following the Yom Kippur War; hence, the Allon Plan. Although he still favored settling the Jordan valley in order to provide Israel with "defensible borders," he was unwilling to go as far as Peres, who favored settling not only the Jordan Valley but the mountains of Samaria as well. Allon thus expressed disapproval of the new settlements that were established with Peres's consent. He also complained bitterly that his support for territorial compromise was being used against him by Peres, who he alleged was leaking rumors to the press that Allon "was about to turn over the whole West Bank and Gaza Strip to the Jordanians" (Gorenberg 2006: 289).

¹⁶⁴ The first 105 housing units were ready by 1972. See Gil Sedan, "Hebron historically at heart of Israeli-Palestinian strife," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 17 January 1997.

Peres's positions were thus to the right of his party. At the same time, it would be mistaken to equate them to those of Menachem Begin, head of the Likud (formerly Gahal) party. Peres did not share Begin's support for annexing the territories; he was not an advocate of a Greater Israel. Nor did he appreciate the boisterous demonstrations organized by Begin and his supporters in the West Bank, preferring a far more discreet strategy. Yet Peres and Begin both favored the establishment of as many settlements in the West Bank as possible. It is therefore hardly surprising that Peres met with a delegation of senior Likud members on 31 August 1976 with the aim of mobilizing their support for his settlement policy (Gazit 2003: 261).

During the rest of his term as Minister of Defense, Peres continued to actively promote the settlement enterprise, helping to plan the future settlement (now city) of Ariel (Bar-Zohar 2007: 311; Gorenberg 2006: 355). In party forums, he passionately defended his hawkish position, blasting the doves' idea that the settlements were somehow a burden to Israel's security. "Where is the consistency," he rhetorically asked his fellow Labor Party members. "How can you explain that settlements in the Golan Heights advances the peace yet the settlements in Judea and Samaria burdens the security of Israel?" Peres insisted that, as long as settling east of the green line did not result in the eviction of its Palestinian residents, Jewish settlement in these territories ought to be allowed.¹⁶⁵ He argued further that at least some of these settlements would be permanent.¹⁶⁶ The following excerpt from an interview in *Newsweek* illustrates Peres's belief that the settlements were not merely bargaining

¹⁶⁵ Peres's address to the Labor Party Subcommittee on Political Matters, 7 January 1977, File #2-021-1977-133, Labor Party Archive.

¹⁶⁶ Peres's address to the Labor Party Central Committee Meeting, 12 January 1977, File #2-23-1977-117-B, Labor Party Archive.

chips for an eventual peace deal, but rather were meant to be enduring fixtures in the Israeli landscape:

Q: What would happen with the Israeli settlements in the occupied areas?

A: I don't see any problem. The Jewish people have the right to settle even in Brooklyn or in the Bronx or in London, and I don't see why they could not remain on the West Bank, if there is peace.

Q: What if the Arabs object?

A: Well, we won't take any objections about Jewish settlements. We cannot turn the clock back. Over the past five, ten years, Arabs have built hundreds of new houses, even without permission, in the Galilee and the Negev, and nobody says they should be expelled.¹⁶⁷

As the above interview also illustrates, Peres did not see a contradiction between settlements and a peaceful resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. He dismissed the doves' notion that the settlements would prevent Arab leaders from making peace. A former adviser at the Ministry of Defense recalls that Peres would respond to such assertions by arguing that if the Arab leaders wanted an agreement with Israel, they would seek it regardless of the activities on the ground.¹⁶⁸

In short, Peres distinguished himself as the chief hawk in the first Rabin government by promoting the idea of settling the mountain ridge of the West Bank and lending his support to the establishment of Jewish settlements there.

Opposition to a Palestinian State

The notion of an independent Palestinian state – widely accepted in Israel today by large swaths of the population – was not seriously countenanced by the Labor Party in the years 1967-1977. Golda Meir, who served as Prime Minister from 1969 to 1974, did not even recognize the existence of a Palestinian nation.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Milan J. Kubic, "Peres: The Challenger," *Newsweek*, 17 January 1977, p. 36.

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Naphtali Lavie.

¹⁶⁹ See *The Sunday Times*, 15 June 1969.

“Immediately after 1967, nobody thought about it [a Palestinian state],” recalls a veteran Israeli journalist.¹⁷⁰

In the 1970s, greater international focus on the Arab-Israeli conflict, particularly following the 1973 Yom Kippur War and the Arab oil embargo, led to increased support around the world for a Palestinian state. Leaders of the Socialist International were particularly active in this respect, pressuring Israel’s leadership to end the occupation and support a two-state solution to the conflict. Defense Minister Peres passionately denounced such talk, saying that a Palestinian state would be “a disaster for Israel, for the Middle East and for peace.”¹⁷¹ Peres challenged one of the leaders of the Socialist International, Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky, to tell him “where in the socialist bible it is written that when two nations live in the same land there must be a territorial division and not a federation coexistence.”¹⁷² Two fears, in particular, factored into Peres’s opposition to a Palestinian state: terrorism and greater Soviet involvement in the region. “If a Palestinian state should emerge,” Peres warned, “there is no doubt that it would be filled with modern Soviet weaponry or weapons from Libyan arsenals.”¹⁷³ The following passage from a Labor Party gathering in January 1977 vividly illustrates Peres’s dual concerns of terrorism and Soviet encroachment in the region:

I see the scenario whereby these [terrorist] cells will begin to infiltrate our settlements, Kfar Saba, Ramat Hakovesh, Petach Tikva, and the IDF will, once

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Dan Margalit, 23 November 2006 (telephone interview). A notable exception was Arie “Lova” Eliav, who stated that Israel must “never repress the rights of the Palestinians to national self-determination” and ought to “help them establish a state” (Gorenberg 2006: 175). Because Eliav’s positions were outside of the Labor Party’s mainstream, he was forced to give up his position as Secretary-General of the party.

¹⁷¹ Peres address to Labor Party Subcommittee on Political Matters, 7 January 1977, File #2-21-1977-133, Labor Party Archive.

¹⁷² Defense Minister Peres’s conversation with Hagai Eshed, published in *Davar*, 27 June 1975.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

again, have to carry out revenge operations. The revenge operations will lead to a strengthening of the Soviet orientation, because they will want to strengthen the Palestinian army. Before we know it, we will have created a most miserable situation for ourselves...if we shall agree to a Palestinian state, for two months we will be lauded all over the world. After these two months, however, we will return to terrorism, we will return to the conflict, plus a deep Soviet involvement, and we will have nobody to whom to turn.¹⁷⁴

Unlike Peres's position on territorial compromise, which put him at odds with his party, when it came to opposing the establishment of a Palestinian state, Peres and his Labor Party colleagues tended to see eye to eye. The prevailing view in Labor was to establish some sort of confederation with Jordan, which was seen as a more legitimate partner than the Palestinians, particularly since it was led by a Western-oriented King familiar to the Israeli public. "All of us spoke of a Jordanian option, even [left-wing firebrand] Shulamit Aloni," says a former Labor legislator.¹⁷⁵ Indeed, Prime Minister Rabin made it clear that "Israel's policy is that the Palestinian issue has to be solved in the context of a peace treaty with Jordan. We don't see any room to have a third state between Israel and Jordan."¹⁷⁶ Peres, especially, became an early supporter of the "Jordanian option." In the mid-1970s, he came up with a federation plan, according to which the residents of the West Bank and Gaza would enjoy autonomy and be able to decide whether to define themselves as Palestinians if they so chose. Rather than the state determining its citizens' fate, Peres argued, his plan would enable citizens to determine their fate in three ways: the place in which they reside, the school in which they educate their children, and the borders they defend.

¹⁷⁴ Peres address to Labor Party Subcommittee on Political Matters, 7 January 1977, File #2-21-1977-133, Labor Party Archive.

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Gad Yaacobi.

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Prime Minister Rabin on BBC Television, 9 September 1975.

Peres envisioned this federation to be a first step toward a future confederation with Jordan.¹⁷⁷

Opposition to Negotiations with the PLO

In October 1974, the Seventh Arab Summit conference in Rabat recognized the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Arafat was subsequently granted the privilege of addressing the United Nations General Assembly, which passed resolutions declaring for the first time that the Palestinians were a nation with rights to sovereignty.¹⁷⁸ No longer were the Palestinians regarded by the United Nations merely as “displaced people.” The PLO was even granted observer status at the United Nations.

While several countries, including the Soviet Union and India, opened their doors during this period to PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, the western world largely avoided any dealings with him. It was only in July 1979 that Chancellors Bruno Kreisky of Austria and Willie Brandt of Germany would finally meet with Arafat.¹⁷⁹ In the meantime, in September 1975, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger officially pledged that the U.S. would not recognize or negotiate with the PLO.¹⁸⁰ Only if the PLO accepted UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 would the United States reconsider its position.

In Israel, the broad consensus was that the PLO, which was continuously engaged in terrorism against its citizens, was not a legitimate partner for negotiations. On this point, there was no discernable difference between Labor and Likud. Prime

¹⁷⁷ Defense Minister Peres’s conversation with Hagai Eshed, published in *Davar*, 27 June 1975.

¹⁷⁸ “The PLO Strategy: Fight and Talk,” *Time*, 27 January 1975.

¹⁷⁹ It was not until 1980 that Kreisky would grant the PLO informal diplomatic recognition.

¹⁸⁰ “Talking to the PLO,” *Time*, 27 August 1979.

Minister Rabin's rationale for rejecting dialogue with the PLO could probably have been offered by almost any mainstream politician in Israel:

I don't believe the PLO can really change its position apart from lip service to our existence. They are not going to abandon their objective of a secular state in a greater Palestine because they would then lose their *raison d'être*. Their basic philosophy is that the Jews have no right to a state of their own and that their own state should be erected on the ruins of the Israeli state. In any event, I don't believe we should change our policy on the Palestinian issue and that is that it is not the key to a Mideast solution...We will never negotiate with the so-called PLO.¹⁸¹

Just as Rabin and Peres shared their opposition to a Palestinian state, they also agreed on excluding the PLO from prospective peace talks. Asked whether he ruled out completely any dealings with the PLO, Defense Minister Peres replied: "It's not me who is ruling out dealings with the PLO but the PLO itself who is. If those gentlemen say it's their purpose to put an end to the state of Israel, I don't see much sense in negotiating with them...The most moderate people in the PLO call for peace – without Israel."¹⁸² For the Likud's Menachem Begin, it was not merely that the PLO was less than forthcoming or an untrustworthy partner; Yasser Arafat "and his henchmen...have a Nazi attitude toward the Jewish people. They want to destroy our people."¹⁸³ Just as one would not think about negotiating with the Nazis, it was inconceivable for the Jewish state to negotiate with "the most implacable enemy of the Jewish people since the Nazis."¹⁸⁴ To be sure, while Begin tended not to draw distinctions between moderate and extremist Palestinians, Peres and Rabin were careful not to rule out talks with all Palestinians. "Our 'no' to the Palestine Liberation Organization sounds like a 'no' to all Palestinians, and this need not be," he stated.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸¹ "Interview with Prime Minister Rabin," *Newsweek*, 7 December 1975.

¹⁸² "Israel's Defense Minister: 'War is Avoidable'," *U.S. News & World Report*, 7 April 1975.

¹⁸³ Warren Brown, "Israeli Leader Rebuffs Carter's Mideast Plans," *The Washington Post*, 23 May 1977.

¹⁸⁴ Marcus Eliason, *AP*, 25 July 1977.

¹⁸⁵ "Peres backs talks with Palestinians," *The New York Times*, 27 December 1975.

Rabin, too, had shown willingness to accept some non-PLO Palestinians as part of a Jordanian delegation in future peace talks.¹⁸⁶

Conclusion

Shimon Peres was an unmitigated hawk throughout the two periods covered in this chapter. Prior to the 1967 War, he was identified with the “activist” approach of his mentor, Prime Minister Ben-Gurion. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, he opposed the moderates’ call for peace talks, compromise, and restraint in the wake of terrorist attacks. As far as Peres was concerned, Arab leaders were intent on Israel’s destruction and there was therefore no point in engaging them in peace talks or even bringing up the possibility of compromise of any kind. As to the terrorist attacks, he was an early, outspoken proponent of counter-terrorism operations. His activism during this period foreshadowed his hawkish stance vis-à-vis the Arab-Israeli conflict following the 1967 war. While his Labor Party colleagues tended to support ceding at least parts of the newly conquered territories, Peres categorically rejected territorial compromise, favoring instead a “functional arrangement” in which Israelis would rule the West Bank together with Palestinians. Although Peres opposed the right-wing opposition’s idea of extending Israeli sovereignty to the West Bank, he distinguished himself as a Labor Party hawk by becoming the party’s foremost supporter of Jewish settlements there. Like the majority of his colleagues, he vociferously opposed Palestinian statehood and any dealings with the PLO.

Establishing Peres’s hawkishness is necessary in order to demonstrate his subsequent dovish turn, which will be explored in the next two chapters. More

¹⁸⁶ Larry Thorson, *AP*, 2 January 1977.

broadly, however, Peres's views are of importance to the student of Israeli foreign policy since Peres was a major actor in Israeli foreign policymaking throughout the years covered here. As has been demonstrated in this chapter, even prior to becoming a politician, Peres played a significant role in some of the country's most epochal events. As a civil servant in the 1950s, Peres transformed the Ministry of Defense into a powerful institution that involved itself in foreign policy, often eclipsing the influence of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Peres succeeded in maneuvering the government from an Anglo-Saxon to a French orientation, forging a formidable alliance with France. His "French connection" led to massive sales to Israel of sophisticated arms, a joint military campaign against Egypt, and a nuclear reactor. While it may not be possible to counterfactually prove that Peres's activities constitute what Fred Greenstein (1969) refers to as "actor indispensability" – a structuralist might be inclined to suggest that the strategic imperatives were such that the French connection was bound to be forged regardless of anything Peres did – the interpretation I have offered appears to be the most plausible given the evidence at our disposal and consistent with the views of historians, journalists, and veteran politicians, including critics of Peres.

Given the severity of the political, bureaucratic, and economic obstacles facing Israel's nuclear project, it is doubtful that this project would have succeeded had it not been for Peres's stubborn determination and improvisational methods that led to creative solutions to the gargantuan problems – as even his critics acknowledge. That is not to say that Israel could not or would not have become a nuclear power, but it highly unlikely that, absent Peres's efforts, it would have

occurred when it did, especially given the overwhelming opposition to this project by Israel's senior politicians, economists, and scientists.

Similarly, Peres's tenure as Minister of Defense from 1974-77 was marked by the construction of some of the first settlements in the West Bank. Peres not only gave the settler leaders unprecedented access to the government, he actively promoted their agenda of settling the mountain ridge of the West Bank. Without Peres's support, the settlements of Ofra and Sebastia/Elon Moreh would probably not have been established in Yitzhak Rabin's government, in which most members displayed ambivalence, if not outright hostility, toward the settlers. (Prime Minister Rabin, it should be recalled, was even prepared to evacuate the settlers by force, but was prevented from doing so due to Peres's actions.) It is not inconceivable that the settlers would have found another figure in the government to champion their cause, but in Peres they found a good listener whose door was always open; it would have been difficult to cultivate this sort of relationship with another Labor Party minister. In short, in much of the years 1953-1977, Peres was a highly influential actor, who played a significant role in moving the country's defense and foreign policy in a decidedly hawkish direction.

CHAPTER 5

PERES'S DOVISH TURN, PHASE I (1977-1987)

The year 1977 marks an important turning point in Peres's shift from a hawk to a dove. By the end of that year, he began to change his approach toward the Arab-Israeli conflict in general and the Palestinian issue in particular. He embraced the concept of territorial compromise; adopted a more positive tone with regard to the Arab world; began to change his attitude toward Jewish settlements in the West Bank; and emerged as a committed supporter of the peace process.

Several critical events affecting Peres's political career occurred that year. In February, Minister of Defense Peres challenged Prime Minister Rabin for the Labor Party's top spot. Rabin managed to squeeze out a narrow victory, only to resign two months later in the wake of a scandal over his wife's illegal foreign bank account. Peres was subsequently chosen to replace Rabin as the Labor Party Chairman and its candidate for Prime Minister. Then in May, for the first time since the establishment of the state, the Labor Party was soundly defeated by Menachem Begin's Likud Party in the national elections; Peres's Labor Party was relegated to the opposition. Six months later, on 19 November, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat made a historic visit to Israel to address Israelis from the rostrum of the Knesset, where he called for peace between the two countries. Each of these events, it will be shown below, had an impact to some extent on Peres's evolving views concerning Arab-Israeli peacemaking. It will also be demonstrated that Peres's high levels of cognitive openness and complexity help to explain his proclivity to modify his beliefs in

accordance with new information he received from the environment – in contrast to other leaders who were witness to the same information yet resisted changing their beliefs or were comparatively slow to do so.

The Beginnings of a Dovish Shift

Support for Territorial Compromise

As shown in the previous chapter, Peres and Moshe Dayan had been the Labor Party's leading opponents of territorial compromise in the decade following the 1967 War. By the late 1970s, however, Peres had become a committed supporter of territorial compromise. In interviews and Knesset speeches, and various other public forums, he spoke repeatedly of the need "to withdraw from territories," though he remained vague about the extent of such a withdrawal from the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.¹⁸⁷

Peres adopted the Labor Party's key marketing tool for territorial compromise: the demographic argument. According to this oft-stated argument, if Israel was to remain a democratic state with a Jewish character, it could not rule indefinitely over an Arab minority – a growing minority that could one day become a majority – against its will. In 1977, Peres began employing this rationale in his public pronouncements – a rationale from which he since has not strayed. "We do not want to include in the heart of the Zionist and Jewish demography a minority that always

¹⁸⁷ See Peres address to the Knesset, 20 June 1977, File #108, Batch #1090, 2004, IDF Archives; "Interview with Shimon Peres," *Davar*, 31 March 1978; "Peres: Labor Party Ready to Concede Territory," *The Washington Post*, 7 July 1978; and Peres address to Labor Party Central Committee, 30 December 1979, File #2-23-1979-120 (bet), Labor Party Archive.

will be an eternal threat to our existence,” he declared.¹⁸⁸ The Likud’s stated objective of annexing the West Bank and Gaza came under sharp criticism by Peres for neglecting the demographic consequences of such a move. “The argument is not whether or not to annex the territories to the state of Israel...the argument is whether to annex Arabs to the state of Israel,” Peres contended.¹⁸⁹ If the government were to annex well over a million Arabs, he argued, the state of Israel would be endangered, because as a bi-national state it would no longer remain a Jewish one.¹⁹⁰ The answer to the demographic danger was territorial compromise. “What is territorial compromise?” Peres asked rhetorically. “It is necessary for ensuring the Jewish character of the state of Israel in the future,” he answered.¹⁹¹

Such arguments, couched in terms of Israel’s security concerns, tended to trump moral explanations for ending the occupation. Nevertheless, a noticeable shift in Peres’s attitude toward the moral aspect of the occupation can be discerned in the late 1970s as well. As Minister of Defense in the mid-1970s, Peres had rejected the very term “occupation,” as was shown in the previous chapter. By 1979, however, Peres began raising the moral problem inherent in occupying another people. “We do not want to be a nation that rules over other nations,” he said. “Not only do we not want to transform Israel from a Jewish state to an Arab one, but we also do not want

¹⁸⁸ Labor Party Central Committee Meeting, 23 July 1978, File #2-23-1977-118-B, Labor Party Archive, Beit Berl; Labor Party Central Committee Meeting, 25 December 1977, File #2-23-1977-117-B, Labor Party Archive, Beit Berl; Labor Party Forum, 25 September 1979, File #2-23-1979-120-A (aleph), Labor Party Archive; Labor Party Convention, 1980, File #2-021-1980-140, Labor Party Archive; Labor Party Convention, 23 February 1977, File #23, Batch 31, 1980, IDF Archives.

¹⁸⁹ Labor Party Central Committee Meeting, 25 November 1979, File #2-23-1979-120-B (bet), Labor Party Archive.

¹⁹⁰ Labor Party Central Committee Meeting, 22 October 1981, File #2-23-1981-123, Labor Party Archive; Labor Party Central Committee Meeting, 30 December 1979, File #2-23-1979-120-B (bet), Labor Party Archive; Labor Party Central Committee Meeting, 26 November 1981, File #2-23-1981-123, Labor Party Archive.

¹⁹¹ Peres address at Labor Party Central Committee, 23 July 1978, File #2-23-1977-118 (bet), Labor Party Archive.

to turn Israel into a country that rules over Arabs, even though we have the power to do so; we do not want to do so for moral reasons.”¹⁹² Another moral danger that Peres saw stemming from the occupation was the growing Israeli dependence on Arab labor, “not because it is Arabs who are working, but because the Jews are stopping to work.”¹⁹³ Thus, to remain self-sufficient, rather than rely on others to do the work for them, Peres saw it in Israel’s interest to end the occupation. Since annexation would lead to a bi-national state and continued occupation was politically and morally dangerous, territorial compromise was a real necessity.

Diminished Support for Settlements

Following the Likud’s victory in the May 1977 elections, Begin made settling the West Bank a high priority for his government. Ariel Sharon, who joined the government as Minister of Agriculture, played a big role in encouraging the construction of new settlements. Peres criticized the Likud’s plans for settling all of the West Bank. The founder of some of the first settlements, who only a year earlier met with Likud officials to mobilize their support for his hawkish settlement policy, now advised caution with regard to the pace and extent of settling the biblical lands of Judea and Samaria. “Is it allowed?” Peres asked rhetorically. “Certainly it’s allowed,” he responded, “but we must remember to distinguish between what is needed and what is allowed.”¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Labor Party Central Committee Meeting, 25 November 1979, File #2-23-1979-120-B (bet), Labor Party Archive.

¹⁹³ Peres address to Labor Party Central Committee, 17 September 1981, File #2-23-1981-123, Labor Party Archive.

¹⁹⁴ Peres address to Labor Party Central Committee, 19 May 1977, File #2-23-1977-116 (aleph), Labor Party Archive.

Peres rationalized his newfound opposition to Begin's policies by distinguishing between "settlements that have a security benefit" and settlements being built in populous Arab areas; the former were, in his mind, the legitimate settlements to which he had lent a hand as Minister of Defense, while the latter was the counterproductive policy of Prime Minister Begin and his Likud party. The problem with Begin's approach, complained Peres, was that by establishing settlements in densely populated Arab areas – territories that the Prime Minister was planning to annex – Begin was unwittingly endangering Israel's Jewish majority. Begin's policy, as Peres described it, was to erect "political settlements," as opposed to the "demographic settlements" established by the previous government.¹⁹⁵ If Labor returned to power, Peres pledged, he would put a stop to building Jewish settlements in these areas.¹⁹⁶

At the same time, Peres's views on settlement policy did not undergo any sort of radical change during the late 1970s. He did not express any regret, for example, over the settlements that had been established under his watch. On the contrary, he defiantly defended his previous actions: "We established settlements...and we do not regret what we did," he stated. "We stand firmly in support of the important and serious settlement construction over the last ten years without regret and without change."¹⁹⁷ He even expressed the hope that the Likud government would not "uproot

¹⁹⁵ Peres address to Labor Party Central Committee, 23 April 1981, File #2-23-1981-122, Labor Party Archive.

¹⁹⁶ "Israeli Labor Stressing Dovish Image, but Doubts Remain," *The New York Times*, 13 June 1980.

¹⁹⁷ Peres address to Labor Party Central Committee, 23 July 1978, File #2-23-1977-118 (bet), Labor Party Archive.

the settlements we built.”¹⁹⁸ In his writings, he laid out his vision for Jewish settlements, which did not betray his earlier support for settlements:

[Israel needs] to create a continuous stretch of new Jewish settlements; to bolster Jerusalem and the surrounding hills, from the north, from the east, and from the south and from the west, by means of the establishment of Jewish townships, suburbs and villages — Ma'aleh Adumim, Ofrah, Gilo, Beit El, Givon and Nahal outposts — to ensure that the Jewish capital and its flanks are secured and underpinned by urban and rural settlements....These settlements will be connected to the coastal plain and Jordan Valley by new lateral axis roads; the settlements along the Jordan River are intended to establish the Jordan River as [Israel's] de facto security border; however, it is the settlements on the western slopes of the hills of Samaria and Judea which will deliver us from the curse of Israel's 'narrow waist' (Peres 1978: 48).¹⁹⁹

Nevertheless, by the early 1980s, Peres's rhetoric concerning settlements had undergone a noticeable shift. No longer did he speak about the need to create a string of settlements along the hills of Samaria or the Jordan Valley. Any reference he made to the government's program of settling the West Bank was expressed in largely negative terms. He lamented the Begin government's "investment in Judea and Samaria" while "numerous moshavim and kibbutzim are in dire financial straits" yet were being neglected by the government.²⁰⁰

Peres's growing number of attacks on the Likud's settlement policy was a reaction to the government's accelerated pace in constructing new settlements and in appropriating increasingly greater revenues for the settlement enterprise. In the early 1980s, Begin and Sharon – who, in 1981, became Minister of Defense – established "bedroom communities" by subsidizing housing within commuting distance of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. For several years beginning in 1981, over eighty percent of

¹⁹⁸ Peres address to Labor Party Central Committee, 6 December 1978, Labor Party Central Committee, Labor Party Archive.

¹⁹⁹ This passage, from Peres's book *Tomorrow is Now*, was translated by Martin Sherman and quoted in his op-ed, "Peres vs. Peres," *Jerusalem Post*, 13 December 2003.

²⁰⁰ *Moshavim* are a type of cooperative agricultural communities of small, individual farms, while *kibbutzim* are collective communities. See Peres's address to Labor Party Central Committee, 18 November 1982, File #2-23-1982-124 (gimel), Labor Party Archive.

public funds invested in the territories went towards the construction of these communities (Tessler 1994: 548). It was not surprising, therefore, that by the end of 1981, there was a 30 percent increase in the number of Jewish settlers in the West Bank, and by the end of 1982 there was another 30 percent increase, bringing the number of settlers to 21,000 (Ibid.) In total, there were 103 Jewish settlements, 70 of which had been built by Begin's government (Ibid).

In the 1984 national election campaign, Peres, Labor's candidate for Prime Minister, repeatedly blasted the Likud government for investing \$3.5 billion in settlements over a seven-year period.²⁰¹ When Peres and the Likud's Shamir (Begin's successor) established a government of "national unity" following the near-tie that resulted from these elections – Labor received 44 seats, while Likud garnered 41 seats – the new government's settlement policy was a major issue of contention in the coalition negotiations. The two major parties agreed that any proposal for a new settlement would necessitate the approval of the entire government.²⁰² In practical terms, Labor agreed to the establishment of six new settlements, an agreement that had the support of both Peres, who directed the negotiations and who would serve as Prime Minister (until 1986), and Rabin, who would serve as Minister of Defense for the entire duration of the new government. Only a minority of Labor's senior officials, such as Gad Yaacobi and Yitzhak Navon, voiced their objections to these settlements, though they did so in ministerial meetings rather than publicly. "We said that this was an unnecessary concession," recalls Yaacobi. Peres, he says, "is no small

²⁰¹ "An Interview with Shimon Peres," *Time*, 9 July 1984, p. 32; "Begin's Rhetoric: Missing in Shamir-Peres Debate," *Los Angeles Times*, 11 July 1984, pp. 6, 13.

²⁰² Labor Party Central Committee Meeting, 10 September 1984, File #2-23-1984-126 (aleph), Labor Party Archive.

manipulator and diplomat. He said, ‘we didn’t have a choice – the government wouldn’t have emerged otherwise.’”²⁰³ As Prime Minister from 1984-86, then Foreign Minister from 1986-88, Peres was thus constrained in terms of stopping settlement activity. He was able to limit it, but his Likud colleagues in these two national unity governments prevented him from freezing settlement activity altogether. Notwithstanding his limited influence in this regard, what is clear is that by 1987, Peres had become a critic of the settlement enterprise. Recalls a former colleague:

At that point, I was able to discern a sharp distinction in his view between the Jordan Valley and Judea and Samaria. I then understood that he made this distinction and that he was prepared to act accordingly. I think that in his first term as Prime Minister, he already began presenting clear views: [settlements in] the Golan Heights – yes; [settlements in] Judea and Samaria and the Gaza Strip – no. But he wasn’t Prime Minister long enough to implement it.²⁰⁴

In short, by the late-1970s, Peres no longer gave unqualified support for the establishment of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. He began to distinguish between settlements that were legitimate in his eyes versus those that were problematic. In the mid-1980s, he sharpened his criticism of the governing Likud party’s settlement policy but stopped short of demanding a complete halt to new settlements as a condition for remaining in the government.

Continued Opposition to a Palestinian State

In the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, Peres continued to oppose the creation of an independent Palestinian state.²⁰⁵ “With regard to a Palestinian state,” he told the Labor Party Central Committee on 25 December 1977, “we do not simply

²⁰³ Interview with Gad Yaacobi, 9 October 2006, Tel Aviv.

²⁰⁴ Interview with Zvili, 4 December 2006, Tel Aviv.

²⁰⁵ As will be discussed in chapter 6, only in the late-1990s did Peres publicly endorse the idea of an independent Palestinian state.

oppose a third state because a Palestinian state would not bring peace; to my regret such a state would also push for the continuation of the conflict between the Arabs and ourselves.”²⁰⁶ He promised that if Labor returned to power, it would not permit the establishment of such a state.²⁰⁷ Peres believed that a Palestinian state would be “a disaster for Israel, for the Middle East, and for peace” because it would lead to terrorism, military conflicts, and deeper Soviet involvement in the area.²⁰⁸ Of particular concern to him was the prospect of an additional army between Israel and the Kingdom of Jordan.²⁰⁹

His opposition to Palestinian independence was shared by most of his colleagues in the Labor Party and, of course, by those affiliated with the right-wing Likud. “It is inconceivable to us to allow a Palestinian state...It would be a mortal danger to us,” stated Begin in an interview given shortly after his 1977 election triumph. Begin correctly noted in that interview that there was a national consensus on this issue.²¹⁰

Where Peres’s Labor Party clearly distinguished itself from the governing Likud was in opposing the latter’s annexation plans and supporting, instead, territorial compromise in the framework of a Jordanian solution to the conflict. Peres, in particular, became his party’s chief advocate of the “Jordanian option,” viewing it as

²⁰⁶ Peres address to Labor Party Central Committee, 25 December 1977, File #2-23-1977-117 (bet), Labor Party Archive.

²⁰⁷ “Israeli Labor Stressing Dovish Image, but Doubts Remain,” *The New York Times*, 13 June 1980; see also Peres Address to Labor Party Central Committee, 7 September 1980, File #2-23-981-121 (bet), Labor Party Archive.

²⁰⁸ Labor Party Subcommittee on Political Matters, 7 January 1977, File #2-021-1977-133, Labor Party Archive.

²⁰⁹ Labor Party Central Committee Meeting, 25 November 1979, File #2-23-1979-120-B (bet), Labor Party Archive; Third Labor Party Convention in Binyanei Ha’uma, Jerusalem, 17 December 1980, File #2-021-1980-140, Labor Party Archive.

²¹⁰ David Halevy, “A Palestine State: ‘Inconceivable,’” *Time*, 30 May 1977, p. 31.

a way to resolve the Palestinian issue while avoiding the establishment of another state between Jordan and Israel. Addressing a meeting of the Labor Party Central Committee on 25 November 1979, Peres said: “If we do not want a Palestinian state in addition to the Palestinian state that exists – and Jordan is, in effect, a Palestinian state – we must conduct negotiations with Jordan.”²¹¹ Peres’s not-so-veiled reference to Jordan serving as the Palestinian state is indicative of his strong opposition at that time to an independent Palestinian state. To be sure, more often than not, Peres was careful to include Palestinians – as opposed to the Jordanians alone – in his framework for a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, although the addition of Palestinians sometimes appeared to be little more than an afterthought. “We are calling on the Jordanians and the Palestinians to join forces in resolving the Palestinian problem,” he said at the opening of the Third Labor Party Convention on 17 December 1980. “Most of the Palestinians are residents of Jordan, and most of the residents in the territories are Jordanian citizens. Given that it is a single problem it is necessary to find one solution...within a Jordanian-Palestinian framework,” Peres said.²¹² Despite Peres’s inclusion of the Palestinians in such a delegation, however, he viewed the Palestinians as a necessary accessory rather than the crux of the solution to the conflict. “They [the Palestinians] do not have an exclusive right to decide themselves on the future of the territories,” Peres argued. “Their needs will come into consideration, but will not be the sole factor,” he stressed.²¹³

²¹¹ Peres address to Labor Party Central Committee, 25 November 1979, File #2-23-1979-120 (bet), Labor Party Archive.

²¹² Peres address to the Third Labor Party Convention in Binyanei Ha’uma in Jerusalem, 17 December 1980, File #2-021-1980-140, Labor Party Archive.

²¹³ Peres address to the Labor Party Central Committee, 26 November 1981, File #2-23-1981-123, Labor Party Archive.

Peres's approach did not deviate in any significant way from his Labor Party colleagues or from the party platform, which, throughout the 1980s, supported negotiations with a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation and, at the same time, rejected "the establishment of an additional separate state in the territory between Israel and Jordan."²¹⁴

The viability of the "Jordanian Option" peaked in 1987, the year Peres reached the ill-fated London Agreement with Jordan's King Hussein. The King's subsequent decision to renounce claims to the West Bank would serve as a key turning point in Peres's hawk-to-dove transformation, a point that will be discussed in detail below.

Continued Opposition to Negotiations with the PLO

The Jordanian option was, as far as Peres was concerned, the best antidote to a solution that would require a deal with the PLO. According to this logic, by dealing with the western-oriented Jordanian monarch, Israel would be spared the nuisance of having to deal with the wily terrorist Yasser Arafat. "It is not possible to say no to the PLO without saying yes to Jordan," Peres argued. "If you say no to Jordan and no to the PLO," he continued, "you create a sort of creature with whom you cannot conduct negotiations."²¹⁵

Yes to Jordan and *no* to the PLO was Peres's position throughout the 1970s and 1980s. He was convinced that the PLO would not alter its rejection of Israel and support for terrorism; that it lacked a governing structure representing the majority of

²¹⁴ See, for example, Labor Party Platform, Fourth Congress, 8-10 April 1986, Labor Party Archive. See, also, "A Bitter Divorce," *Time*, 31 October 1988, p. 26.

²¹⁵ Peres address to Labor Party Central Committee, 27 October 1977, File #2-23-1977-117 (bet), Labor Party Archive.

the Palestinians' true desires; and that, politically, any solution involving the PLO would not be as viable as a deal with Jordan.²¹⁶ As leader of the Labor Party, Peres became well acquainted with the leadership of the Socialist International, befriending his European counterparts. He disagreed vehemently with the organization's position that Israel ought to negotiate with the PLO. To those who suggested that the PLO be granted recognition by Israel, Peres would reply: "Stroking a tiger will not make it a pussycat."²¹⁷ He adamantly resisted the pressure placed on him by leaders of the Socialist International – Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky, in particular – to engage the PLO in peace talks, as can be clearly discerned from Labor Party Central Committee meetings during these years. On one occasion, Peres chastised Kreisky for "proving that despite his good relations with the PLO, it hasn't prevented the problem of terrorism and the desire of a group of extremists among the Palestinians to eliminate the state of Israel."²¹⁸ Peres's opposition to negotiations with the PLO did

²¹⁶ See Peres's address to Labor Party Central Committee, 8 July 1979, File #2-23-1979-119 (bet), Labor Party Archive; Ohed Zmoreh, "A plan for difficult years," [Interview with Labor Party Chairman Shimon Peres], *Davar Hashavua*, 10 September 1980, pp. 5-7; Peres's address to Labor Party Central Committee, 6 September 1981, File #2-23-1981-122, Labor Party Archive; Peres's address to Labor Party Central Committee, 20 February 1986, File #2-23-1986-129 (aleph), Labor Party Archive.

²¹⁷ "Step by Step with Shimon Peres," *Time*, 18 April 1977, p. 24; Peres address to the Labor Party Central Committee, 17 September 1981, File #2-23-1981-123, Labor Party Archive.

²¹⁸ Peres's address to Labor Party Central Committee, 6 September 1981, File #2-23-1981-122, Labor Party Archive. For additional expressions of disagreement with the Socialist International leadership over the matter of the PLO, see Peres's address to Labor Party Central Committee, 23 July 1978, File #2-23-1977-118 (bet), Labor Party Archive; Peres's address to Labor Party Central Committee, 8 July 1979, File #2-23-1979-119 (bet), Labor Party Archive; Peres's address to Labor Party Central Committee, 17 September 1981, File #2-23-1981-123, Labor Party Archive; Peres's address to Labor Party Central Committee, 22 October 1981, File #2-23-1981-123, Labor Party Archive; Peres's address to Labor Party Central Committee, 26 November 1981, File #2-23-1981-123, Labor Party Archive; and Peres's address to Labor Party Central Committee, 18 November 1982, File #2-23-1982-124, Labor Party Archive.

not change after he became Prime Minister in 1984. The PLO was, as far as he was concerned, an organization that was committed to terrorism, not peace.²¹⁹

Peres's position reflected the mainstream view among the country's leaders. The Likud's Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir firmly opposed any dealings with the PLO, but so did senior Labor Party figures, such as Peres's archrival, Yitzhak Rabin. Yigal Allon, the former Foreign Minister, regarded the Palestinian National Covenant as "an Arabic Mein Kampf" because it called for the destruction of Israel (Agid-Ben Yehuda and Auerbach 1991). Only a minority in Labor voiced a willingness to conduct negotiations with the PLO. In one party debate, for example, Mordechai Gur declared that Israel ought to "negotiate with anyone in the Arab world that recognizes Israel's right to exist in peace and security. It goes for states and it goes for organizations." Peres responded by saying that "if Israel will be seen as soft toward the PLO, the world will not hesitate to join the PLO in clobbering Israel on the head."²²⁰ While dovish Labor Party figures like Yossi Sarid expressed support for talks with the PLO, these voices tended to be marginalized. Throughout the 1980s, the party's platform stated explicitly that "the PLO and other organizations based on the Palestinian Covenant, which denies the State of Israel's right to exist and rejects the national character of the Jewish people, or which use terrorist methods, cannot be partners to negotiations."²²¹

²¹⁹ "Mideast Peace Prospects: 'The Same Old Dark Picture'," *U.S. News & World Report*, 14 October 1985, p.49. [Interview with Peres]

²²⁰ Labor Party Central Committee Meeting, 22 October 1981, File #2-23-1981-123, Labor Party Archive.

²²¹ See, for example, the Labor Party Platform of the Fourth Congress, 8-10 April 1986, Labor Party Archive.

Peace Becomes a Top Priority for Peres

Notwithstanding his continued opposition to talks with the PLO and to the establishment of a Palestinian state, peace emerged as a top priority for Peres in the late 1970s. “Peace and security will be the foremost consideration in elections, in the party, in parliamentary tactics,” he declared at the end of the decade.²²² For Peres, it was imperative that Israel not miss what he regarded as the golden opportunity launched by Sadat’s peace initiative in 1977 to settle the Arab-Israeli dispute. “If there will not be a continuation of the peace process, then there will be a process of no peace,” Peres predicted. “Things don’t stop in the middle of the road. The peace process must continue.”²²³ Throughout his years as opposition leader, Peres continued to promote the peace process, criticizing Prime Minister Begin, and later Begin’s successor, Yitzhak Shamir, for their failure to carry out the autonomy plan in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as stipulated in the Camp David Accords.

Peres thus underwent a significant change in the late 1970s and early 1980s concerning his attitude toward the Arab-Israeli conflict in general and the Palestinians in particular. This change manifested itself, first and foremost, in a marked shift in rhetoric. Throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and most of the 1970s, Peres spoke and wrote about hostile Arab intentions. In Peres’s view, Israel lacked a partner in the Arab world, which was united in its goal: the destruction of the Jewish state. In the late 1970s, however, Peres had identified at least one prominent Arab partner for peace: Egypt. “I got the impression that Egypt and its president, like Israel and its

²²² Labor Party Central Committee Meeting, March 18, 1979, File #2-23-1979-119-B (bet), Labor Party Archive.

²²³ Labor Party Central Committee Meeting, October 22, 1981, File #2-23-1981-123, Labor Party Archive.

government, are interested in peace,” he declared to his Labor Party colleagues, some of whom had remained skeptical toward Egyptian President Anwar Sadat’s true intentions.²²⁴ Peres’s approach toward the Arab world extended to the Palestinians as well, according to Peres’s former political aides, who emphasize his adoption of a much more positive attitude and rhetoric toward the Palestinians.²²⁵ Recalls Gideon Levy, ex-Peres spokesman-turned-leftist firebrand *Haaretz* journalist: “...you could see mainly how his rhetoric had changed. His rhetoric in those days [late 1970s] was really a rhetoric I can sign onto today – me, maybe one of the most radical Israelis! I could sign onto his rhetoric.”²²⁶ Another former political aide recalls that when he began working for Peres in July 1977, he thought he would be working for a hawk, “but instead I found him to be a dove.”²²⁷

According to Moshe Shachal, a Peres associate who served as a Labor Party Member of Knesset and cabinet minister, “Peres emerges as a persistent leader for peace” throughout the four governments of which they were both cabinet members. Shachal notes that the hawkish leader in the 1970s became the key person “who really made a very persistent effort to have peace with the Arab countries, with the Palestinians.”²²⁸ Shachal notes that one of Peres’s constant challenges at each junction was to present formulas that would be acceptable to all segments of the Labor Party, from hawks to doves. Although at times, his pragmatism would lend itself to conduct reminiscent of an *askan* [a wheeler-dealer], Shachal insists that Peres

²²⁴ Peres’s address to Labor Party Central Committee, 23 July 1978, File #2-23-1977-118 (bet), Labor Party Archive. See also Peres’s address to Labor Party Central Committee, 6 December 1978, File #2-23-1977-118 (gimel), Labor Party Archive.

²²⁵ Interviews with Yossi Beilin, 6 December 2006, Jerusalem; Gideon Levy, 14 November 2006, Tel Aviv; Israel Peleg, 21 December 2006, Shfayim.

²²⁶ Interview with Gideon Levy.

²²⁷ Interview with Israel Peleg.

²²⁸ Interview with Moshe Shachal, 30 October 2006, Tel Aviv.

was remarkably consistent in pursuing peace since becoming the leader of the opposition in 1977.²²⁹

To sum up, the decade that began in 1977, with Peres's ascent to the Labor Party chairmanship and leadership of the opposition, witnessed a palpable shift in Peres's attitude toward the key criterion distinguishing hawk from dove: territorial partition. From 1967 to 1977, Peres was an outspoken opponent of territorial compromise, situating himself to the right of his Labor Party colleagues. However, beginning in January 1977, Peres embraced the concept he had earlier criticized, becoming the leading voice in favor of territorial withdrawal, which he argued was necessary for guaranteeing Israel's Jewish majority in the long run. Around this time, Peres's enthusiasm for settling the West Bank diminished. To be sure, he continued to defend those settlements that had been established under his watch, and he continued to promote, in his writings, the notion of settling the mountain ridge and the Jordan River. At the same time, however, he was quite critical of Begin's aggressive settlement policy, arguing that it was foolish to build settlements in densely populated Arab areas. Two related issues in which he did not change his views during the 1977-87 period concern the establishment of a Palestinian state and negotiations with the PLO, both of which he continued to oppose. Finally, there was a noticeable shift in Peres's rhetoric vis-à-vis Israel's enemies, while peace became a high priority item on Peres's agenda.

²²⁹ Ibid.

Analysis of Peres's Dovish Turn in 1977-87 Period

Domestic Political Factors: Labor Party Politics and Opposition Politics

Peres's newfound expressions of support for territorial compromise coincided with political activities within the Labor Party. During the weeks that preceded the Labor Party convention in late-February, Peres campaigned to replace incumbent party leader Yitzhak Rabin. In these pre-primary days, the party chairman – who also was its candidate for prime minister – was chosen by the 3,000 party delegates attending the convention. A clear majority of Labor Party members favored territorial compromise in contrast to Peres, who was to the right of most of his party colleagues.²³⁰ Had Peres stuck to his hardline positions, it would have made him less competitive with Rabin in terms of gaining the chairmanship of a party that was committed to territorial compromise; this was, after all, a concept that essentially marked the key difference between the two major parties, Labor and Likud. In early February, Peres thus joined Rabin in support of the draft platform plank, which advocated “territorial compromise on all three fronts” – that is, the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights, and the West Bank.²³¹ As it turned out, Rabin narrowly defeated Peres in that race, winning by merely 41 ballots (1,445 to Peres's 1,404).

At the convention, Peres spoke of “the objective of territorial compromise” and the need for Israel to concede territories in the framework of negotiations.²³² From that moment on, Peres publicly – and emphatically – supported territorial compromise. Rabin's victory at the convention, however, was short-lived. In April, a scandal entailing his wife's bank account in the United States – illegal at the time –

²³⁰ See interviews with Gad Yaacobi, Nissim Zvili, and Yossi Beilin.

²³¹ AP, 6 February 1977.

²³² File #23, Batch 31, 1980, IDF Archives.

led to his resignation. Peres was then picked as his successor, becoming the party's candidate for prime minister. However, after Labor suffered its first defeat in the 1977 elections, Peres assumed the role of opposition leader, a role that, by definition, required him to draw sharp distinctions between the Likud's Prime Minister Menachem Begin and himself. He understood that, as opposition leader, he was expected by his party and by the general public to offer a clear alternative to the government's policy. Says Beilin, "he became a leader of a party that did not accept his view, so he had to accommodate himself."²³³ Indeed, he did so by making repeated references that year to Labor's historic support for territorial partition, and crediting this support with the establishment of the state of Israel.²³⁴ Just as Ben-Gurion favored painful compromises in 1948, Peres argued, the situation Israel faced thirty years later necessitated similarly difficult compromises in the West Bank.²³⁵ The Labor Party's ideology, he declared, was "an ideology that has declared that peace has a price – territorial compromise, an ideology that has rejected extremism, be it Greater Israel or total concession of the State of Israel..."²³⁶ Greater Israel was, after all, the policy of Begin's Likud-led government.

Domestic politics thus played a critical role in the timing of Peres's favorable pronouncements on territorial compromise. The race for the party leadership, the subsequent national elections, and the opposition politics that followed Labor's debacle at the polls are key "triggering events" that explain Peres's sudden change on

²³³ Interview with Yossi Beilin.

²³⁴ See, for example, Peres's address to the Knesset, 20 June 1977, File #108, Batch 1090, 2004, IDF Archives; Peres's address to the Labor Party Central Committee, 21 July 1977, File #2-23-1977-117-A.

²³⁵ Ibid; see also "Interview with Shimon Peres," *Davar*, 31 March 1978; "Peres: Labor Party Ready to Concede Territory," *The Washington Post*, 7 July 1978 [interview]

²³⁶ Labor Party Central Committee Meeting, 24 September 1978, File #2-23-1977-118-C (gimel), Labor Party Archive.

the issue of territorial compromise in 1977. It must be noted, however, that domestic politics constitutes only part of the explanation for Peres's dovish turn. As Israel Peleg, one of Peres's former aides from this era attests, "the party matter was important as far as his political standing," but it did not form the basis of Peres's worldview. "It's a focal point of power that he knew was important to him – that if he wanted to realize the ideas he was adopting, learning, planning, seeing in the long term, he couldn't do this if he wasn't the head of the party," says Peleg. "I don't think it formed him, I think it was utilized by him."²³⁷ It would be mistaken, therefore, to conflate the impetus behind Peres's rhetorical shift with the underlying reasons for his evolving attitude on the prospects for peace with the Arab world and on issues such as settlements. What were these underlying reasons?

Systemic-Structural Factors: Socio-Economic Changes in the Arab World, the Completion of the Dimona Project, and Sadat's Historic Visit

In the 1970s, Peres began talking about social changes he was observing in the Arab world. "There is no doubt that far-reaching social change is already knocking on the historic door of the Arabs," he wrote in his book *David's Sling* (Peres 1970: 12). According to Peres, if indeed there was such a change, "the destiny of the region will be completely transformed" and he expressed his "hope of a different kind of future for Arab-Israeli relations" (Peres 1970: 12). Later in the decade – but prior to the internal political events discussed above – Peres elaborates on this theme. With the accelerating price of arms, he asserted, Arab leaders would not be able to afford continued warfare with Israel:

²³⁷ Interview with Israel Peleg. Nissim Zvili, too, points out that, while domestic political factors undoubtedly played a role in his embrace of territorial compromise, "Shimon began to understand more and more the meaning of what ought to happen." See interview with Nissim Zvili.

I certainly think that a change has taken place in the Arab world on the issue of peace and war. The change emanates from a socio-economic structural change in Arab society, primarily in Egypt...It is wrong to think that the wars left scars only in Israel. In my opinion, the wars left scars also with the Arabs, caused losses, frustration. The price of arms is going up and is a burden on the Arab world. Wars cause also an accelerated pace of political and social processes, each society emerges differently in almost every war. It is true also with regard to the Arab countries, not only with regard Israel...²³⁸

According to Peres, wars had left deep scars in the Arab world, resulting in a loss of both arms and oil. Due to the burden of Arab-Israeli wars on the Arab economies, “there are structural changes taking place in every single country in the Middle East,” he argued.²³⁹

Above all, Peres believed that Arab leaders had come to appreciate “the satiety in the military strength of the Middle East,” in particular “the destructive strength of the new arms.”²⁴⁰ What was likely on Peres’s mind was the completion of his pet project: Israel’s nuclear reactor in Dimona – a project initiated and overseen by Peres during his tenure as Director-General of the Ministry of Defense. According to Avner Cohen, Israel became a nuclear weapon state on the eve of the 1967 war (Cohen 1998: 275). By the early 1970s, Arab leaders either assumed Israel to be a nuclear power or suspected that it was on its way to becoming one (Aronson 1992; Quester 1979; Weizman 1981). Peres had long believed that the day would come when the Arab world would recognize the futility of attempting to destroy the Jewish state. Dimona had been designed to do just that. According to Peres, in the aftermath of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the Arab world had come to realize that defeating Israel was an unrealistic goal. “We had Dimona and also I think the Arabs reached the

²³⁸ Labor Party Subcommittee on Political Matters, 7 January 1977, File #2-021-1977-133, Labor Party Archive.

²³⁹ Second Labor Party Convention, Sixth Session, 24 February 1977, File #2-021-1977-133, Labor Party Archive.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

maximum and came to the conclusion that they cannot win. And also they knew that we didn't use everything we have," he notes many years later.²⁴¹ In the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War, Peres became convinced that Israel had "the defensive strength necessary to survive."²⁴²

A milestone event that reinforced Peres's conclusion was Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's decision to visit Jerusalem and address the Knesset in November 1977. Sadat's symbolic gesture had a discernable psychological impact on Israeli public opinion, which, practically overnight, saw a shift from overwhelming opposition to returning the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt to overwhelming support for such a move (Arian 1995: 104). Sadat's gesture, beyond being a symbolic one, signified an important geopolitical shift: Israel's biggest enemy, Egypt, would henceforth no longer threaten Israel with destruction. Indeed, the Egyptian-Israeli peace talks that followed Sadat's visit, and which culminated in the first-ever Arab-Israeli peace treaty, solidified this structural change, a fact that was not lost on Peres.²⁴³ As far as Peres was concerned, however, Sadat's move took on additional importance in that it served to validate the Dimona project. For Peres, Sadat's decision to make peace with Israel proved that Dimona had had a palpable effect on the attitude of at least one Arab leader's attitude toward Israel. According to Peres, the then-Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Yadin confided in him that Sadat had told him that his suspicions of Israel's nuclear capability played a key role in convincing him

²⁴¹ Interview with Shimon Peres, 3 November 2006, Tel Aviv.

²⁴² Labor Party Central Committee Meeting, 23 July 23 1978, File #2-23-1977-118-B, Labor Party Archive. Peres claims he came to this conclusion shortly after the 1973 War. See interview with Peres.

²⁴³ Interviews with Yossi Beilin and Israel Peleg.

that Israel could not be destroyed.²⁴⁴ Peres thus saw the Dimona project as the underlying factor precipitating Sadat's move that led, in turn, to the important structural change favoring Israel.²⁴⁵

If domestic politics explains the *timing* of Peres's dovish turn, these structural factors, which pointed to a diminished sense of threat, constitute the *permissive* conditions that led him to alter his views on the Palestinian question. To Peres, Israel had become strong enough to concede territory in exchange for peace, because the price for ceding territory seemed lower than the long-term costs of an occupation that would alter the demographic balance in favor of the Palestinians. Why did these same structural factors not lead other Israeli leaders, such as Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir, to reach the same conclusion as Peres?

Cognitive Openness: The Influences of the Socialist International and Political Aides

In chapter 3, I have tried to show that Peres is a cognitively open individual and that his level of openness is notably higher than that of Rabin and significantly

²⁴⁴ Interview with Peres. In his book *The New Middle East*, Peres writes that one of Sadat's assistants admitted to Yadin and to then-Defense Minister Ezer Weizman that Egypt's decision to talk peace had definitely been influenced by the Dimona project (pp. 4-5).

²⁴⁵ Since Peres was involved in the nuclear program from the start, it might be reasonable to assume that, by the very nature of nuclear strategic logic, his experience could have made him more nuanced as a hawk. Many Israeli doves have long suggested that Israel's status as a nuclear power reduces the risk for Israel to retain buffers of territory. However, although Peres's intimacy with the Dimona project seems to have been an important *permissive condition* for his dovish turn, it does not appear to have been a *causal* factor for his revised positions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. After all, other hawkish figures involved in the Dimona project never changed their hawkish views. For example, Yuval Ne'eman, an Israeli physicist who helped pioneer this project, went on to lead Tehiya (Renaissance), a far-right party, in 1979. Ne'eman founded this party as a protest against Israel's peace treaty with Egypt. Moreover, Peres himself did not moderate his views until a decade following the completion of the Dimona project; from 1967 until 1977, he was very much a hawk. Finally, there are indications that Peres has viewed the Dimona project in tactical terms, as when, for instance, he once commented, "Give me peace and we'll give up the nuclear program. That's the whole story." See Serge Schmemmann, "Peres Says Israel, With Regional Pact, Would End Atom Effort," *The New York Times*, 23 December 1995.

higher than that of Begin and Shamir. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, this openness manifested itself in Peres's receptiveness to both foreign and domestic influences. One group of world leaders whose views Peres got to know particularly well after he became Chairman of the Labor Party was the Socialist International, during a time when socialist parties were in power in many of Europe's capitals. Peres himself became active in the Socialist International and was elected its Vice President in 1978. In this capacity, he met regularly with luminaries like Willy Brandt, leader of the Social Democratic Party of West Germany and President of the Socialist International; Bruno Kreisky, Chancellor of Austria; Swedish Prime Minister Olaf Palme; Portuguese Prime Minister Mario Soares; and French President Francois Mitterrand. These frequent meetings exposed Peres to those voices that pressed for an equitable and expeditious resolution to the Palestinian issue. These leaders pushed hard for Middle East peace. Upon returning from his trips abroad, Peres would recount his conversations with them in party forums and interviews, speaking positively of their efforts to bring the Arab world and Israel closer to peace. Yet he remained firmly opposed to both negotiations with the PLO and the establishment of a Palestinian state – positions strongly supported by the Socialist leaders.

However, his close association with the Socialist International appears to have had a discernable effect on his approach toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The politician who, in the mid-1970s, rejected the very notion of “occupation” began, by the end of the decade, to talk about the moral folly of ruling over the Palestinian people. Says Yossi Beilin: “It was very important for him [Peres] to have good relations with Willie Brandt, with Kreisky, with Olaf Palme. Now, you could not

have good relationships with them with his old ideas. It was important for him to accommodate himself.” According to Beilin, while Peres may not have changed his mind on such matters as holding negotiations with the PLO, he adopted a much more positive attitude, reflected in his rhetoric, toward the Palestinians. “It is not a matter of them [the leaders of the Socialist International] convincing him, but rather is a matter of him understanding that if he doesn’t accommodate himself to their general views on the Middle East, then they will not accept him.”²⁴⁶ According to Beilin’s account, Peres thus *learned* that, to be accepted in the community of Socialist leaders, he would need to begin to seriously address the plight of the Palestinians in his quest for a secure Israel.

Learning theorists note that most cases of learning take place at the tactical level, as opposed to a reassessment of strategic policy beliefs or fundamental assumptions (Tetlock 1991). Whether the impact of the Socialist International on Peres’s adoption of a softer line toward the Palestinians was purely tactical, or perhaps represented part of a deeper, strategic policy shift in Peres’s mind is not entirely clear. “He adjusted himself,” says Yael Dayan. “I don’t know if to reality or to a real understanding of moral questions, historical questions, surrounding himself with people whose basic thing was peace...”²⁴⁷ The veteran journalist and author Yishayahu Ben-Porat, who first began covering Peres’s activities in France in the mid-1950s, recalls that Peres, as opposition leader in the late-1970s and 1980s, was particularly influenced by French President Francois Mitterrand and two of his Jewish advisers, Georges Dayan and Jacques Attali. Ben-Porat stresses that Dayan and Attali

²⁴⁶ Interview with Yossi Beilin.

²⁴⁷ Interview with Yael Dayan, 16 December 2006, Tel Aviv.

tried to impress upon Peres the importance of resolving the Palestinian issue while reassuring him that they shared his concerns for a secure Israel.²⁴⁸ Former Peres aide Israel Peleg rejects the notion that Peres's dovish shift was a purely tactical one:

It's not a matter of expediency. It's not a political matter. There is an intellectual openness to accept a changed situation...He is far-sighted. He is willing to bend what might seem to be his beliefs for the long run. Sometimes it does not seem this way, which is part of his image problem – that he didn't make his moves due to a worldview that crystallized, but rather due to reasons of political expediency. I was with him, and I was close enough to view him from the side. I think it stems from responsibility and nothing else.²⁴⁹

Notwithstanding whether Peres's "learning" was a mere tactical shift on his part, a reassessment of his strategic policy beliefs, or, perhaps, even a reevaluation of some fundamental assumptions, those who were close to him in the 1970s agree that his ongoing interaction with the Europeans at the end of the decade and into the next one was a significant factor in his dovish turn. With regard to his European influences, Peres can be seen to have absorbed information from the environment and modified his positions accordingly. His openness to the views of others – in this case, his European interlocutors – distinguishes him from both his predecessor, Rabin, and his then-Likud party rival, Prime Minister Begin. According to Samuel Lewis, who was the U.S. Ambassador to Israel in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Peres, unlike Begin, "was very sensitive to the international context" and was sensitive not only to American opinion but to European opinion as well.²⁵⁰ It is the level of one's sensitivity to his environment that is, after all, the defining feature of cognitive openness. Yael Dayan, as well, contrasts Begin's derisive attitude toward the views of

²⁴⁸ Interview with Yishayahu Ben-Porat, 17 November 2006, Herzliya Pituach.

²⁴⁹ Interview with Israel Peleg.

²⁵⁰ Interview with Samuel Lewis, 28 August 2006, Washington, D.C.

other world leaders with the *modus operandi* of Peres, who not only was amenable to other viewpoints but actively sought them out on issues including (though not exclusively) Israel's conflict with its neighbors.²⁵¹

As to Rabin, he was, as shown in the previous chapter, more dovish than Peres in the 1970s. He did not need to be convinced, for example, that settlements were detrimental to the cause of peace, having resisted (in vain) Peres's efforts to establish them. However, Rabin, as Prime Minister, did not enjoy a similar relationship with the leaders of the Socialist International or with other world leaders as did Peres. For one thing, Rabin had always held an American orientation – an orientation that became even more entrenched during his ambassadorship to the United States (1968-1973) – and he tended to distrust Europe. But Rabin was also much less interested in what others had to say than was Peres, as I have tried to show in chapter three.²⁵²

If the Socialist International constituted an important moderating influence on Peres from the outside, his longtime aide, Yossi Beilin, helped to fulfill this role from within. Numerous interviewees familiar with Peres have pointed to three pivotal figures who, at various points in Peres's career, played central roles in shaping his policy positions: David Ben-Gurion, Moshe Dayan, and Yossi Beilin. In the previous chapter, Ben-Gurion's and Dayan's mentorship in general, and their roles in informing Peres's hawkishness in particular, were discussed in detail. It was shown, for example, that Peres adopted Ben-Gurion's "activist" approach early on as Director-General of the Ministry of Defense, subsequently as Deputy Minister of Defense, and finally as co-founder of the Rafi party. It also was shown how Peres

²⁵¹ Interview with Yael Dayan.

²⁵² See also interview with Yishayahu Ben-Porat.

greatly admired Dayan and followed his lead, forging a political alliance in the 1950s. It thus came as no surprise when, in light of Dayan's opposition to territorial compromise (and support for a "functional arrangement") following the 1967 War, Peres followed suit. Even after Peres took over the Defense Ministry from Dayan, who resigned in the wake of the devastating losses in the Yom Kippur War, Peres continued to consult with Dayan, as he did, for example, in the hours preceding the Entebbe Operation.²⁵³ After the 1977 elections, however, Dayan stunned the nation by accepting newly elected Prime Minister Begin's offer to serve as his Foreign Minister. Peres, caught off-guard, was particularly distraught by Dayan's decision to abandon Labor and join forces with the Likud government.²⁵⁴ While Peres did not sever his ties to Dayan after this controversial move, their relationship was never the same afterwards. For Peres, this episode represents a clear break not only from their political alliance, but also from his reliance on Dayan to lead the way. Up until that point, Peres had always "accepted everything Dayan said, even if he disagreed with it," notes Shlomo Nakdimon, an author and former aide to Prime Minister Begin. "First, Dayan was his senior. And Peres belongs to that group of civilian leaders who looked up to army officials...Dayan was a general-plus." Zeev Schiff puts it more starkly, arguing that "Dayan had a negative influence" on Peres, because he "prevented him from crystallizing his views." Peres, according to Schiff, "diminished himself next to him [Dayan]" and thus his "crystallization was postponed."²⁵⁵ Indeed, the moment Dayan joined the Begin government, Peres "thought that this would be an

²⁵³ As noted in chapter 3, the then-Defense Minister Shimon Peres made it a point to consult with Dayan, who had left politics, on the wisdom of going ahead with the Entebbe Operation.

²⁵⁴ Interview with Samuel Lewis.

²⁵⁵ Interview with Zeev Schiff, 10 November 2006, Ramat Aviv Gimel.

opportunity to free himself from the guardianship of Dayan and assume the role of the Labor Party, a leftist-oriented party,” Nakdimon asserts.²⁵⁶ Concurringly Yishayahu Ben-Porat, arguing that “the weight of Dayan” had finally been lifted from Peres. “The moment Dayan separated from him, Shimon managed to free himself and open up.”²⁵⁷

As Peres freed himself from Dayan’s grip, he worked feverishly to rebuild the vanquished Labor Party and establish it as a real alternative to the Likud government. To this end, he hired a team of young, highly educated, and ambitious aides headed by Yossi Beilin. One of the distinguishing features of this group was its members’ penchant for speaking their minds and not hesitating to challenge Peres (or one another) when policy disputes arose. Their views were more dovish than those of their boss, yet that hardly deterred them from freely expressing their opinions. Peres did not discourage them from challenging his views and listened to what they had to say – even if, in the end, he rejected their counsel.

By all accounts, the person with whom Peres consulted the most from 1977 on was Beilin. To this day, the two men – despite political and even personal rifts that have come between them – continue to meet regularly.²⁵⁸ Beilin is widely viewed as the person who has had the biggest influence on Peres since Dayan. *Haaretz* Editor-in-Chief David Landau says that “Yossi Beilin is not just key, he’s far and away the most important person in the whole story. There’s no comparison between Shimon Peres’s relations with Yossi Beilin, and his relations with anybody else.”²⁵⁹ Peres’s

²⁵⁶ Interview with Shlomo Nakdimon, 26 November 2006, Ramat Aviv.

²⁵⁷ Interview with Yishayahu Ben-Porat.

²⁵⁸ Interview with Shulamit Aloni.

²⁵⁹ Interview with David Landau, 21 November 2006.

former aides concur that Beilin has, over the years, played a critical role in moving Peres in a more dovish direction.²⁶⁰

Beilin was one of the leaders of the party's Young Guard prior to being picked by Peres to serve as Labor Party spokesman in 1977, following Labor's defeat in the national elections. "The leadership of the Young Guard was more dovish than the majority of branch members," Beilin writes (Beilin 1999: 12). Its members did not see the wisdom of establishing Jewish settlements in the newly conquered territories; nor did they accept the commonly held notion in Israel that there was nobody to talk to on the other side. In 1981, Beilin established the Mashov caucus, a dovish forum that advocated the return of the Golan Heights to Syria, Israeli recognition of the PLO, withdrawal from all of Gaza and most of the West Bank, and the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza – but no compromise concerning Jerusalem – in the framework of a confederation with Jordan (Beilin 1999: 15).²⁶¹ Members of Mashov met regularly with Palestinians throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s to discuss ways in which to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In 1983, Beilin brought in Nimrod Novik as part of Israel's first "100-day team" launched in the widespread anticipation of Peres's victory in the 1984 elections. Beilin brought in experts in various fields who helped to set the framework for the first one hundred days of a Peres-led government. While the Labor Party did not fare as well in the election as the polls had predicted, it did slightly better than Likud, enabling Peres to serve as Prime Minister for the first two years of the "national unity government." Nimrod Novik, who subsequently became Prime

²⁶⁰ See, also, interviews with Aliza Eshed, Gideon Levy, Nimrod Novik, and Israel Peleg.

²⁶¹ *Mashov* is a Hebrew word that stands for feedback.

Minister Peres's chief foreign policy adviser, credits Beilin for having the greatest influence on Peres during the latter's premiership. "I would say that Shimon Peres was working mostly with an additional hard drive, which was Yossi Beilin, who was the brain behind any initiative of foreign policy then and since."²⁶² Beilin himself offers the following assessment of the 100-day team's influence on Peres's thinking:

In many cases, I think that we had an influence. The influence is not on high policy. It is sometimes connected with high policy – whether or not to visit a settlement in the West Bank, for example. So we would say: these are the cons, these are the pros, and we'd make a recommendation as to whether to do it. In most of the cases, he would accept it. Sometimes, he would say: With all due respect, I respect what you say but I'm not going to abide by it. I have my own view about it. But it was an open game. In many cases, we had our own disputes, within the group. I would say: 'Uri [Savir], please support your view.' 'Nimrod, support your view,' and let us see what is happening. Sometimes, he would say to me: 'OK, but if this is the case, what do you think about it?' In many cases, I did not have my own view. I would say: 'both of them are very convincing – you have to decide. But in most of the cases, we already came with a majority view and with a recommendation. So it did work.'²⁶³

In short, Peres's attentiveness to the concerns raised by the leaders of the Socialist International on the one hand, and his own political aides on the other hand – particularly, Yossi Beilin – exposed him to views that were considerably more dovish than his own. His willingness to listen to these views left open the distinct possibility that he would become influenced by them, which, according to Peres's associates, is in fact what had happened.

Cognitive Complexity: Peres as a Multi-Dimensional Thinker

Peres's high level of cognitive complexity, like his openness, helps to explain his capacity to undergo a significant shift from his previously held views on the Palestinian issue. As discussed in chapters two and three, cognitive complexity refers to the number and combination of dimensions an individual applies to characterize a

²⁶² Interview with Nimrod Novik.

²⁶³ Interview with Yossi Beilin.

given situation. The more cognitively complex a decision-maker is, the more capable he or she is of making new distinctions, thus revising his or her beliefs when confronted with new information (Tetlock 1985: 1565-1585).

In chapter three, Peres was shown to have a very high degree of cognitive complexity. Former colleagues, advisers and aides describe him as a multi-dimensional and multi-faceted thinker, who arrives at a decision after carefully examining various aspects of an issue. Important in this regard is what Peres does with the information he assimilates from his environment. Says a former adviser, “it’s not which figures influence Peres, but how he is influenced by them.” When he comes across an original idea that, in his view, holds promise, Peres explores this idea in its various dimensions before committing himself to it.²⁶⁴ Explaining a highly complex decision-making process, a former cabinet minister and Labor Party colleague notes that Peres creates a conceptual framework based on the numerous meetings he has held with various people on a multiple set of issues. Says Avraham Katz-Oz, “I think that he usually does not work on one issue, but rather his conceptual product is a product of dealing and discussing in a very large group of issues. He takes out of this the relevant concept on the issue in which he is working.”²⁶⁵

Understanding the way in which Peres processes information enables us to understand, in turn, why he was inclined to change his mind on core issues such as territorial compromise and settlements. It is important to note that even during his days as a relentless hawk, Peres demonstrated a high level of cognitive complexity

²⁶⁴ Interview with Israel Peleg.

²⁶⁵ Interview with Avraham Katz-Oz, 3 December 2006, Tel Aviv.

concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Six months after the 1967 war, for example, he issued the following assessment about a proposed Israeli withdrawal from the newly occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip:

One can claim that an Israeli withdrawal will not bring peace. But one can also claim that an absence of an Israeli withdrawal is likely to lead to war. Because the question is not just what we want – on the screen of desires, we must project also the will of the other. They too want something. Our ideology reflects only our aspiration. But our policy must take into account the position of our adversary.²⁶⁶

Peres thus views this situation in more than one dimension. His formulation is nuanced – even complex – in that it accounts for alternative ways of evaluating a hypothetical event, one he ended up opposing at the time. As mentioned in chapter four, Peres likewise made the case in an internal party forum that Israel must consider the moral dimension of occupying the West Bank, an argument that was answered swiftly with a harsh rebuke by Peres ally Moshe Dayan.²⁶⁷ These examples serve to illustrate that even during Peres’s most hawkish period, he analyzed the situation with a multidimensional lens.

In short, by consistently maintaining an open mind, considering every possible angle of a given situation, and absorbing each new piece of information he received from the environment – his own reading of the situation as well as input from numerous individuals with whom he consulted – Peres was able to adapt with relative ease to changed circumstances and to update his views.

²⁶⁶ Labor Party Forum, “Jewish Ideology and Israeli Policy,” 28 December 1967, File #5-008-1966-57, Labor Party Archive.

²⁶⁷ Rafi Secretariat Meeting, 3 September 1967, File #5-003-1967-24, Labor Party Archive.

Conclusion

The 1977-1987 period marks the first phase of Shimon Peres's dovish turn. Of the four leaders who dominated Israeli politics during this period – Begin, Rabin, Peres, and Shamir – only Peres's views concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict underwent a significant change. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Rabin was a dove in comparison to the others. Like the majority of Labor Party members, he supported territorial compromise and preferred to see as little settlement construction in the occupied territories as was politically feasible. Peres was a newcomer to these positions. Domestic politics (e.g., becoming chairman of the Labor Party) and structural shifts (e.g., the completion of the Dimona project and Sadat's historic visit to Israel that led to the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty), combined with a fear that the price for continued occupation would be exorbitant given the changing demographic balance between Jews and Palestinians, weighed heavily on his decision to move in a markedly more dovish direction. Indeed, by the mid-1980s, he had emerged as Israel's foremost champion of the peace process. Begin and Shamir, by contrast, remained committed throughout this period to their opposition to territorial compromise and to the annexation of the West Bank and Gaza.

As demonstrated in this chapter, Peres's high levels of cognitive openness and complexity explain the ease with which he was able to revise his views in accordance with new information he received from the environment. Those who were witness to Peres's dovish turn are in agreement that Peres's openness to the views of others played a critical role in his revised positions. In particular, the extensive conversations he held with the leadership of the Socialist International and with his

own team of advisers, who were free to challenge their boss when they disagreed with him, exposed Peres to positions that were more dovish than his own. Moreover, his penchant for viewing concepts and events in multiple dimensions lent itself well to updating his positions. As will be shown in the next chapter, it is these qualities that enabled him to continually update his beliefs in response to changed circumstances, while other leaders – those with lower levels of cognitive openness and complexity – were slower to do so or did not do so at all.

CHAPTER 6

PERES'S DOVISH TURN, PHASE II (1987-1997)

If the events that occurred in 1977 mark that year as the first major turning point in Peres's dovish turn, 1987-88 can be seen as the period in which Peres's second key turning point takes place in his hawk-to-dove evolution, a transition that can be said to have culminated in 1997, the year he first publicly endorsed the idea of an independent Palestinian state. The Oslo process, which began in 1993 and ended abruptly with the start of the second Palestinian Intifada in 2000, shattered big taboos in Israeli society – most notably, the notion accepted by most mainstream Israeli politicians that the PLO was not a legitimate negotiating partner for peace. Indeed, one of the more significant bi-products of “Oslo” was mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO, a development that facilitated direct talks between nearly every prime minister since Yitzhak Rabin with the leadership of the PLO. While 1993 was a watershed year in this regard, for Peres, it was the collapse of the London Agreement of April 1987 that persuaded him that there was no viable alternative to talking with the PLO.

Peres reached this conclusion after the so-called “Jordanian option” was essentially removed as a potential basis for a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.²⁶⁸ Peres's public support for an independent Palestinian state did not come

²⁶⁸ While the leadership of the Labor Party (including both Peres and Rabin) endorsed the Jordanian option, this so-called option was by no means viewed by everyone as a viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Those on the Right tended to view Jordan as the Palestinian state and thus saw no need to negotiate a return of any territory to the Hashemite Kingdom. Those on the Left, by contrast, argued that negotiating with the Palestinian leadership, rather than with Jordan, was the key to peace.

until the late-1990s, when it became increasingly more acceptable to the Israeli public. Yet, like the need to talk with the PLO, he apparently came to this conclusion much sooner.²⁶⁹

The Completion of Peres's Dovish Shift

Intensified Opposition to Settlements

The mid-1980s saw a deceleration in the pace of settlement construction, as compared with the aggressive settlement policy of the nation's first two Likud governments (1977-81, 1981-84).²⁷⁰ The November 1988 elections, however, resulted in a narrow yet significant victory for Likud. The two major parties once again formed a "national unity government," but this time Labor joined the coalition as a junior partner. With Labor's influence significantly diminished in terms of setting government policy, and Likud blocking progress in the peace process, Peres led his party out of the coalition in March 1990. For the next two years, the Likud's Yitzhak Shamir led a narrow right-wing government, with Labor sitting in the opposition. Sharon became Minister of Housing and presided over the largest expansion of Jewish settlements in the country's history. For the duration of that government (1990-92), the number of settlers grew from 90,000 to 126,000, creating a serious crisis in Israel's relations with the United States (Frankel 1994: 295). The expansion of settlements during these two years was unprecedented. Between 1967 and 1990, 20,000 housing units had been built in the West Bank; in 1991 alone, 13,000 housing

²⁶⁹ Interview with Nissim Zvili, 4 December 2006, Tel Aviv.

²⁷⁰ Notwithstanding the slow growth of new settlements during this period, it should be noted that the population in existing ones grew substantially. From 1984-1988, the number of Israelis living in West Bank settlements (beyond East Jerusalem) rose 80 percent, a fact not lost on the leadership of the first Palestinian Intifada (Gorenberg 2006: 369).

units were built (Slater 1996: 470). Fourteen new settlements were erected that year, with the government having spent 2.5 billion shekels (\$1 billion) on settlement-related matters, such as housing, roads, and schools in the West Bank (Ibid). The 1990-1992 Shamir government had invested a total of 3 billion shekels (\$1.2 billion) in the occupied territories (Slater 1996: 474).

Peres did not spare his criticism of the Likud's settlement policy, condemning it privately and publicly, as a minister in the government and, later, as the leader of the opposition. As Foreign Minister, he asked the following rhetorical question at a Labor Party Central Committee meeting in February 1988: "Did this extravagant enterprise [settlement construction] produce security? Has it strengthened our position in the negotiations?"²⁷¹ At the end of that year, on the eve of the 23rd government of Israel in which Peres would serve as Minister of Finance, he once again questioned the wisdom of supporting settlements: "Will fortifying such settlements reduce Israel's isolation in the world or the opposite, will they increase it?"²⁷²

To be sure, Peres was hardly going out on a limb by expressing his opposition to the Likud government's settlement policy. After all, the Labor Party as a whole opposed the construction of new settlements, particularly in those areas densely populated by the Palestinians, a position reflected in the party's platform. Unlike Jewish settlements in the Golan Heights, which received (and continue to receive) the support of a small but vocal segment of Labor's supporters, opposition to settlement

²⁷¹ Labor Party Central Committee, 11 February 1988, File #2-23-1988-135 (aleph), Labor Party Archive.

²⁷² Labor Party Central Committee, 21 December 1988, File #2-23-1988-137 (bet), Labor Party Archive.

construction in the West Bank has been a near-consensus issue since the late-1970s. Rabin's problematic relationship with settlements, harkening back to his days as Prime Minister, has already been noted. In 1992, Rabin replaced Peres as Chairman of the Labor Party and subsequently defeated the Likud's Shamir in the national elections held in June of that year. Throughout his campaign, Rabin emphasized what he viewed as the "distorted order of priorities" in which "political settlements in the territories precede everything else: immigration absorption, the future of the younger generation, the war against unemployment, and social and economic progress" (Slater 1996: 475). Rabin promised that, if elected, he would "stop the political settlements, whose only purpose is to prevent any possibility of finding a political solution to the conflict" (Ibid).

Yet, given the vehemence of his opposition toward settlements, Peres appears to have transcended mere party politics. His antagonism toward settlement expansion surpassed even the opposition expressed by Rabin in both its scope and its intensity. For Rabin, what was troublesome about the Likud's policy was the opportunity costs involved in pouring a tremendous amount of resources into the settlements, which came at the expense of pressing political, social and economic matters. Yet he made it clear that he could live with some new settlements – what he referred to as "security settlements," in contrast to Shamir's "political settlements." "If the construction were taking place in Greater Jerusalem, the Jordan Rift and the existing settlements on the Golan Heights, I would not complain," he said during the 1992 campaign (Slater 1996: 475). Peres, by contrast, preferred to see a freeze on all settlement activity in

the territories.²⁷³ Even with regard to the Golan Heights, Peres, in contrast to Rabin, said he would be willing to trade land in the Golan Heights for peace with Syria.²⁷⁴ On the issue of settlements Peres's shift was therefore more dramatic than that of Rabin. In the mid-1970s, Peres was a staunch supporter of settlements; in the late-1970s and early 1980s, he displayed a certain ambivalence towards them, questioning the wisdom of Likud's aggressive policy; in the mid-1980s, he advocated an end to building settlements in the densely populated Arab areas; and by the early 1990s, he wanted to halt settlement activity altogether. Rabin's position on this issue did not change in any significant way; at no point was he ever a fervent supporter, but neither was he a fierce opponent. It is not surprising that Shamir, in his autobiography, characterizes Peres as "far more extreme [than Rabin] in his opposition (it too amounted to hatred) for the settlements established beyond the so-called Green Line of our pre-1967 borders. For reasons I never understood, they literally enraged him" (Shamir 1994: 165).

Support for PLO Talks

Those on the Israeli Left had long advocated direct Israel-PLO talks as the only way to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In the Knesset, left-wing parties, such as the Citizens Rights Movements and Mapam, as well as dovish members of the Labor Party, advocated dialogue with the PLO. The two men who led Labor, however, had steadfastly refused to countenance this concept, believing that the solution to the conflict lay with King Hussein and local Palestinian leaders (with Hussein playing the lead role). The deadlock in the Washington talks that began with

²⁷³ Clyde Haberman, "Peres Urges Halt to West Bank Settlements," *The New York Times*, 4 October 1991.

²⁷⁴ "Trade Golan Peres," *Herald Sun*, 18 November 1991.

the Madrid Conference in October 1991 and which continued in Washington during the first year of Rabin's second term as Prime Minister convinced Rabin that Israel could not continue to bypass the PLO leadership if it wanted to reach a deal with the Palestinians. Rabin thus became the first Israeli prime minister to authorize direct talks with the PLO. For Peres, however, this conclusion came nearly five years earlier, following the collapse of the "Jordanian option." However, given his power-sharing arrangements with the Likud's Yitzhak Shamir, he had been unable – and perhaps unwilling to make an all out effort – to change Israel's policy before Labor's victory in the 1992 elections.

To understand Peres's dramatic turnaround on this issue, it is critical to recount the ill-fated London Agreement of 1987. In April of that year, Peres, the then-Foreign Minister in the national unity government headed by Shamir, met with Jordan's King Hussein at the London residence of attorney Victor Mishcon to discuss ways to jumpstart the peace process. The two veteran statesmen agreed to a number of points that, they felt, could serve as the basis for an international conference that would lead to peace. Specifically, they agreed that such a conference would be convened to launch the process but would not itself impose solutions; after the convening of the first session, subsequent sessions of the conference would require the prior consent of all the parties; Israel would negotiate with a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, which would exclude members of the PLO; and that the actual negotiating would be done bilaterally (Peres 1995: 266-7). For Peres, this agreement, which became known as the "London Agreement," was the opportunity of a lifetime. Eight years had passed since the first Arab-Israeli peace treaty was signed, and Israel finally

had been given the chance to conclude not only the second peace treaty – with Jordan – but also to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict once and for all.

The agreement, however, fell through because it failed to receive the backing of then-Defense Minister Rabin, who ridiculed the significance of the Peres-Hussein understanding, and Prime Minister Shamir, who feared that an international conference would push Israel into a corner.²⁷⁵ The first Palestinian uprising against Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza – the *Intifada* – erupted in December 1987, just months following the collapse of the London Agreement. Peres sees a direct link between these two events:

We all paid a heavy price for the destruction of my milestone agreement with King Hussein. Hundreds of people, both Palestinian and Israeli, paid with their lives: within months the Palestinian *intifada* broke out in the West Bank and Gaza, resulting in years of violence and bloodshed (Peres 1995: 270; see, also Peres, 1993: 16).

The Jordanian option was dealt a mortal blow with King Hussein's announcement, on 31 July 1988, that he was severing all administrative and legal ties, save for guardianship over the Muslim holy places in Jerusalem, to the West Bank.²⁷⁶ For Peres, Hussein's decision meant that Israel was left with no plausible alternative to negotiating with the Palestinian leadership – i.e., the PLO – a move he had always avoided doing and that, as far as he was concerned, could certainly have been avoided. "My preference is the agreement I reached with King Hussein in London," Peres maintains to this day. "The minute that Shamir torpedoed it, the choice was either not to negotiate with anybody or to negotiate with the Palestinians. Now, with the Palestinians you have to make a choice between the PLO and Hamas, and I

²⁷⁵ Interviews with Moshe Shachal, 30 October 2006; Zalman Shoval, 20 November 2006, Tel Aviv; and Nissim Zvili.

²⁷⁶ See http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/88_july31.html

thought that the PLO is better. Simple as that.”²⁷⁷ Peres’s claim that the London Agreement was a critical turning point in his dovish turn is backed by testimony from numerous elected officials, aides, and journalists who were privy to his dovish transformation.²⁷⁸

Peres felt he had to wait until he became Foreign Minister in Rabin’s second government, however, before he could directly challenge Israeli government policy vis-à-vis the PLO. Shamir, who served as Prime Minister continuously from 1986 until 1992, was firmly opposed to dealing with the PLO. Neither the collapse of the London Agreement nor the Palestinian Intifada had softened his rigid stance on this matter. Peres also did not want to risk losing an internal Labor Party battle over whether to change Israeli policy vis-à-vis the PLO. The party mainstream was committed to maintaining Israel’s long-standing policy, and Peres, as the party’s leader, opted not to push for a change for which he did not have the majority necessary to implement.²⁷⁹

Rabin, moreover, leading the hawkish wing of the party, wielded significant clout in both the party and the government. While the London Agreement seems to have meant little to him, the Intifada did have a discernable impact on the Defense Minister’s attitude toward the Palestinians. When the uprising began, Rabin was slow to respond to this new challenge faced by Israel. It had not occurred to the man who had led his nation in battle that military force – short of, perhaps, extremely brutal measures – would fail to quell the uprising. As the Intifada dragged on, however, his

²⁷⁷ Interview with Shimon Peres, 3 November 2006, Tel Aviv; see also Peres (1995: 277) and interview with Yossi Beilin, 6 December 2006, Jerusalem.

²⁷⁸ See interviews with Jean Frydman, 21 November 2006, Jaffa; David Landau, 21 November 2006, Tel Aviv; Nimrod Novik, 23 October 2006, Herzliya Pituach; and Nissim Zvili.

²⁷⁹ Interview with Nimrod Novik.

hardline position softened. “I’ve learned something in the past two and a half months. Among other things that you can’t rule by force over one and a half million Palestinians” (Slater 1996: 416). This realization made Rabin more attuned to the seriousness with which a younger generation of Palestinians – those who had grown up under Israeli occupation – were committed to achieving political independence. He subsequently became dedicated to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict via political means. In 1989, he thus advanced a plan focused around Palestinian elections that could produce an acceptable partner for negotiations (Slater 1996: 424). While the plan ultimately fell through due to both Palestinian and Likud opposition, it demonstrates Rabin’s recognition that the status quo was damaging to Israel’s interests.

The Intifada did not, however, soften Rabin’s stance with regard to the PLO. “I am totally opposed to negotiations with the PLO,” he told a group of high school students in Jerusalem on 17 March 1988 (Slater 1996: 418). On this point, he did not differ with Shamir. Peres, by contrast, displayed greater flexibility on this matter and had begun preparing the ground for eventual PLO talks. As Foreign Minister, he had even set up a special committee to examine the PLO developments.²⁸⁰ In September 1988, he implied that PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat could become an acceptable negotiating partner, saying he would agree to hold talks with “every Palestinian leader that renounces terror and violence” and accepts United Nations Security Council Resolution 242. “We are not going to look in his past and his biography and his descriptions,” Peres said. “We are going to look at his position.” He criticized

²⁸⁰ John Kifner, “For PLO, a Government Doesn’t Mean Negotiations,” *The New York Times*, 19 August 1988.

Arafat for telling then-French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas that the PLO had “indirectly” accepted Israel. “Mr. Arafat finds it extremely difficult to make the necessary decisions,” Peres complained. “If he recognizes, recognize directly.”²⁸¹

Arafat did just that less than three months later. On 14 December, in a special session of the UN General Assembly in Geneva, Arafat explicitly declared the PLO’s recognition of Israel’s right to exist in “peace and security,” accepted UN Resolutions 242 and 338, and renounced “all forms of terrorism, including individual, group and state terrorism.” Arafat’s declaration met the Reagan Administration’s conditions for talking to the PLO, ending thirteen years of American refusal to have any contact with the organization.

The U.S. decision to open a dialogue with the PLO was roundly criticized in Israeli government circles, not only by Prime Minister Shamir but also by Defense Minister Rabin and Foreign Minister Peres. Rabin said that the U.S. decision was “a grave mistake, both regarding terrorism and the possibility of open political talks.” The decision, he suggested, “actually granted legitimacy to the uprising in the territories.”²⁸² Echoing Rabin’s assessment, Peres said that the American decision “represents a sad day” for Israel.²⁸³ Rabin’s response, however, appears to have been a more genuine reflection of his true feelings than that of Peres, who, as noted, had been preparing the ground for dealing with the PLO. Just days after criticizing the American decision, Peres seemed to suggest that talks with the PLO were inevitable.

²⁸¹ James M. Markham, “Peres Discounts the ‘Biography’ of Potential Palestinian Negotiators,” *The New York Times*, 26 September 1988.

²⁸² Sergei Shargorodsky, “Shamir Expresses Shock at U.S.-PLO Talks, Preparing Peace Initiative,” *AP*, 17 December 1988.

²⁸³ “Israel Depressed by U.S. Decision to Start Dialogue with PLO,” *The Xinhua General Overseas News Service*, 15 December 1988.

“We had warned clearly that if there is not going to be a Jordanian-Palestinian option, the road to the PLO will be paved, and this is what happened after the London Agreement was torpedoed,” he told his Labor Party colleagues. At the same time, he expressed skepticism about the PLO’s true intentions: “The PLO has changed its declarations,” he said, “but this will only have meaning if it becomes clear that there is a change on the ground.”²⁸⁴ Yet unlike the other senior members of the national unity government – Prime Minister Shamir and Defense Minister Rabin – Peres failed to rule out the possibility of dealing with the PLO.

On 22 December, Peres’s Labor Party joined forces with the Likud’s Yitzhak Shamir in another “national unity” government. Peres was named Vice Premier and Minister of Finance in the new government, which, upon the Likud’s insistence, rejected any form of dialogue with the PLO. As far as Prime Minister Shamir was concerned, the PLO was “still the same terrorist organization. They haven’t changed, and we don’t see any reason to change our attitude toward them.”²⁸⁵ Rabin agreed with Shamir, reiterating his well-known stance that he has always opposed, and continues to oppose, negotiations with the PLO.²⁸⁶ However, the government’s hard line vis-à-vis the PLO did not stop Peres’s most senior aides from holding meetings with Faisal Husseini, Ziad Abu Zayad and other local Palestinian leaders openly associated with the PLO. These meetings provoked fervent opposition not only from the Likud ministers, but also from the more hawkish Labor legislators, such as Micha Goldman, who complained that the meetings were “dragging the party to the left” and

²⁸⁴ Address to Labor Party Central Committee, 21 December 1988, File #2-23-1988-137 (bet), Labor Party Archive.

²⁸⁵ Joel Brinkley, “The World; Israel Reviews Military Tactics, and Sees Only Defiance,” *The New York Times*, 29 January 1989.

²⁸⁶ “Interview with Defense Minister Rabin,” *Haaretz*, 21 April 1989.

Mordechai Gur, who said: “I don’t think the meetings with PLO supporters are contributing anything. The gap between Israeli and Palestinian stands is so large that by direct talks one won’t be able to achieve anything.”²⁸⁷ While Peres did not participate in these meetings himself, he supported them. “The truth is that now I’m busy with the Treasury, but when I’ll be free, I’ll meet with them too,” he said.²⁸⁸

Peres may have been reluctant to openly challenge Israel’s longstanding policy vis-à-vis the PLO at this stage, but he did nothing to discourage Labor’s dovish Knesset members from doing so; in fact, he tacitly – and, in some cases, actively – supported their efforts. His top aides – Yossi Beilin and Nimrod Novik – not only met regularly with Palestinians who gave their allegiance to the PLO, but they spoke out publicly in support of holding direct talks with the PLO. Beilin stated that if the government continued to refuse to negotiate with the PLO, Israel “won’t have a chance of convincing the world of the justness of its stand.”²⁸⁹ His repeated calls for Israel to talk with the PLO prompted requests for his resignation from right-wing members of the government.²⁹⁰ Peres ignored these demands, but after two years of political stalemate and constant wrangling over the composition of the Palestinian

²⁸⁷ Joel Brinkley, “Meeting PLO Backers Splits Coalition in Israel,” *The New York Times*, 17 February 1989.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.* The reality was that the 1988-90 national unity government headed by Shamir was conducting negotiations with the PLO via an assortment of intermediaries despite the denials of its leadership. As Beilin, then the Deputy Finance Minister, pointed out, “Whoever doesn’t admit or recognize this, whoever tries to ignore it, is like a small boy who closes his eyes and thinks the world doesn’t see him.” In January 1990, Bassam Abu Sherif, an aide to Arafat, alleged that Shamir knew “more than anybody else that even those Palestinians he himself had met represented the PLO.” Several months later, Arafat made a similar assertion. “With whom are they going to make peace? With phantoms? With me.” See “Peres Aide Says PLO and Israel are Dealing,” *AP*, 14 July 1989; Ian Black, “Contacts with PLO Throw Israeli Cabinet Into Crisis,” *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 7 January 1990; and Mary Beth Sheridan, “Arafat Says He Met Secretly with Top Israeli Leaders,” *AP*, 7 April 1990.

²⁸⁹ Joel Brinkley, “Israel and PLO: Pressure Grows for Negotiations,” *The New York Times*, 24 February 1989.

²⁹⁰ Joel Brinkley, “Israeli Intelligence Report Links Peace Hopes to Talks with PLO,” *The New York Times*, 21 March 1989.

delegation to proposed peace talks – the Likud insisted that the PLO should have no say in the negotiations and that the Arab population in Jerusalem could not participate in the Palestinian elections – he pulled Labor out of the government in March 1990, becoming leader of the opposition.

Perhaps the greatest indication of where each member of the governing triumvirate stood on this delicate issue occurred when a Labor Party minister, Ezer Weizman, reportedly broke Israeli law by meeting with leaders of the PLO in December 1989. Prime Minister Shamir promptly fired him; Rabin publicly denounced Weizman's activities but in the end supported the party's decision to keep him in the government; and Peres insisted that he would pull the Labor Party from the coalition if Weizman were let go. In the end, the coalition crisis was resolved when Shamir allowed him to remain a minister but not in the inner cabinet, the government's decision-making core. In the course of the crisis, Weizman revealed that Peres had listened in on one of his telephone calls to an Arab contact in Tunis (where the PLO was headquartered at the time) and passed on a message urging PLO acceptance of U.S. plans for Israeli-Palestinian talks.²⁹¹

More importantly, Peres helped the Labor doves, Beilin's Mashov group, achieve a major victory in November 1991, when the party congress adopted a resolution abandoning its objection to negotiations with the PLO. Labor's new platform also advocated the repeal of the five-year old law forbidding contacts with the PLO, supported the extension of territorial compromise to include the Golan Heights, declared that it recognizes the "national rights" of Palestinians, and called

²⁹¹ "Israelis Come to Terms on Weizman Dismissal," *The New York Times*, 3 January 1990; Nicolas B. Tatro, "Israel Again Says No to Talks with the PLO – An AP Analysis," *AP*, 3 January 1990.

for a one-year freeze on new Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.²⁹² While Rabin fought the party doves, siding with the hawkish Old Guard, Peres put all his authority behind them and helped them get their resolutions passed (Beilin 1999: 44; Makovsky 1996: 20). Yet, as noted, he felt he was in no position to implement these policies in the late 1980s and early 1990s due to the strong objections by Shamir and Rabin. After the 1988 elections, Peres was essentially demoted to the Ministry of Finance in the second national unity government and was given little say over matters of foreign policy. Only following Rabin's victory in 1992 was Peres, as Foreign Minister, again in a position to influence the government's foreign policy.

The Rabin government inherited peace talks begun by the previous government but which had shown no signs of progress. In 1991, Prime Minister Shamir reluctantly agreed to participate in the Madrid Conference, an international conference aimed at resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict. Hosted by Spain and cosponsored by the United States and Soviet Union, it convened on 30 October of that year. Subsequent bilateral sessions were held in Washington, talks that continued under the leadership of Rabin. Both Shamir and Rabin had insisted that the Palestinian team not include members of the PLO. The reality, however, was that the members of the Palestinian slate communicated regularly with, and took their orders from, the PLO leadership in Tunis. Little autonomy was given to the Palestinian negotiators in Washington, who, as a result, displayed little inclination for

²⁹² Clyde Haberman, "Israel's Labor Party Takes Dovish Lines," *The New York Times*, 22 November 1991. The party's Old Guard managed to defeat the dovish wing on one matter: Beilin's proposal concerning a Palestinian state (Beilin 1999: 44).

compromise.²⁹³ Peres recognized early on the flawed policy of the Israeli government, seeing it as a “Purim party,” whereby the Israelis were pretending not to talk to the PLO when, in fact, it was clear that the Palestinian negotiators had ties to the PLO and were receiving directives from Arafat.²⁹⁴ “The PLO leadership in Tunis pulled the strings,” Peres writes (1993: 6).

Now that Peres was Foreign Minister in a Labor-led government, he made several attempts to persuade the prime minister to negotiate directly with Arafat, but to no avail. In his memoirs, he notes that he suggested this to Rabin in August 1992 and, subsequently, in January 1993. Writes Peres:

I told him again that, in my view, we must take bold steps toward negotiations with the PLO. As long as Arafat remained in Tunis, I argued, he would represent the ‘outsiders,’ the Palestinian diaspora, and would do his best to slow down the peace talks. I suggested that we propose to Arafat and his staff that they move to Gaza. Once there, they would have the right to vote and to stand in elections, and, if elected, they would represent the Palestinians directly in negotiations with Israel. My criticism of the Washington talks was that we were trying to reach a declaration of principles without any reference to specific territorial issues. The way to succeed, I believed, was to link a declaration of principles to a tangible concept of ‘Gaza first plus.’ I made no secret of my positions. They were known to my close aides at the Foreign Ministry – as well as to several key figures in the PLO (1995: 280).

Rabin resisted Peres’s efforts. Not surprisingly, a source identified with Rabin at the time spoke of how “he [Prime Minister Rabin] now feels that Shimon Peres is leading him into Yasser Arafat’s arms – the last place Rabin wants to be pushed.”²⁹⁵ Yet the Washington talks failed to produce progress, threatening to undermine Rabin’s pledge from his 1992 election campaign to reach an autonomy agreement with the Palestinians within six to nine months.

²⁹³ Nor was Israel’s chief negotiator, Elyakim Rubenstein, a former Likud government official who Rabin had retained, inclined much to compromise.

²⁹⁴ Interview with Alon Pinkas, 17 October 2006, Tel Aviv. Purim is a Jewish holiday in which people wear masks.

²⁹⁵ Sarah Honig, “Rabin is still peeved at Peres,” *The Jerusalem Post International Edition*, 14 November 1992.

Beginning in April of 1992, Beilin began to meet with Norwegian academic Terje Larsen, who had taken a strong interest in Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking. That fall, in follow-up to the Beilin-Larsen talks, Norway's Deputy Foreign Minister Jan Egeland visited Israel, proposing backchannel negotiations between Israel and the PLO, which Norway would help facilitate. On 19 January 1993, through Beilin's and Peres's efforts, the Knesset repealed the law forbidding Israeli-PLO contact (Makovsky 1993: 20). Beilin, now Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister, wasted no time and immediately began to authorize secret, unofficial talks between Israeli academics Yair Hirschfeld and Ron Pundak and a delegation of PLO officials headed by Ahmed Qurai (Abu Alaa). In contrast to the Washington talks, which were going nowhere, progress was being made in the backchannel talks, prompting Beilin to notify Peres in late-January about the existence of this parallel track. Peres, in turn, informed Rabin, reportedly convincing him to sanction the continuation of this backchannel by arguing that these talks enabled Israel to obtain valuable information about PLO positions without obligating the Israeli government (Makovsky 1993: 23). The talks thus continued, eventually being upgraded to an official level. In contrast to Rabin, who was skeptical that the Oslo process would yield fruits, Peres recognized the usefulness of talks that took place away from the media limelight, enabling the two sides to "talk directly, person-to-person, rather than simply spout rhetoric" (Peres 1993: 14). He also feared that the alternative to the PLO would not necessarily be a more moderate Palestinian leadership, but rather one dominated by Hamas radicals. He writes:

...I felt that the PLO was losing ground. For years, most people believed that relations between Israel and the PLO were at zero sum, whereby the advantages of one side automatically become the disadvantages of the other. Would a PLO collapse

benefit Israel? If the great enemy against whom we had been fighting these many years suddenly disappeared, who would take its place? Was Hamas a preferable alternative?...Thus, circumstances at the time in the region and in the territories led us to conclude that perhaps it was in Israel's interest to have the PLO play a role on this political stage (Peres 1993: 18-19).

After months of arduous negotiations, the Israelis and Palestinians reached a breakthrough in August 1993 with the signing of their "Declaration of Principles," which would serve as a framework for a five-year interim period of Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The most difficult and controversial issues – Jerusalem, refugees, Israeli settlements, security and borders – would be deferred until final-status talks. The Declaration of Principles included, also, a paragraph on the Gaza Strip and Jericho, which Israel would transfer to a newly created Palestinian Authority. Significantly, the two sides also reached a historic agreement on mutual recognition, whereby Israel officially recognized the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and the PLO renounced terrorism and recognized Israel's right to exist in peace and security.

For the Israeli Right, "Oslo" (as the peace process in the 1990s came to be called) was a mistake of disastrous proportions, because it breathed new life into an organization that was financially and politically bankrupt after having sided with Saddam Hussein's Iraq – the losing side – in the Persian Gulf War. As far as the Right was concerned, no lasting peace could result from negotiating with an organization that remained committed to Israel's destruction. Former Prime Minister Shamir expressed the sentiment felt by many on the Right when he said the following in an interview:

The PLO cannot be a partner for peace. We opposed any contact with the PLO's people. Arafat was considered abominable and untouchable. That was correct. The negotiations were supposed to take place only with representatives of the Arab population in the 'territories.' Any negotiations with the PLO have the seeds of the

next calamity concealed within it, because this organization has engraved on its flag the liberation of the 'occupied lands.' Unfortunately, we have brought a corpse back to life (Misgav 2000: 104).

As noted above, however, Peres, in contrast to other top Israeli leaders, came to the conclusion that Israel needed to talk with the PLO following King Hussein's decision of 31 July 1988 to renounce Jordan's claims to the West Bank; i.e., once the Jordanian option appeared to be dead. Peres was a relative latecomer to a viewpoint long held by Labor's doves and by those philosophers, writers, politicians, and activists to the left of Labor. However, among the first tier of Israeli politicians – those who had already served as prime minister or were viewed as potential prime ministers – Peres was the first to arrive at this juncture.

It took Rabin nearly five additional years to arrive at the same conclusion. For Rabin, his persistent opposition to dealing with the PLO in the late 1980s and early 1990s was not mere posturing – it was done in earnest. When he pledged during his 1992 campaign to reach an autonomy arrangement with the Palestinians within six to nine months he had no intention of negotiating such a deal with the PLO. Even when the Washington talks were going nowhere, Rabin still believed it was possible to reach an agreement with local Palestinian leaders, thereby bypassing the PLO leadership in Tunis. As one former government insider attests:

Rabin, when he became Prime Minister, still thought that you can do [a deal] without the PLO...he was trying to negotiate with the local Palestinian leadership in Israel. We knew it won't work. Rabin had to experience it himself. Rabin was convinced that all those who tried it before him failed because they didn't do it right, not because it couldn't work. Dayan failed with the Village League because he didn't do it right. Shamir failed because he didn't do it right. 'I will succeed,' and that's why he promised the people within nine months a deal with the Palestinians. He was sure that he will do it right...Shimon knew it can't work. They won't dare, the local leadership will not dare. It's like today assuming that Haniyeh will violate Meshal's instructions. Same thing. Rabin said no: I will produce the local leadership. I will strengthen them, I will give them the instruments, I will give them the prestige. And he saw intelligence was bringing them their faxes to Tunisia every day asking for instructions. They won't move an inch without guidance. Not Hannan Ashrawi and

Husseini and all the group. We were the first ones to meet with them in public as government officials. And he saw it's not working. And the nine months were ticking. And he promised and he cannot deliver. And then Shimon shows up and says: 'You know, there's something in Oslo that looks like this and that.' He said, 'You know what? Try it.' Six months earlier, he [Peres] wouldn't dare suggest it to him. But he was desperate. His coalition was about to collapse because he was not doing anything.²⁹⁶

Once Rabin learned about the backchannel negotiations at Oslo and gave the green light for their continuation, he lent a hand to the dramatic shift in Israel's policy vis-à-vis the PLO. In one significant respect, Rabin's change of heart was more significant than that of Peres: as Prime Minister, it was his shift that actually counted in the end. Had he rejected the secret talks, any agreement that might have been reached between the Israelis and Palestinians – unlikely, in any case – would have been meaningless just as Arafat's approval was needed on the Palestinian side. In any event, by the first half of 1993, Rabin had come to the same conclusion to which Peres had arrived in the summer of 1988: namely, that progress in the peace process necessitated a change in Israeli policy with regard to the PLO.

Support for a Palestinian State

If it took many years for Israeli policymakers to recognize, and agree to negotiate with, the PLO, it took even longer for them to accept the notion – publicly, at least – of an independent Palestinian state. Today, Israeli politicians from a wide swath of the political spectrum openly speak about such a state as the final outcome of the peace process. Following U.S. President George W. Bush's Middle East speech of 24 June 2002, which laid out a vision of “two states, living side by side, in peace and security,” the right-wing leader of the Likud, Ariel Sharon, became the first

²⁹⁶ Interview with Nimrod Novik.

Israeli prime minister to publicly endorse the creation of a Palestinian state.²⁹⁷ In November 2005, Sharon bolted the Likud and formed a new centrist party, “Kadima,” whose platform called for achieving “two states for two nations.”²⁹⁸ Kadima won the greatest number of Knesset seats in the 2006 elections, making Ehud Olmert, Sharon’s successor as Kadima Chairman, the new Prime Minister. Like Sharon, Olmert had abandoned the Likud party and similarly had accepted the eventuality of a Palestinian state.²⁹⁹

To be sure, the concept of a Palestinian state still has its opponents in Israel. The Likud party’s most recent platform, drafted in March 2006, rejects “the establishment of an Arab Palestinian state west of the Jordan River.”³⁰⁰ The party’s current chairman, former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, opposes a Palestinian state, as do those Knesset factions to the right of Likud, including Yisrael Beiteinu, Shas, and National Union-NRP. Moreover, even those who are willing to accept a Palestinian state lack a shared vision for what such a state will look like.

Nevertheless, there has been a sea change in Israeli (and U.S.) attitudes toward a Palestinian state. This change can be traced to the direct negotiations with the PLO begun at Oslo, although it was only in May 1997 that the Labor Party, no longer in power, formally resolved to accept a Palestinian state (Ben-Ami 2006: 247). At the Sixth Labor Party Convention, which took place on 7 December of that year, Labor Party Chairman Shimon Peres expressed his support for a Palestinian state

²⁹⁷ For text of President Bush’s speech, see <http://www.bitterlemons.org/docs/bush.html>. On Sharon’s endorsement of a Palestinian state, see <http://archives.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/meast/12/04/sharon.palestinian.state/>.

²⁹⁸ See <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Politics/kadimaplatform.html>.

²⁹⁹ Olmert has spoken repeatedly of the need for a two-state solution. See, for example, Aluf Benn, David Landau, Barak Ravid and Shmuel Rosner and AP, “Olmert to Haaretz: Two-State Solution, or Israel is Done For,” *Haaretz*, 29 November 2007.

³⁰⁰ <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3227271,00.html>

“because we cannot carry on our shoulders the economic and social responsibility of three million Arabs, because they are authorized to conduct their lives and say so in a loud and clear voice.”³⁰¹

Prior to the late 1990s, however, neither Peres nor Rabin, who was assassinated by a right-wing extremist in November 1995, expressed support for a Palestinian state. In his televised debate with Shamir on the eve of the 1992 elections, Rabin emphasized that there were three points about which he stood firm: “no to a Palestinian state, no return to 1967 borders and a united Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty” (Lochery 1997: 214). Following the Oslo breakthrough, however, both Rabin and Peres danced around this delicate issue. On the one hand, they were careful to continue to publicly oppose a Palestinian state so as not to pre-judge the outcome of the ongoing negotiations – and, perhaps just as importantly, to keep their fragile coalition in tact. On the other hand, their opposition to a state did not appear to be nearly as firm as it had been prior to Oslo. Rabin, when asked about his position on this matter, responded in a convoluted manner:

Whoever reads the Labor party’s election platform will find that there is no support for the establishment of a Palestinian state. However, it should be recalled that the permanent settlement will only be discussed in two years’ time, or not later than another two years, when we will have had an opportunity to examine two stages – ‘Gaza and Jericho First,’ and afterwards stages connected with the transfer of authority, perhaps even elections in all the territories – what the level of the Palestinian system’s capability will be to govern in those spheres which, according to the agreements, have been or will be given to them to govern.³⁰²

³⁰¹ Sixth Labor Party Convention, Third Session, 7 December 1997, File #2-021-1997-191, Labor Party Archive; see also Peres, “Why Israel Needs a Palestinian State,” *Le Monde Diplomatique*, May 1998.

³⁰² Interview with Prime Minister Rabin on Israel Radio, 1 August 1994. See <http://www.israel-mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign+Relations/Israels+Foreign+Relations+since+1947/1992-1994/218+Interview+with+Prime+Minister+Rabin+on+Israel.htm?DisplayMode=print>

Peres, too, expressed opposition to an independent Palestinian state, but did not rule it out as he had done in the past. In one interview, Peres was asked if the Palestinians would be given a state of their own, to which he responded: “No, we would prefer to see the solution as a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation which will leave the West Bank and Gaza demilitarized.”³⁰³ In his book, *The New Middle East*, penned shortly after the historic events at Oslo, Peres writes about his concerns – not his outright rejection – of a future Palestinian state:

Even if the Palestinians agree that their state would have no army or weapons, who can guarantee that a Palestinian army would not be mustered later to encamp at the gates of Jerusalem and the approaches to the lowlands? And if the Palestinian state would be unarmed, how would it block terrorist acts perpetrated by extremists, fundamentalists, or irredentists? (Peres 1993: 169).³⁰⁴

Rabin and Peres understood that the logical extension of civilian Palestinian rule in the territories, following the creation of a Palestinian Authority, would be the eventual founding of a Palestinian state (Kurzman 1998: 473). Indeed, one Labor Party insider confirms that these two leaders had resigned themselves to the eventuality of a Palestinian state. Says Nissim Zvili, the Secretary-General of the Labor Party during the Oslo negotiations:

...in our own conversations and in small forums, he [Peres] has spoken about it [a Palestinian state] for a very long time. As far as he is concerned, the Oslo agreements are about a Palestinian state. He didn't discuss it because he had an agreement with Rabin not to discuss it...Between Rabin and Peres, there was an understanding that at this stage, we don't talk about a Palestinian state, although everyone knows that that is the direction. Nobody was so naïve as not to understand that that is the direction. They knew but didn't discuss it because of the reality in Israel. It was ridiculous not to understand this.³⁰⁵

³⁰³ “Shimon Peres – The Chance for Mideast Peace,” Larry King Live, *CNN*, 16 February 1993, Transcript 764.

³⁰⁴ Peres does not endorse the idea of a Palestinian state in his memoirs either, written two years after the Declaration of Principles was signed.

³⁰⁵ Interview with Nissim Zvili.

In short, Peres and Rabin appear to have privately accepted a future Palestinian state as an inevitable outcome of the Oslo process, although Rabin never expressed support for it in public and Peres did so only in 1997.

Still A Dove: Peres's Views Today (1997 – 2008)

Although this chapter is focused on the 1987-97 period, in which Peres's dovish transformation can be seen to be complete, it is useful to ask whether he has remained a dove in the ensuing decade. In other words, is Peres a case of a hawk-turned-dove or a hawk-turned-dove-turned-hawk? His decision in 2005 to leave the Labor Party, his political home for over five decades, and join Ariel Sharon's newly formed Kadima party – prior to being elected the nation's ninth President on 13 June 2007 – prompted considerable speculation as to whether he remains a dove or has reverted to more hawkish positions. "Today I don't know what he supports," comments longtime acquaintance and left-wing firebrand Shulamit Aloni.³⁰⁶

Was Peres's move from the left-of-center to a more centrist party indicative of a hawkish turn? The preponderance of evidence indicates otherwise. Peres left Labor after his defeat in the party primary to Amir Perez. It was an expedient move that enabled him to become Vice Premier in a government headed by Sharon rather than remain a politician relegated to the sidelines. An old friend of Peres dismisses the notion that Peres's move to Kadima suggests a hawkish shift in Peres's attitudes toward the Palestinians. The move was a domestic political move, this friend insists; Peres remains a committed dove.³⁰⁷ Yael Dayan compares his move to her father's

³⁰⁶ Interview with Shulamit Aloni, 1 November 2006, Kfar Shmaryahu.

³⁰⁷ Interview with Jean Frydman, 21 November 2006, Jaffa.

decision to join Menachem Begin when the latter became Prime Minister in 1977. Both men, she says, joined a right-wing government in order to be in a position that would enable them to push for peace.³⁰⁸ Indeed, Peres did not alter his views on any of the issues concerning Arab-Israeli peacemaking. As a recent interview with Peres makes clear, Peres remains committed to the establishment of a Palestinian state.³⁰⁹ Nor has he given up on the PLO. “We must choose the PLO or Hamas,” he says.³¹⁰ Despite having joined Kadima, a party whose members have tended to be sympathetic to settlers in the West Bank, Peres has spoken out against settler activities, arguing that they had created an “unbearable situation.”³¹¹ More importantly, in a rare move, Peres has even expressed regret over his role in establishing Jewish settlements in the West Bank. “There are things I regret,” Peres noted in a recent interview. “For example, the settlements in the territories, that I, unfortunately, also had a hand in, which were a very big mistake.”³¹² On each criterion delineating hawk from dove – opposition to settlements and support for territorial compromise, negotiations with the PLO, and a Palestinian state – Peres has remained a dove. He also continued to actively promote the peace process with the Palestinians, both in his capacity as Vice-Premier and, today, as President of the nation.

³⁰⁸ Interview with Yael Dayan, 16 December 2006, Tel Aviv.

³⁰⁹ Interview with Shimon Peres. See also Peres’s Address to the Baker Institute, Rice University, 16 January 2006.

³¹⁰ Judith Miller, “Veteran: Israel’s new president on Iran’s nuclear program – and his own,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 21 July 2007.

³¹¹ “Kadima MK in Hebron says party backs settlers,” *Haaretz*, 20 March 2007.

³¹² Amira Lam and Amir Shuan, “I will be privileged to see peace. I hope you will too,” *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 23 April 2007, p. M19.

Analysis of Peres's Dovish Turn in 1987-98 Period

Domestic Politics: Labor's Victory in 1992

Domestic political developments serve as important triggering events for the second phase of Peres's dovish change. With regard to settlements, the religious nationalists, who had allied themselves with Labor governments following the 1967 War, had transferred their allegiance to Likud in the late 1970s. Likud leaders proved to be far more committed to settlement expansion than were any of Labor's leaders, not only in their rhetoric but also in their actions. While Labor distanced itself from the settlement enterprise soon after the first Likud government came to power in 1977, Likud leaders only deepened their resolve to create "facts on the ground" in territories they sought to annex. Labor's inclusion in the two national unity governments of 1984-88 and 1988-90 slowed down the expansion of settlements but, due to the Likud's insistence, settlement growth was never frozen. When Likud was in power without Labor, for the two years beginning in June 1990, the government saw a massive expansion of settlements, with a tremendous amount of government resources devoted toward them. However, with Labor's victory in the June 1992 election, settlement expansion was placed on the backburner of national priorities by Prime Minister Rabin. Thus, the extent of the government's settlement activities rests, to a large degree, on the domestic balance of power between Likud and Labor. Just as Begin's election in 1977 and Shamir's formation of a narrow, right-wing government in 1990 served as triggering events for settlement expansion and – simultaneously, Labor leader Shimon Peres's heightened criticism of this expansion policy – Rabin's

formation of a Labor-led government in 1992 served as a triggering event for a significant reduction in the resources allocated to settlements.

The Labor Party's return to power in 1992 can be seen as a permissive condition for the Israeli government's policy change vis-à-vis the PLO. While Peres concluded that Israel would need to talk to the PLO following the decision by King Hussein to cede Jordan's claims to the West Bank in July 1988, he did not make a direct push for this policy shift until Labor returned to power in 1992. For the Likud's Shamir, such a policy shift would have been inconceivable. Only with a different regime in place would it be politically feasible to pursue direct talks with the PLO. This, of course, is precisely what Peres set out to do as Foreign Minister in Rabin's Labor-led government. Rabin rejected Peres's entreaties at first, but after experiencing deadlock in the Washington talks for himself, he accepted Peres's recommendation to enable the backchannel talks with the PLO to continue.

The 1992 election fails to serve as either a triggering event or a permissive condition, however, for Israeli policymakers' acceptance of an eventual Palestinian state. While Rabin and Peres understood that this would be the inevitable outcome of a peace process with the PLO, they felt that the Israeli public in the early 1990s was not ready to accept a Palestinian state. Only in 1997, while Labor was in the opposition, did Peres (and Labor) publicly embrace a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As irony would have it, it was none other than Ariel Sharon of Likud to become the first prime minister to publicly declare his support for an independent Palestinian state.

Systemic-Structural Factors: The Collapse of the “Jordanian Option,” Long-Range Missiles, the Gulf War, the Demise of the Soviet Union, and the Weakening of the PLO

Several epochal events and processes in the late 1980s and early 1990s served as the permissive conditions for the hawk-to-dove shifts on the Israeli political scene. For Peres, the key event that began his reevaluation of Israel’s policy vis-à-vis the PLO was the collapse of the Jordanian option. For years, Peres was inclined to believe that the PLO could be bypassed by negotiating a peace agreement with Jordan’s King Hussein. The London Agreement was the culmination of his efforts in this regard, and when it fell through, he saw the writing on the wall. He still was far from comfortable with the idea of negotiating with the PLO, but he began preparing for this eventuality from the moment King Hussein divested himself of the authority of the West Bank.

Peres also viewed the end of the Cold War as having created a golden opportunity to make progress in the peace process. As Foreign Minister in 1992, he visited the former Soviet Union, declaring that “the new relationship between Russia and America is a God-send contribution to the pacification of the Middle East.” “Russia,” he suggested, “instead of being a supplier of arms, hopefully will become a supplier of peace.”³¹³ Moreover, the collapse of the Soviet Union – a key patron of Arab states as well as the PLO – and the aftermath of the Persian Gulf War had left the PLO (which backed Iraq in the war) in a vulnerable state. Writes Peres:

No longer were the Arab states inevitably united among themselves and against Israel. An Arab state had engaged in naked aggression against a sister state. An

³¹³ Wendy Sloane, “Russia Can Help Build New Middle East, Israeli Foreign Minister Says,” *AP*, 21 August 1992.

international coalition, including Arab states, had been formed to beat back the aggressor...the Arab-Israeli conflict, which had been the strongest source of Arab unity, ceased to play that role as Arab unity gave way to dangerous divisions (Peres 1995: 277).

The role of technological progress must not be overlooked either in ascertaining the permissive conditions responsible for Peres's hawk-to-dove shift. Technological changes have long interested Peres, as can be seen, for example, in his embrace of nuclear technology in the 1950s. In the early 1990s, in the aftermath of Saddam Hussein's scud missile attacks against Israel during the Persian Gulf War, Peres concluded that borders were becoming obsolete in the age of long-range missiles, which presented a long-term threat to Israel's security. In his first interview as Foreign Minister in Rabin's Labor-led government, Peres said: "Today the countries of the entire world are organizing themselves on a regional basis because missiles do not respect national boundaries or borders, water does not flow according to customs tariffs or follow borders."³¹⁴ In discussing what he termed "the New Middle East," Peres wrote: "The world has changed. And the process of change compels us to replace our outdated concepts with an approach tailored to the new reality" (Peres 1993: 34). In the age of long-range ballistic missiles, what was needed, wrote Peres, was a new approach that combined diplomacy with economics. He thus called for

...bilateral and multilateral pacts, extending beyond the borders of the countries involved and covering the entire expanse within reach of the deadly missiles – that is, treaties that cover whole regions. The countries in a region must cooperate to counteract the nuclear, biological, and chemical menace by creating a state of affairs that makes conflicts too costly, too impractical, and too difficult. Thus, the key to

³¹⁴ "Shimon Peres Discusses Peace Process in First Interview as Foreign Minister," Israel Broadcasting Authority TV, Jerusalem, 22 July 1992. This was a theme to which Peres returned many times throughout the decade. In his acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1994, Peres declared that "territorial frontiers are no obstacle to ballistic missiles" and that "the battle for survival must be based on political wisdom and moral vision no less than on military might." [See http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1994/peres-lecture.html]

maintaining an equable and safe regional system is in politics and in economics...Politics should pave the way from pure military strategy to an enriched political and economic repertoire (Peres 1993: 34-35).

In stark contrast to Peres, whose thinking was clearly affected by what he perceived as major changes in the world that had far-reaching consequences for Israel, such observations were conspicuously absent from the rhetoric of Likud leader Yitzhak Shamir. To be sure, Shamir welcomed such events as the end of the Cold War, which he hoped would bode well for Israel. Thus, on the eve of Soviet Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh's visit to Israel in 1991, Shamir expressed the hope "that this visit will be a further stage in the development of our relations." He even offered the Soviets a role in the peace process.³¹⁵ Yet these developments did not alter Shamir's positions, which remained remarkably consistent throughout the 1990s. If anything, he viewed the end of the Cold War's regional impact as reinforcing his hawkish views. After all, the Soviets ceased to be a regional superpower; they removed their backing from Iraq, which enabled the U.S. to easily defeat Saddam Hussein; and Mikhail Gorbachev's glasnost brought a flood of Jewish immigration to Israel.³¹⁶ Despite the momentous international and regional events, Shamir saw no reason to alter Israel's policy towards the Palestinians. "The Arabs are the same Arabs, and the sea is the same sea," he was fond of saying (Shlaim 2001: 426).

Change, however, was what defined the 1992 election. Shamir, the status quo candidate, lost to Rabin, whose campaign theme revolved around change. Unlike Shamir, who did not embrace the view that the momentous events at the turn of the decade required Israel to alter its policies, Rabin emphasized that the world had

³¹⁵ G.G. LaBelle, "Soviets' Visit Seen as a Boost – And a Risk – to Israel," *AP*, 25 April 1991.

³¹⁶ David Makovsky, "Yitzhak Shamir: Decisions from the Underground," *The Jerusalem Post*, 21 June 1991.

changed, that an important window of opportunity for peace needed to be explored, and that Israel's national priorities needed to be altered accordingly. The scope of events and processes influencing Rabin's thinking was narrower than that which affected Peres's worldview. Rabin did not attribute much importance, for example, to the London Agreement (or its subsequent collapse).³¹⁷ Nor did he discuss the implications of long-range missiles on the importance, or lack thereof, of territory, as did Peres. However, both the end of the Cold War and the Persian Gulf War had a discernable impact on Rabin's thinking concerning Israel's role in the Middle East and the prospects of Arab-Israeli peace. For Rabin, these events offered Israel "tremendous opportunities" as the Arab world lost its chief military patron – the Soviet Union.³¹⁸ Rabin, addressing the Council of Europe, spoke of joining what he saw as a "new world order" in moral terms:

In the last decade of our twentieth century, walls of hatred have fallen, peoples have been liberated and artificial barriers have disappeared, powers have crumbled and ideologies have collapsed. It is our sacred duty to ourselves and to our children to see the new world as it is now, to note its dangers, explore its prospects and do everything possible so that the State of Israel will fit into the changing face of the world.³¹⁹

Rabin also emphasized that recent developments between Israel and other countries had erased Israel's isolation in the international community. He made the following remarks to the Knesset on 27 June 1993:

The train that travels toward peace has stopped this year at many stations that daily refute the time-worn canard – 'the whole world is against us.' The United States had improved its relations with us, has returned to a normal course of closer relations and sincere and open dialogue. The administration of President Bush approved guarantees worth 10 billion dollars. The Clinton administration has opened its heart and arms to us and is continuing the American tradition of support for Israel. In

³¹⁷ See interviews with Moshe Shachal, 30 October 2006, Tel Aviv, and Nissim Zvili.

³¹⁸ Richard Z. Chesnoff and David Makovsky, "Israel's Search for Security," *U.S. News & World Report*, 17 August 1992. See, also, David Makovsky, "The Once and Future Prime Minister," *The Jerusalem Post*, 19 June 1992; and David Makovsky, "Changes in Attitude," *U.S. News & World Report*, 12 October 1992.

³¹⁹ Yitzhak Rabin in Speech to Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 26 January 1994.

Europe our dialogue with the EC has been improved and deepened. We have been inundated by visiting heads of state – and we have responded to them with friendship and with economic and other links. We are no longer ‘a People that dwelleth alone.’³²⁰

The Intifada, moreover, had convinced Rabin that Israel could not continue to rule over the Palestinians by force indefinitely. And, like Peres, Rabin was concerned that the price of this occupation would be costly to Israeli security in the long-run given the demographic realities that could, in time, compromise Israel’s Jewish character.

In short, situational factors served as permissive conditions for Israel’s leadership to change course in its foreign policy vis-à-vis the Palestinians. The Oslo accords did not, however, gain the acceptance of the Israeli right-wing parties, whose members, including former Prime Minister Shamir, voted against the agreements in the Knesset and spoke out against the Oslo process at every opportunity. Clearly, then, not everyone shared the view of Peres and Rabin that structural changes had provided Israel with a golden opportunity for peace with a severely weakened PLO – a small price to pay for averting the long-term dangers of continued occupation.

Cognitive Openness: Peres’s “Learning” from his Environment and the Influence of his Advisers

Peres’s actions following King Hussein’s announcement of 31 July 1988, effectively closing off “the Jordanian option,” attests to his high level of cognitive openness as well as complexity. For years, Peres was the country’s most ardent supporter of the Jordanian option, viewing a confederation with Jordan as the optimal solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. By negotiating with King Hussein, Peres

³²⁰ Excerpt from Address by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to the Knesset, Report on activities of the Government, The Information Division of the Israeli Foreign Ministry – Jerusalem, 27 June 1993.

had hoped that Israel could avoid having to deal with the PLO's Yasser Arafat. The London Agreement of 1987 was the culmination of Peres's efforts in this regard, and to this day he laments its collapse, believing that it could have been a viable alternative to an independent Palestinian state.³²¹ However, the moment King Hussein relinquished his control of the West Bank was the moment that Peres began to reevaluate his position, as is evidenced by the special committee he set up whose purpose was to closely monitor developments within the PLO; his quick adoption of more nuanced rhetoric concerning the PLO; and his support – albeit largely behind-the-scenes – of the Mashov group's efforts to move the Labor Party in a more dovish direction. The end of the Cold War and the Persian Gulf War were additional situational factors that contributed significantly to Peres's dovish shift.

Peres's political activities since the late 1980s suggest that he was able to “learn” from the situational change, as painful as this change was on a personal level given his prior devotion to the Jordanian option in general and to the London Agreement in particular. Personal feelings aside, Peres is highly sensitive to his environment, as was shown in chapter 3. His decades-old aversion to negotiating with the PLO was thus superseded by the new information he confronted; namely, that if Israel wanted a deal with the Palestinians, it could no longer avoid the PLO; the alternative was no longer Jordan but, as he saw it, the rejectionist leadership of Hamas, which would be worse than the PLO.

Similarly, Peres's reversal on the question of a Palestinian state also is a reflection of his sensitivity to the environment. Since the 1990s, he has seen an

³²¹ Peres is not alone in viewing the collapse of the London Agreement as a missed opportunity for peace. Even some officials affiliated with Likud concede that Shamir's rejection of Peres's agreement with King Hussein was, in retrospect, a big mistake. See, for example, interview with Zalman Shoval.

independent Palestinian state – a prospect he abhorred for many years and a solution he finds less than ideal even today – as nevertheless preferable to the status quo, and certainly preferable to the long-term dangers the status quo had in terms of Israel’s long-term security.

In the 1977-97 period, Peres displayed not only a high sensitivity to the environment, but also an unusually high degree of openness to what others were telling him – in particular, his political aides. “I think that Yossi Beilin’s group influenced him greatly,” says Gad Yaacobi, Peres’s former ally-turned-critic. “They sat with him a lot, spoke with him a lot, and tried to convince him to change his views, his positions, on the issue of negotiations with the PLO and a Palestinian state.”³²²

By the time Beilin informed his boss of the unofficial, backchannel negotiations that were taking place in Oslo, Peres had come to accept the notion of dealing with the PLO. Explains David Landau:

In Oslo, Beilin managed to neutralize – at least for that crucial period – Peres’s profound contempt for Arafat, which at that time was based on intelligence assessments. After 1988 and the change in the Palestinian ideology, Peres was under pressure from people in the peace camp to embrace the Palestinian option, Palestinian independence, negotiations with the PLO – expressly because the Jordanian option had been torpedoed. But he was very, very, very reluctant to do so. The reason he was reluctant to do so was no longer ideological; it was practical. He honestly believed that Yasser Arafat was a nincompoop, incompetent. Not merely a terrorist. Terrorist is for propaganda. Everybody is a terrorist. But he believed that...[Arafat] was personally, congenitally and politically incapable of delivering...Peres allowed himself to be convinced that his [old] position was barren and would lead to nothing. And he was convinced by Beilin, because Uri Savir, on behalf of Beilin, was sitting with Abu Ala. And Abu Mazen was behind it. So these two guys looked far more serious than Arafat. Arafat was kind of in the background.³²³

³²² Interview with Yaacobi, 9 October 2006, Tel Aviv. See also interviews with Nimrod Novik; Gideon Levy, 14 November 2006, Tel Aviv; David Landau; Israel Peleg, 21 December 2006, Shfayim; and Alon Pinkas.

³²³ Interview with David Landau.

Indeed, Oslo negotiator Ron Pundak attributes Peres's hawk-to-dove shift to his cognitive openness: "Peres is somebody who learns and changes. He is somebody who is not stuck at any point with an ideology. He adapts, he learns, he listens, he upgrades himself." Asked if Peres's learning was done on a tactical level as opposed to a worldview level, Pundak responds unequivocally: "No, not tactics at all. Totally a worldview. The globalization suddenly hit him, so he adopted it in a few manners. The success of Europe, suddenly; the fall of the wall; the integration of East and West; the nuclear threat in the Middle East...It's the entire world which has changed and, obviously, he changed with it."³²⁴

Cognitive Complexity: A Positive-Sum Interpretation of the Palestinian Question and a Multifaceted View of Security

Peres's high level of cognitive complexity can be seen clearly in his oral and written statements on the Arab-Israeli conflict throughout the 1990s. His comment that "one can say that the better off the Palestinians are, the better it will be for their Israeli neighbors" is further evidence of how he perceived the conflict; it was, as far as he was concerned, not a zero-sum game.³²⁵ If one side benefits, this does not necessarily mean that the other side loses; on the contrary, satisfying Palestinian national aspirations can make life better for Israelis. This attitude was manifested, most obviously, in Peres's 1993 book, *The New Middle East*. In explaining his shift concerning the PLO, Peres writes:

...I felt that the PLO was losing ground. For years, most people believed that relations between Israel and the PLO were at zero sum, whereby the advantages of

³²⁴ Interview with Ron Pundak, 31 October 2006, Tel Aviv.

³²⁵ Shimon Peres, "On the Path to Capitulation...or Peace?" *The Washington Times*, 21 May 1999, A15.

one side automatically become the disadvantages of the other. Would a PLO collapse benefit Israel? If the great enemy against whom we had been fighting these many years suddenly disappeared, who would take its place? Was Hamas a preferable alternative?...Thus, circumstances at the time in the region and in the territories led us to conclude that perhaps it was in Israel's interest to have the PLO play a role on this political stage (Peres 1993: 18-19).

In the early 1990s, Peres's cognitive complexity was reflected, also, in his multi-dimensional outlook concerning how best to provide Israel with the security it needed to survive in the decades ahead. The man who established the Israel Aircraft Industries and who was instrumental in turning Israel into a nuclear power had come to perceive security in much broader terms. "Missiles are impervious to maps of sovereignty and to obstacles, natural or man-made," he said, emphasizing the importance of collective security arrangements. His "grand design" for the Middle East would encompass regional security as well as a new system of economic relations, which could take the form of a common market or a free-trade zone.³²⁶ Peres's vision of a "New Middle East" was met with criticism and no small amount of ridicule. It was seen as "pie in the sky" to some, patronizing to others. Nevertheless, regardless of its feasibility, it is a sophisticated concept, a manifestation of a cognitively complex mind. Even tourism was included in Peres's revised definition of security because of the new environment in which an influx of tourists would foster (Peres 1993: 149-153).³²⁷ "The world has changed," argued Peres. "And the process of change compels us to replace our outdated concepts with an approach tailored to the new reality" (Peres 1993: 34).

³²⁶ Leslie Susser, "Peres's Grand Design," *The Jerusalem Report*, 6 May 1993.

³²⁷ See, also, Melissa Healy, "Israel's Peres Says He Backs Jordanian-Palestinian State," *Los Angeles Times*, 6 September 1993.

Peres's high levels of cognitive openness and complexity are important for explaining why he was able to change his views and reach the conclusion at which other Israeli leaders arrived only later, if at all. Rabin, who also favored the Jordanian option, opposed dealing with the PLO, and rejected Palestinian statehood, demonstrated no signs of altering his stance following King Hussein's West Bank decision. Even four years later, after becoming Prime Minister, Rabin showed no inclination to change Israel's policy vis-à-vis the PLO. Despite no real progress in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations – the so-called “Washington talks” begun in Madrid by the previous government – Rabin was convinced that a deal could still be reached with the local Palestinian leaders, thereby bypassing Arafat. It thus took him considerably longer than Peres to conclude that this formula would not bear fruit. However, once he gave the green light to Israel-PLO talks, he remained committed to this new policy despite his many doubts about whether it would produce an agreement. He therefore proved to be more sensitive to environmental factors than was Shamir, whose positions remained the same despite regional and international changes, but less so than Peres, who displayed greater sensitivity to the environment. Says Moshe Maoz, “I think Peres was ahead of many on the Palestinian issue. He was more open and changed his mind earlier than others, like Rabin. I recall that [Gen. Aharon] Yariv and Lova Eliav – they were ahead of Peres. But Peres was ahead of Rabin on this issue.”³²⁸

³²⁸ Interview with Moshe Maoz, 18 April 2007 (telephone interview). Samuel Lewis makes the same point: “You can find lots of evidence of other Israeli ex-military and some politicians who made this same evolution much faster than Peres did. But he made it. And he made it faster than Rabin did. The Likud guys never made it, basically. They haven't to today, most of them.” See interview with Samuel Lewis, 28 August 2006. Dennis Ross agrees that Rabin was slower to come along than Peres with regard to the PLO. See interview with Dennis Ross, 25 July 2007, Washington, D.C.

Conclusion

As shown throughout this chapter, the decade beginning in 1987 can be seen as the second and final phase in Peres's shift from a hawk to a dove. By 1997, Peres's dovish transformation can be seen as complete: the opponent of territorial compromise and founder of Jewish settlements in the mid-1970s had become a staunch supporter of the peace process, advocating an end to settlement construction, support for PLO talks, and the establishment of a Palestinian state in Gaza and most of the West Bank.³²⁹ The defining turning point for him occurred in July 1988, following King Hussein's decision to cede authority for the West Bank to the PLO. It was at that point that Peres saw the writing on the wall: the "Jordanian option," which he had long championed, had collapsed; Israel would have no choice but to deal directly with the PLO – an idea most Israelis, including Peres, had abhorred. Negotiating with the PLO meant not only dealing with a terrorist organization but also tacitly accepting the notion of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (as opposed to a political confederation with Jordan). Indeed, in 1997, Peres began to speak of the need for such an independent Palestinian state.

The Oslo peace talks, which began in 1993, saw a shift in Israeli attitudes towards the PLO. To a large degree, Prime Minister and Defense Minister Rabin can be credited with this change given his credibility in Israeli society as a leader committed to Israel's security. The moment he authorized the secret talks in Oslo, which paved the way for the agreement he ultimately signed in September 1993, the long-held taboo of avoiding talks with the PLO was shattered. Yet, as we have seen,

³²⁹ Peres has always been ambiguous about the extent to which he would be willing to part with the West Bank, believing that this important detail is best left to the negotiations.

Rabin was slow to accept the notion of engaging the PLO, choosing to do so only after experiencing many months of deadlock in the so-called “Washington talks” between Israeli and local Palestinian leaders who would not make any moves without the approval of the PLO leadership in Tunis. Peres, as was shown, preceded Rabin by nearly five years on this issue. By contrast, longtime Likud leader Yitzhak Shamir remained as firmly opposed to Israel-PLO talks after they had already begun as he had been prior to the Oslo process. In contrast to Peres and Rabin, Shamir did not accept the notion that the momentous events of the late 1980s and early 1990s – the Intifada, the Persian Gulf War, and the collapse of the Soviet Union – necessitated a change in Israeli policy vis-à-vis the Palestinians. Peres and Rabin changed their views; Shamir did not.

As in the previous chapter, the leader’s cognitive structure emerges as the key causal variable that explains one’s propensity to alter his views – or not to do so. Of the three leaders who dominated the Israeli political scene during the 1987-97 period – Shamir, Rabin, and Peres – Shamir was the least cognitively open and complex individual; Peres, the most. Thus, Shamir was the least affected by information he received from the environment, and he continued to view the Arab-Israeli conflict in zero-sum terms. His hawkish beliefs on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remained remarkably consistent despite events at home and abroad.

Rabin, it was shown in chapter 3, was a much more cognitively open and complex individual. He thus displayed far greater sensitivity to the environment than did Shamir. His views changed based on a steady flow of information from the

environment that challenged his long-held beliefs, ultimately convincing him that it was in his nation's best interest to negotiate a peace deal with the PLO.

Peres had an even higher level of cognitive openness and complexity than did Rabin. He showed himself to be a great listener who not only was open to hearing people's views (even those views that contradicted his own), but who actively sought them out. He also closely monitored international, regional, and technological trends, which provided him with a constant flow of new information, enabling him to adapt relatively quickly to changing circumstances. Finally, Peres's nuanced and layered interpretation of what he saw enabled him to perceive the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in positive-sum, as opposed to zero-sum, terms, a fact that enabled him to revise his long-held beliefs and seek creative, even if at times fanciful, solutions to Israel's security problems.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION: THEORY BUILDING AND APPLICATION

Why do some hawkish leaders become dovish and what determines whether these leaders' views affect dramatic change in a state's foreign policy? This question represents the central puzzle of this dissertation, one that challenges scholars to focus on a level of analysis most political scientists avoid: the individual. In addressing this research question, agency is incorporated into the explanatory equation by crafting a theoretical framework with the individual at its center. Specifically, this framework proposes that a leader's cognitive structure – his or her levels of cognitive openness and complexity – is the critical causal variable for determining his or her propensity to revise core positions in light of new information from the environment. Systemic-structural factors and domestic political factors serve as either permissive conditions or triggering events for the leader's foreign policy shift. Thus, while the latter sets of factors are important parts of the explanation, the key to understanding the hawk-to-dove shift lays in the cognitive structure of the leader. The extent to which the leaders' new policy outlooks, in turn, affect states' foreign policy behavior is similarly dependent on the leader's cognitive structure.

Forty years ago, Fred Greenstein observed that the study of personality and politics has more critics than practitioners. The overarching thrust of these criticisms, he noted, was that personality explanations of political behavior tend to be undemonstrated, unreplicable, and perhaps even arbitrary interpretations (Greenstein 1969: 17-20). Yet Greenstein rightly identified the prohibitive analytical price paid

for ignoring the study of individuals, and he attempted to square the analytical circle. Greenstein was interested in the questions of *action dispensability* – the circumstances under which the actions of single individuals are likely to have a greater or lesser effect on the course of events – and *actor dispensability* – that of whether we need to explain the action in terms of the actor’s personal characteristics (Greenstein 1969: 41). A growing number of scholars, many of whom are schooled in political psychology, have followed Greenstein’s lead by arguing that the study of individuals – their actions *and* their personalities – is critical to explaining certain political outcomes (Byman and Pollack 2001; George 1993/1994; Hermann and Hagan 1998; Hudson 2005, 2007). The present work is situated within this burgeoning literature on leaders, but also reaches beyond it in attempting to construct a multi-level theoretical synthesis.

Central Conclusions

In addressing the question of why some hawkish leaders turn to dovish policies, this project has focused on the oft-ignored individual level of analysis, though not at the dismissal of the systemic and domestic levels. Two central conclusions emerge from the research: (1) the actions of a single person can be a critical element in affecting foreign policy outcomes (the question of action dispensability); and (2) the cognitive structure of a leader – in particular, one’s levels of cognitive openness and cognitive complexity – is a key causal variable for explaining that leader’s propensity to shift his or her views on core issues (the question of actor dispensability).

The Importance of Agency in International Relations

The exploration of four key foreign policy cases in which Shimon Peres was directly involved – the arms procurement deals with France, the French-Israeli nuclear agreement, the founding of some of the first settlements in the West Bank, and the decision to hold direct, official talks with the PLO – reveals the importance of agency in these outcomes. To be sure, one should not rule out the possibility that these events would have occurred absent Peres's involvement. But such counterfactuals are difficult to prove with a high degree of certainty. The most plausible explanation for these outcomes is that they were the product of Peres's aggressive determination to exploit opportunities that others did not see, to create opportunities where none seemingly existed (as in the nuclear reactor deal), and to gain support for his agenda by courting politicians and bureaucrats at home and abroad.

As demonstrated in chapter 4, Peres's activities in France in the 1950s were critical to the massive arms deals Israel secured, which changed the balance of power in the Middle East in Israel's favor. In retrospect, it might seem logical that the U.S. arms embargo would have led Israel to turn to France for help and why France, in turn, would have been willing to sell arms to help defeat Egypt's Nasser, an ally of France's nemesis, the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN). Yet these situational factors were hardly apparent at that time to many key decision-makers in France and Israel. Indeed, the Israeli foreign ministry's "Anglo-Saxon" orientation and the French Foreign Ministry's "Arabist" orientation can hardly be seen as having helped facilitate the massive arms deals that were concluded in the mid-1950s; rather, these

factors were obstacles to such cooperation. But Peres, the then-Director-General of the Israeli Defense Ministry, was determined to succeed where the Foreign Ministry had failed in obtaining a significant quantity of high-quality arms. Peres correctly concluded that Israel's lobbying efforts in the United States were an exercise in futility, due to the U.S. arms embargo and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles's hostile attitude towards Israel, and he argued that the real opportunity lay in France due to a confluence of mutual interests – shared adversaries (Egypt and, to a lesser extent, Great Britain), post-World War II sympathy for Jews among leading French politicians, shared economic interests, and France's desire to enhance its regional and international role. It was Peres's persistence, creativity, and ability to identify situational nuances and bureaucratic opportunities – factors rooted in his cognitive openness and complexity – that led to Israel's secret arms deals with France. By cultivating relationships with government and opposition officials alike, dealing directly with the French Ministry of Defense (thus bypassing the foreign ministries of both countries), and constantly emphasizing to his interlocutors the mutual interest that the two countries had in undermining Nasser's rule, Peres, practically alone, succeeded in forging a tacit alliance with a leading European power.

The structural and domestic political factors at the time of Israel's nuclear arms deal with France are similarly inadequate for explaining Israel's acquisition of a nuclear reactor; in fact, they would suggest a very different outcome than what transpired. In the 1950s, Israel was a poor country that had nowhere near the budget needed to finance such a prohibitively costly endeavor. Domestically, there was hardly any support for such an undertaking. Even the Israeli scientific and political

establishments were fervently opposed to Israel's nuclearization. At the same time, the United States sought to prevent nuclear proliferation. Even France itself had not yet become a nuclear power. Yet Peres, with Prime Minister Ben-Gurion's blessing, made it his personal mission to turn Israel into a nuclear state. He tenaciously lobbied French Defense Ministry officials to consider the merits of engaging in cooperation with Israeli nuclear scientists, and exploited the negotiations over Israel's role in the Suez expedition of October 1956 to this end; an unwritten agreement for French-Israeli nuclear cooperation was a bi-product of that expedition. Peres succeeded in his mission in no small part due to his ability to exploit opportunities in the bureaucratic divisions within France – for example, by bypassing the Quai d'Orsay and dealing directly with French Defense Ministry officials, who were seeking an international client for their arms.

Even after a nuclear agreement with France was attained, however, numerous political obstacles threatened to preclude its implementation, and Peres had to labor intensively to overcome them. In one instance, it should be recalled, Peres managed to convince Maurice Bourges-Maunoury, the Prime Minister whose cabinet made a formal decision to confirm the agreement but who was toppled later that night by the French National Assembly, to predate the agreement to the previous day. In short, the nuclear agreement, from its inception to its realization, is a case of agency trumping structure; it occurred *despite* the structural conditions that were in place, not because of them.

The settlement enterprise in the West Bank discussed in Chapter 4 also owes a great deal of debt to Peres who, as Defense Minister from 1974 to 1977, helped found

some of the first settlements there, paving the road for the policy of creating “facts on the ground.” While then-Prime Minister Rabin never warmed to the settlers’ agenda and, on a number of occasions, tried to thwart their efforts, Peres was the government minister most sympathetic to their goals and he actively promoted the notion of settling the mountain ridge of the West Bank. Peres’s motives for supporting them remain unclear, but one likely possibility is that he viewed the settlement enterprise as a wedge issue that could erode the standing of Rabin, his chief rival whom he sought to replace as Labor Party Chairman and Prime Minister.³³⁰ Settler leaders had unprecedented access to the government due to Peres’s willingness to meet with them frequently for extended periods of time. Peres lent his hand to the establishment of the Ofra and Sebastia/Elon Moreh settlements, exacerbating the tensions between himself and Rabin. With regard to Sebastia, while the cabinet demanded that the Elon Moreh settlers be removed from the area and was poised to use force to evacuate them, Peres was instrumental in forging a compromise plan that enabled the settlers to establish their new settlement in a nearby location. It can be argued that the settlers were bound to find a champion and to override reasoned resistance because of the familiar dynamics of intense minority politics in a democratic parliamentary system. In fact, they did just that in 1977, when Menachem Begin became Prime Minister – an outcome that led settler leaders to switch their allegiance from the Labor Party to Begin’s Likud. Nevertheless, had it not been for Peres’s active support, it is highly unlikely that the settlers would have made much headway prior to Labor’s defeat in 1977.

³³⁰ See interview with Zeev Schiff, 10 November 2006, Ramat Aviv Gimel.

Finally, as shown in chapter 6, the decision to talk to the PLO, which precipitated the Oslo peace accords, is another example in which agency was a critical factor. To be sure, structural conditions helped lay the foundation for an Israeli-Palestinian rapprochement. Specifically, a weakened and financially bankrupt PLO – a consequence of the Persian Gulf War and the collapse of the Soviet Union – was compelled to compromise on its principal demands and accept peace with Israel. The ascent of a more dovish Labor-led government following Israel’s 1992 election created a more amenable environment for negotiations with the PLO. However, had it not been for Peres’s adoption, support, and promotion of the Oslo talks – and his ability to convince Rabin to give them the green light – it is doubtful that the Oslo accords would have been reached. As one analyst notes, the key to Oslo’s success on the Israeli side was Peres’s quick recognition of the potential of the backchannel negotiations and his success in securing Rabin’s endorsement of these talks by working with him in an honest, open manner – in contrast to his handling of the London Agreement of 1987, which he had concluded “behind the back” of the then-Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.³³¹

To be clear, these cases do *not* suggest that structural and situational factors are of no importance, but rather that agency, which is so often overlooked by scholars of international relations, can be *at least as important* in accounting for political outcomes. In the cases reviewed here, Peres’s role is shown to have been a *critical*, albeit not sole, factor in explaining these outcomes. What this research suggests is that structural conditions can be exploited by the decisionmaker or by individuals with access to the decisionmaker. In situations where the structural conditions do not

³³¹ Interview with Zeev Schiff.

appear to be conducive to the political objective at hand, the successful political actor will be able to overcome them, fostering more favorable conditions, as Peres did in each of these cases, effectively altering Israeli government policies.

Of particular importance here is that in all of the aforementioned situations, Peres was a secondary political actor. Why was he successful in shaping Israeli foreign policy in a way that many others were not? More broadly, why does the foreign policymaking process respond better to some individuals than to others? As argued above, a large part of the answer lies in Peres's cognitive structure, a point discussed in greater depth in the next section.

The Importance of Cognitive Factors in Foreign Policy Change

The second overarching conclusion of this research project is that a more robust explanation of foreign policy change must account for the personality characteristics of leaders. Specifically, a leader's levels of cognitive openness and cognitive complexity are found to hold great promise in determining the likelihood that he or she would opt to pursue a major foreign policy change and, moreover, that he or she would be successful in affecting change. A ***cognitively open*** system is receptive to new information from the environment that may revise one's beliefs; a ***cognitively closed*** system fails to assimilate new information, leaving one's beliefs intact (Farnham 2001; Finlay, Holsti and Fagan 1967; Rokeach 1960). Similarly, a ***cognitively complex*** system, which recognizes that distinct situations possess multiple dimensions, is associated with more sophisticated and more adaptive behavior than a ***cognitively simple*** system, which perceives situations in binary terms (Hermann

1980; Shapiro and Bonham 1973; Stein 1994, 2002; Suedfeld and Wallace 1995; Tetlock 1984, 1985; Vertzberger 1990).

Thus, a leader who possesses high levels of cognitive openness and cognitive complexity will be more likely to revise previously-held beliefs when confronted with new circumstances than will his or her cognitively closed and cognitively simple counterpart. In this study, Peres is found to possess especially high levels of cognitive openness and complexity, more so than Rabin and significantly more so than Begin or Shamir. Indeed, of these leaders, Peres was the first to revise his beliefs on the Palestinian issue, and he did so more extensively than Rabin; neither Begin nor Shamir revised their views on this issue.

An additional tentative conclusion that emerges from this research is that a leader who possesses high levels of cognitive openness and cognitive complexity is better able to affect foreign policy change than those with lower levels of cognitive openness and complexity. The cognitively open and complex leader is highly sensitive to the environment and is thus better poised to exploit opportunities that the cognitively closed and simple leader may not see. By placing himself/herself in the shoes of other political actors with differing worldviews and with differing perspectives on what constitutes their states' national interests, the cognitively open and complex actor will be able to maximize his/her leverage by seeking allies and building coalitions, thereby expanding his/her power base. To revisit the example of the "French connection" discussed in the section above, Peres's high levels of cognitive openness and complexity enabled him to better appreciate the interests of his French interlocutors than his colleagues. In the 1950s, as Israel sought a partner

that would deliver a significant quantity of arms, Peres's complexity enabled him to differentiate American interests from those of the French in terms of assessing who was more likely to deliver such arms to Israel. Moreover, by learning as much as he could about France and its political structure, he was able to differentiate between the conflicting priorities and outlooks of the Defense Ministry, which was interested in an international client for its arms and had a hostile attitude toward the Arabs, and the Foreign Ministry, which had an Arabist orientation and opposed military solutions to the problems of the Middle East. By cultivating a wide array of relationships in the French capital and, in the process, listening to the concerns of each individual with whom he met, Peres became attuned to the interests and ideas of key French politicians (including leaders of the opposition), their aides, and their domestic supporters. As Former French President Guy Mollet poignantly observed, unlike Israeli Foreign Ministry officials – including Foreign Ministers Sharrett and, subsequently, Golda Meir – who emphasized *their* national interests, Peres was able to win the French over by emphasizing the mutual interest *both* countries shared in undermining Nasser's rule in Egypt.³³²

Operationalizing the Cognitive Structure of Leaders

Determining a leader's levels of cognitive openness and complexity should not be done on the basis of the dependent variable(s) identified with the leader's foreign policy change; doing so would create a tautology. In chapter 3, therefore, the

³³² As mentioned above, and as shown in chapters 4-6, the link between cognitive openness and complexity, on the one hand, and an ability to affect foreign policy change, on the other hand, holds in the other cases as well. Peres's inclination to seek out the opinions of a broad array of figures from across the political spectrum both at home and abroad and, in the process, gaining allies, enabled him to piece together support for his agenda.

Israeli leaders' cognitive structures were assessed not on the basis of their positions on territorial compromise, settlements, negotiations with the PLO, and Palestinian statehood – the dependent variables – but rather on their outlooks on *other* issues and *before* the behavior in question took place (i.e., prior to Peres's and Rabin's dovish turn). Expert testimony revealed useful information about the leaders' relevant personality characteristics, such as whether they were inclined to listen to viewpoints other than their own and whether they tended to make black-and-white judgments or judgments entailing multiple dimensions.

Explaining the Hawk-to-Dove Shift: Key Findings

Three sets of factors emerge as key elements of a leader's dovish shift. First, the more cognitively open and cognitively complex is a leader, the more likely that leader is to change his or her foreign policy preferences, becoming more dovish (or more hawkish) towards an adversary. Of the four leaders whose cognitive structure was analyzed in chapter 3, only Rabin and Peres agreed to deal with the enemy. Begin and Shamir were found to be less cognitively open and complex than were Rabin and Peres; indeed, whereas the former pair of leaders never budged from their opposition to dealing with the PLO, the latter pair reversed their previous beliefs that peace could not be attained with the PLO. By 1993, they both had concluded that peace could *only* be attained through negotiations with the PLO. Begin died in 1992, so it is not possible to state with absolute certainty that he would have rejected the negotiations with the PLO that took place the following year in Oslo. However, until the day he died, Begin, like Shamir, remained an unreconstructed hawk. Neither

Begin nor Shamir had indicated, at any point, a willingness to deal with the PLO or to reconsider their longstanding support for annexing the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. Peres, who was found to be more cognitively open and complex than Rabin, underwent the more profound reversal in his beliefs than did Rabin – and did so earlier. As chapters 4 and 5 make clear, when Peres began his dovish turn, he was more hawkish than Rabin. Until the late 1970s, Peres, in contrast to Rabin, opposed the concept of territorial compromise and promoted the establishment of settlements in the West Bank; Rabin was thus the more dovish of the two Labor Party leaders. In chapter 6, it is shown that by the late 1980s, it was Peres who was the more dovish of the two leaders, as is evidenced by his tacit, if not explicit, support for changing the status quo concerning Israel's PLO policy.

The research findings presented herein suggest, therefore, that leaders' cognitive structure is a key causal variable, enabling us to understand not only why some leaders are more inclined to change their views than are others, but also why some do so earlier than others. In other words, these two cognitive variables can shed light on both the *why* and the *when* questions. On the issue that led to the most significant policy reversal regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – talking to the PLO – Peres had come to the conclusion that Israel needed to change course nearly five years before Rabin reached a similar conclusion. His high levels of cognitive openness and complexity enabled him to be open to information he received from the environment as well as to ideas of both foreign leaders with whom he engaged regularly and his own team of young, educated and highly ambitious advisers who openly challenged Peres's positions on such matters as his preference for concluding

a deal with Jordan's King Hussein at the expense of the Palestinians. After the collapse of the Jordanian option in 1988, Peres quickly adapted to the new realities and began, as foreign minister, to lay the ground for eventual PLO talks. Rabin, whose levels of cognitive openness and complexity were lower, did not solicit the views of others and did not welcome dissenting opinions from his much more limited circle of aides. It is not surprising, therefore, that even after he became prime minister, leading a left-of-center government, Rabin showed no inclination to change Israel's policy vis-à-vis the PLO. He rejected calls from within his own party to change directions. However, once he experienced the gridlock in the Washington talks for himself, he was able to come to terms with the need to directly engage the PLO in order to make headway in the peace process. He therefore proved to be more sensitive to environmental factors than were Begin or Shamir, whose positions remained the same despite regional and international changes, but less so than Peres, who displayed greater sensitivity to the environment. Says Moshe Maoz, who served as a member of an academic advisory group during Peres's premiership in the mid-1980s: "I think Peres was ahead of many on the Palestinian issue. He was more open and changed his mind earlier than others, like Rabin. I recall that [Gen. Aharon] Yariv and Lova Eliav – they were ahead of Peres. But Peres was ahead of Rabin on this issue."³³³

³³³ Interview with Maoz. Ambassador Samuel Lewis makes the same point: "You can find lots of evidence of other Israeli ex-military and some politicians who made this same evolution much faster than Peres did. But he made it. And he made it faster than Rabin did. The Likud guys never made it, basically. They haven't to today, most of them." See interview with former U.S. Ambassador to Israel Samuel Lewis, 28 August 2006, Washington, DC. Dennis Ross agrees that Rabin was slower to come along than Peres with regard to the PLO. See interview with Ross.

The second major finding is that, to the extent that leaders will pursue foreign policy change, they will do so when the distribution of power shifts in a way that alters their states' vital security interests. The PLO's politically and financially weakened status following the Gulf War, in which it had backed Saddam Hussein, cost it the support of Arab donor governments. That, coupled with the end of the Soviet Union's support (following its demise in 1992), meant that Israel was in a politically (not to mention militarily) superior position to its adversary – the PLO – even more so than it had been prior to these events. Indeed, the Rabin government pursued peace with the PLO just as the organization was verging on collapse. For Rabin and Peres, a weakened PLO meant that Israel had a chance to reach an agreement with a humbled adversary whose demands and expectations would likely be more realistic than those it had held in the past.

But what would compel the Rabin government to essentially rescue an organization that seemed doomed to oblivion and to pursue policies of accommodation with this organization at a time when the international environment was widely deemed favorable to Israeli security interests? The answer lies in the leader's *perception* of what the country's long-term security interests entailed. A key *permissive condition* for Rabin's dovish turn – and the dovish foreign policy his government adopted – was the first Palestinian Intifada, which affected him deeply. As Defense Minister when the Intifada began, he became convinced that Israel would not be able to rule by force indefinitely over one and a half million Palestinians (Slater 1996: 416). For Rabin, the Intifada served as a wakeup call that, notwithstanding Israel's favorable position in the international environment, the

demographic time bomb in the occupied territories threatened Israel's security in the long run. As far as he was concerned, Israel would be less secure by not opting for a conciliatory approach toward the Palestinians.³³⁴

However, these same events occurred prior to the premiership of Rabin, during the government of Yitzhak Shamir. Yet Shamir, who was witness to these same systemic realities, did *not* opt for change, sticking instead to the status quo. He did not *perceive* the state's security to be threatened by the status quo, particularly since the distribution of power was such that Israel had become significantly superior to its enemies. Why make concessions when Israel had attained such strength? As far as he was concerned, the PLO was "still the same terrorist organization" – just a much weaker one. For Shamir, resuscitating the PLO by granting it legitimacy and territory was not a rational option given the organization's continued commitment (as he saw it) to Israel's destruction. Israel's long-term security needs required Israeli retention of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, rather than relinquishing these territories to the PLO.

These findings demonstrate the inadequacy of a systemic-structural account for a state's foreign policy change. The unitary rational actor model does not work given that different leaders can perceive the same events quite differently. These

³³⁴ Peres, who served as Foreign Minister in Rabin's second government, agreed with Rabin's perception of Israel's long-term security needs. Unlike Rabin, however, the signal event affecting Peres's strategic calculus was the collapse of the Jordanian option, following King Hussein's decision of July 1988 to sever administrative and legal ties to the West Bank. The King's announcement, which followed on the heels of the ill-fated London Agreement, can be seen as an important turning point – a *triggering event* – for Peres's dovish turn; it was at that juncture that he accepted the notion of Israel-PLO talks, because he concluded that the alternative to negotiating with the PLO would be to negotiate with the far more radical Hamas. Moreover, Peres repeatedly has emphasized that territorial depth is no longer critical to Israeli security in the age of missiles. What would be costly to Israel's security, in the long term, would be the demographic time bomb Israel faced by continuing to hold on to the occupied territories given the high birth rate of the Palestinians.

findings suggest that when a particular leader *perceives* the state's security to be significantly threatened, he or she will then opt to change foreign policy directions. However, when a leader does not perceive the state's security to be significantly threatened, he or she will not seek to alter the status quo. In short, systemic-structural conditions are an inadequate predictor of foreign policy change.

The third key finding is that, to the extent that leaders will change from hawk to dove (or from dove to hawk), they will do so following domestic political realignments that favor such policies. In chapter 5, it was shown that internal Labor Party politics compelled Peres to soften his hard-line stance toward the Palestinians. Until the late-1970s, Peres was a hawk, whose positions were to the right of the Labor Party mainstream. He could not continue to oppose territorial compromise – a central tenet of Labor's platform – and, at the same time, hope to have a realistic chance at leading the party. In February 1977, on the eve of his challenge to Rabin for the chairmanship of the party, Peres thus declared his support for territorial compromise, reversing his position on this issue. When he became the party's chairman several months later, following Rabin's resignation, he soon found himself in the role of the Opposition leader and adapted accordingly. He quickly emerged as a firm supporter of Arab-Israeli peacemaking, opposed the expansion of settlements in the West Bank (another policy reversal) and adopted a more conciliatory tone towards the Palestinians. These domestic political developments can be seen as the *triggering events* for Peres's dovish turn in the first half of 1977.

The 1992 elections in Israel, which brought about Labor's return to power, helped facilitate the Rabin government's decision to change course in longstanding

Israeli policy towards the Palestinians by agreeing to conduct direct negotiations with the PLO, leading both parties to mutually recognize each other. Had the Likud's Shamir won re-election that year, or had there been another "national unity" government with the Likud and Labor sharing power, it is highly unlikely that Israel would have reversed its policy on this issue. In this case, the key domestic political development – Labor's ascent to power – can be seen as a *permissive condition*, rather than a triggering event, for Rabin's dovish turn. As noted above, Rabin did not reverse course immediately following his election despite the fact that he had a coalition in place that enabled him to do so. Labor's rank-and-file supported such a change, but Rabin, in the early 1990s, was a hawk, whose positions were somewhat to the right of the party's mainstream. Rabin had to be convinced that the Washington talks, which sidelined the PLO, was a recipe for continued stalemate before he agreed to give direct talks with the PLO a chance.³³⁵ The 1992 election ought to be seen, therefore, as a *permissive condition* for the Rabin government's dramatic policy shift; without a Labor victory, the government would not have changed course on this issue. But this event, while facilitating the policy shift, did not trigger the change, which took place many months later.

In sum, the empirical research in this study shows that systemic-structural and domestic political factors serve as permissive conditions or triggering events for a leader's dovish turn. They are necessary but insufficient conditions for determining whether a leader will take steps to change foreign policy directions. What differentiates leaders who change directions from those who do not are their

³³⁵ In reality, the PLO was very much involved in the negotiations, directing the Palestinian negotiating team.

respective cognitive structures. In particular, the empirical evidence reveals that a leader's levels of cognitive openness and complexity determines his or her propensity for altering his or her views; if the leader is cognitively closed and simple, he or she will not do so regardless of situational factors. Traditional explanations of foreign policy change, which rely solely on systemic-structural factors or domestic political factors – or both – are therefore inadequate in explaining the hawk-to-dove shift.

Toward a Multi-Level Theoretical Framework

These conclusions pose a formidable challenge to the political scientist: how to better incorporate the role of agency in international relations theory so as to provide an enhanced understanding of foreign policy change.

Based on the research findings presented herein, systemic-structural conditions, domestic political factors, and leaders' cognitive structures all are necessary parts of an explanation of why some hawkish decision-makers will pursue dovish policies. Cognitive structure also appears to be a critical factor for explaining why certain leaders are able to actualize their foreign policy preferences, whereas others are not. Needed, therefore, is an integrated, multi-level theoretical framework for explaining this phenomenon. Based on the largely inductive research conducted for this project, the following is an attempt at just such a framework:

- *The leader's cognitive structure – his/her levels of cognitive openness and complexity – is the critical causal variable in determining his/her propensity to revise core positions in the light of new information from the environment.*

- *The leader's cognitive structure is the critical causal variable in determining his/her ability to affect foreign policy change.*
- *Systemic-structural factors and domestic political factors serve as either permissive conditions or triggering events for the leader's foreign policy shift.*

This framework is intended to offer a better understanding of the *necessary* and *sufficient* conditions to explain a leader's transformation from a hawk to a dove, as well as his/her ability to affect change.

Theoretical Scope

The puzzle this dissertation addresses is what leads hawks to pursue dovish policies and, in turn, what determines whether these leaders' views affect foreign policy change. It is an important question given the growing number of cases around the world in which this phenomenon has taken place; indeed, some dramatic foreign policy changes have resulted from leaders' dovish turns, such as the Nixon Administration's diplomatic breakthrough with China, Sadat's peace treaty with Israel, and U.S.-Soviet rapprochement under Gorbachev.³³⁶

While the focus of this project is on the role of the leader in foreign policy decision-making, it must be emphasized that personality is not the *only* factor that matters in this process. As has been demonstrated, a leader's personality *does* matter – a fact that many international relations scholars overlook – but so do other factors. After all, a hawk does not become a dove in a vacuum; certain situational factors lead him or her to do so. This project's critique of mainstream explanations of foreign

³³⁶ However, equally valid is the question of what would lead a dove to pursue hawkish policies. As argued in the section below, the proposed theoretical framework can help to explain Jimmy Carter's hawkish turn during his presidency, which led to an abrupt downgrading in U.S. relations with the Soviet Union.

policy change ought not to be misconstrued, therefore, as a dismissal of either systemic-level or domestic-level theoretical approaches in international relations theory. On the contrary, as has been demonstrated in the empirical chapters, both levels of analysis prove to be important pieces of the puzzle. They offer, however, just partial explanations; theories of foreign policy change based solely on either or both of these approaches are underdetermined. It is the aim of the suggested framework to serve as a corrective to those partial explanations that dominate the literature.

One of the most widely articulated arguments against cognitive approaches to foreign policy decision-making centers on theoretical parsimony and research economy, as Ole Holsti observed over thirty years ago (Holsti 1976: 112). Indeed, the framework presented here does not match the parsimony of neorealism – few theories in international relations do – and could thus be vulnerable to such arguments. Yet, while parsimony is an important criterion for good theory, it is not the *only* one, as Holsti and other scholars have stressed (Holsti 1976; Hudson 2005; Wolfers 1962).

Write King, Keohane and Verba:

To maximize leverage, we should attempt to formulate theories that explain as much as possible with as little as possible. Sometimes this formulation is achieved via parsimony, but sometimes not. We can conceive of examples by which a slightly more complicated theory will explain vastly more of the world. In such a situation, we would surely use the nonparsimonious theory, since it maximizes leverage more than the more parsimonious theory (King, Keohane and Verba 1994: 104-105).

The theoretical framework laid out above attempts to explain a leader's hawk-to-dove shift and his or her influence on states' foreign policy behavior with "as little as possible," yet the empirical findings reported in this dissertation lead to the conclusion that only a multi-level theoretical approach that accounts for situational factors (encompassing both systemic factors and domestic politics) as well as the

leader's personality can provide a necessary *and* sufficient explanation of foreign policy change. Parsimony may be compromised in such an explanation, but accuracy is more important than parsimony, as Byman and Pollack point out in their argument for incorporating leaders into international relations theory (Byman and Pollack 2001: 113). The added layers of complexity promise a more accurate explanation of foreign policy change.

Application of Theoretical Framework to Other Cases

The test of my theoretical framework will be in its application to other cases. Dramatic foreign policy changes entailing leaders' hawk-to-dove shifts have taken place in Israel as well as in other parts of the world. In this section, I suggest how one can apply this framework to other cases of hawkish leaders whose dovish (or hawkish) shifts led to a change in their states' foreign policies.³³⁷

Jimmy Carter

Unlike the other cases reviewed here, which focus on hawks becoming doves, Jimmy Carter is viewed by some scholars as a dove who, as President, turned hawkish with regard to the Soviet Union. Importantly, it is not argued here that Carter – or any of the other cases discussed below – is necessarily a case of a complete transformation in the leader's worldview. Moreover, to the extent that a transformation did take place, it was short-term and narrow, nowhere comparable to the scope and magnitude of Peres's broad transformation, which took place over a number of decades. What follows, rather, is a preliminary analysis based on recent

³³⁷ See Appendix A for a suggested questionnaire that an analyst might use to determine the extent to which a particular leader is cognitively open and complex.

accounts that seemingly have the potential to serve as additional cases by which my theoretical framework can be applied.

Carter entered office with a more optimistic assessment of the Soviet Union than his predecessors; he had relatively little interest in containment; and he aimed to establish a sort of global community that would entail improved relations with the Soviet leadership (Rosati 1987). Carter's attitude towards the Soviet Union differed markedly from the zero-sum approach of the foreign policy led by Henry Kissinger. The following excerpt from an interview in *Time* magazine with the newly elected President illustrates Carter's dovish worldview:

I think there has been in Kissinger's foreign policy an inclination to divide the world into two major power blocs and almost force nations to take a stand: 'I'm for the U.S., I'm against the Soviet Union.' 'I'm for the Soviet Union, I'm against the U.S.' I think that this is a permanently divisive attitude to take in world affairs, and what I'll do is try to get away from that position and deal with nations on an individual basis as far as what is best for their own people. Not force them to choose between us and the Soviet Union but let them choose our country because our system works best and because their trade with us and their open feeling for us would be in their best interest.³³⁸

From the beginning of Carter's presidency, two aides with differing worldviews competed for Carter's attention. The low-key Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, held views similar to Carter's. He advocated diplomatic, arms control, and economic deals in the expectation that a conciliatory approach towards the Soviets would ultimately benefit both sides. By contrast, the boisterous National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, was a hawk who distrusted Soviet intentions and thus advocated a much harder line. It was Brzezinski who succeeded in winning Carter over to his approach vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. Of Vance, Carter reportedly once said, "Because we thought so much alike, his opinion on foreign affairs wasn't as

³³⁸ Murray Gart and Stanley Cloud, "What I'll Do": Carter Looks Ahead," *Time*, 15 November 1976.

necessary for me to understand. His worldview mirrored my own.”³³⁹ Brzezinski quickly emerged as the adviser closest to Carter (Vance resigned in frustration in April 1980) and used his clout to persuade the President to adopt a more hawkish approach towards the Soviets (Aronoff 2006; Glad 1980, 1989; Lebow and Stein 1993; McClellan 1985). Carter became increasingly frustrated with the Soviet leadership due to a number of incidents – their “uncooperative” and “heavy-handed” conduct during the SALT II talks and Soviet intervention in the Ogaden region in Africa are but two examples. Consequently, his image of the Soviet Union worsened (Aronoff 2006: 440-441).

Carter’s altered *weltanschauung* was a harbinger of changes in his Soviet policy, an event that followed the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. Indeed, on 23 January 1980, he announced the Carter Doctrine, which stated that “an attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.”³⁴⁰ Moreover, Carter adopted a variety of measures aimed at punishing the Soviets, such as withdrawing from the SALT II treaty, terminating eleven working groups on trade, cultural exchanges, and arms control talks; and recalling the American Ambassador from Moscow (Aronoff 2006: 445).

In applying my framework to the case of Carter’s hawkish turn, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (the main systemic-structural factor) can be said to have served as the triggering event for Carter’s abrupt foreign policy change. According to

³³⁹ Douglas Brinkley, “The Lives They Lived; Out of the Loop,” *The New York Times Magazine*, 29 December 2002. See also, “A Surprise at State,” *Time*, 12 May 1980.

³⁴⁰ See <http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.org/documents/speeches/su80jec.phtml>.

this account, belligerent Soviet behavior and Brzezinski's continuous efforts to convince Carter of the Soviets' aggressive designs (the most significant domestic political factor) served as permissive conditions for Carter's hawkish shift. The key causal variable lies, however, in Carter's cognitive structure. Yael Aronoff, in her study of Carter's foreign policy shift, argues that "his moderate cognitive flexibility contributed to his dramatic change toward the Soviet Union" (Aronoff 2006: 435). Carter's relative cognitive openness is manifested by the importance he has placed in keeping an open mind about new ideas and messages, enabling him to change his mind on matters such as the development of the neutron bomb – first supporting it and then opposing it (Aronoff 2006: 437). That Carter made it a point to listen to Brzezinski's counsel, knowing that he would give him a different perspective than the one he already had (and shared with Vance) further attests to Carter's openness. At the same time, the level of Carter's cognitive complexity is assumed to be somewhat limited given his tendency to be quick to judge and his generally black-and-white interpretation of character (Aronoff 2006: 438).

Ronald Reagan

Ronald Reagan entered office as a dedicated anti-communist and foe of the Soviet Union, to which he famously referred, in a March 1983 speech, as the "Evil Empire." He was an "essentialist" who viewed the Soviet Union as a dangerous totalitarian regime that left the United States with no alternative to a prolonged confrontation with the Soviet regime and no possibility for real accommodation (Garthoff 1994: 767). The United States, in Reagan's view, had an obligation to strengthen its military power in light of its implacable enemy.

In the beginning of 1984, however, Reagan dramatically changed both his rhetoric and his administration's policies toward the Soviet Union. Forgoing his earlier antagonistic approach, he began to speak in terms of "dangerous misunderstandings" and the "common interests" between the two superpowers (Fischer 1997: 3). Reducing the risk of war, and especially nuclear war, emerged as "priority number one" for the Reagan administration (Garthoff 1994: 144-145). Within a relatively short period of time, Reagan became a strong supporter of arms control.

Why did Reagan reverse course in the middle of his presidency on an issue in which he had displayed such conviction? Systemic-structural factors appear to have served as the permissive conditions in Reagan's policy reversal. In the first years of his administration, Reagan revived the B-1 bomber program, which had been canceled by the Carter administration; began production of the MX Peacekeeper missile; approved NATO's deployment of the Pershing II missile in West Germany; and announced his Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), dubbed by the media as "Star Wars," a system intended to make the U.S. invulnerable to nuclear missile attacks by the Soviet Union. Reagan's massive military buildup may have given him the confidence that the United States had become powerful enough to pursue peace diplomacy with the Soviets.³⁴¹ By the end of his administration, the U.S. military budget had seen a 43% increase over the total expenditure during the height of the Vietnam War.³⁴² His belief in "peace-through-strength," coupled with his fear that the long-term security interests of the United States would be severely compromised

³⁴¹ See <http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1957.html>.

³⁴² Ibid.

under the threat of nuclear annihilation, may therefore have been a permissive, and possibly a necessary, condition for his willingness to negotiate (Farnham 2003: 159).

Domestic political factors also seem to have played at least a partial role in the administration's embrace of rapprochement with the Soviets. Reagan's rhetorical changes coincided with the 1984 presidential campaign. Polls indicated that nearly half of the American public believed that Reagan's policies had brought the U.S. closer to war. Concerned with Reagan's "warmonger image," it is very likely, therefore, that his campaign strategists urged him to tone down his belligerent rhetoric towards the Soviets.³⁴³ The 1984 election campaign seems to have been the triggering event in Reagan's shift.

Most importantly, Reagan appears to be a case of a cognitively open and complex individual. According to Barbara Farnham's study, Reagan was a good listener, open-minded, able to show empathy to others, and possessed an emotional, as well as political intelligence (Farnham 2003: 169-171). Reagan's cognitive structure, moreover, appears to be more complex than has usually been attributed to him (Farnham 2003, Fischer 1997). These qualities were conducive to the learning he was able to do while in office. For example, due to his relative high levels of cognitive complexity, Reagan was able to differentiate the Soviet leadership from "communists" more generally (Fischer 1997).

A series of events took place in his first term that highlighted to Reagan the danger of nuclear weapons. First, there was the KAL 007 episode, in which a Korean airliner that strayed into Soviet airspace in September 1983 was shot down by the

³⁴³ See Hedrick Smith, "Foreign Policy Emerging as a Bigger Domestic Problem," *The New York Times*, 25 December 1983, Late City Final Edition, Section 4, P. 1.

Soviets. To Reagan, this event “demonstrated how close the world had come to the precipice and how much we needed nuclear arms control” (Reagan 1990: 584, quoted in Farnham 2003: 158). Second, the made-for-television movie “The Day After,” a dark portrayal of the effects of nuclear war, had a profound impact on Reagan, leaving him “deeply depressed” (Reagan 1990: 585, quoted in Farnham 2003: 158). Third, Reagan received a sobering briefing from the military on the Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP) in the event of a nuclear attack. Finally, in November 1983, NATO launched its “Able Archer 83” war games, which were designed to test nuclear release procedures. This simulation was perceived by the Soviet government as a cover for an imminent U.S. nuclear attack on the Soviet Union, leading the Soviets to make preparations for a nuclear war. Reagan perceived the Soviet reaction to Able Archer to be a nuclear “near-miss” (Fischer 1997: 135).

These events had a profound impact on Reagan’s views concerning the threat of nuclear warfare. He began to alter his public rhetoric with regard to arms control talks, which he supported with greater determination. In a December 1983 news conference, Reagan expressed his strong support for “the reduction particularly of nuclear weapons” and said, “...we must come to the realization that those weapons should be outlawed worldwide forever.”³⁴⁴ Within a relatively short period of time, the nuclear threat, rather than the Soviet threat, had thus emerged as Reagan’s greatest fear (Farnham 2003: 160; Garthoff 1994: 144-145).³⁴⁵

³⁴⁴ Transcript of Reagan’s White House News Parley, *The New York Times*, 15 December 1983, Late City Final Edition, Section B, p. 12.

³⁴⁵ For an alternative perspective, see Paul Lettow’s *Ronald Reagan and His Quest to Abolish Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Random House, 2005). Lettow argues that Reagan’s belief in abolishing nuclear weapons can be traced to the 1960s and that, as president, Reagan tried to use the arms race to bankrupt the Soviet Union. The problem with Lettow’s argument is that, even if Reagan’s intention all along was to invest heavily in a massive military buildup only to rid the world of nuclear weapons

In short, my proposed theoretical framework seems to work well in explaining Reagan's dramatic foreign policy change. Reagan's massive arms buildup (e.g., systemic-structural factors), coupled with the fear of nuclear devastation if the arms race continued, served as the permissive conditions for this reversal; the 1984 presidential campaign (i.e., domestic political factors), as well as the nuclear-related incidents – the KAL 007 episode, “The Day After” movie, and “Able Archer 83” – served as the triggering factors for this shift; and Reagan's purportedly high levels of cognitive openness and complexity can be seen as the causal factors that enabled him to “learn” while he was in office.

Mikhail Gorbachev

When Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko spoke out on Mikhail Gorbachev's behalf as a candidate for leader of the Soviet Union, he famously remarked that behind Gorbachev's smile lay “iron teeth” (English 2000: 198). Elected as General Secretary of the Communist Party on 11 March 1985, Gorbachev was not as hard-line as many of his contemporaries, but he also was not a liberal democrat. He was a communist who intended for communism to survive. The reforms he initiated were meant to fix what was wrong with the Soviet system, rather than to do away with the system altogether. In fact, in late 1985, Gorbachev's outlook was still class-based, and America was still believed to be the center of global imperialism (English 2000: 205).

By 1989, Gorbachev had undertaken radical policy changes that led to the end of the Cold War. He had initiated deep cuts in nuclear and conventional arms;

once the Soviet Union was in financial ruin, the bulk of the evidence seems to point to the huge impact that the series of nuclear-related events that marked Reagan's first term had on Reagan's thinking and on his subsequent actions.

withdrawn the Soviet Union from Afghanistan; reduced Soviet naval presence at sea; abandoned Cold War and imperialist stereotypes that had been used to define regional situations; and accepted Socialism's collapse in Eastern Europe (English 2000: 222; Herrmann 1992: 457-459; Lynch 1992: 33). New priorities included economic integration, expanded cultural ties, and cooperating with the West in the fight against terrorism and the promotion of human rights (English 2000: 220). His foreign policy, in short, had undergone a radical restructuring.

The pace and breadth of Gorbachev's changes shocked not only foreign observers and hardline opponents, but also Gorbachev's own reformist allies, some of whom tried to dissuade their leader from pursuing his new policies (English 2000: 193; Stein 1994).³⁴⁶ Robert English aptly describes Gorbachev's bold foreign policy initiatives:

Initial moves, such as halting nuclear tests in August 1985 and a grand disarmament plan in January 1986, were soon followed by even more substantial steps: acceptance of unprecedented military-verification measures in mid 1986; agreement to eliminate all medium-range nuclear missiles in 1987; deep, unilateral conventional force cuts in 1988; and, by early 1989, a complete exit in Afghanistan (as well as disengagement from other conflicts in the third world). Later in 1989, if any still doubted that the cold war had ended, the iron curtain came down on its final act (English 2000: 193-194).

Neorealists' focus on the balance of capabilities appears to hold at least part of the explanation for Soviet foreign policy change. According to this logic, a fundamental cause of Soviet "new thinking" was a diminished perception of threat. Richard K. Herrmann quotes then-Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze addressing the Supreme Soviet on 23 October 1989:

³⁴⁶ Brooks and Wohlforth claim the opposite was the case, that even progressive new thinkers like Edvard Shevardnadze and Aleksandr Yakovlev believed that Gorbachev's intellectual shift was slower than theirs (2000: 43).

In the fifties and sixties there were different realities and different ideas about the external threat. There was no sense of firm national security, and the threat of war was seen as immediate and even inevitable reality...It was necessary to acquire confidence and to eschew, if you will, our weakness complex so as to assess the situation objectively in a balanced way (Herrmann 1992: 462-3).

Thus, Glasnost led to a debate over national interests, in which new thinkers criticized past Soviet leaders for exaggerating threats and misreading bipolar concerns into regional conflicts (Herrmann 1992: 463).

An additional materialist explanation focuses on Soviet economic constraints. Some scholars maintain that the Soviet Union was constrained economically and that these constraints influenced strategic choices that were made (Brooks and Wohlforth 2000/01; Spanier 1991). According to this view, it was the material pressures facing the Soviet leadership that compelled Gorbachev to undertake a radical shift toward retrenchment; material factors were “endogenous” to Gorbachev’s new thinking. Brooks and Wohlforth point to Gorbachev’s pronouncements – for example, in a speech he delivered on 10 December 1984 – that restoring growth was necessary for preserving the Soviet Union’s status as a great power (Brooks and Wohlforth 2000/01: 21). That Soviet economic decline was substantial especially in relation to the United States was significant given the bipolarity of the international system at the time (Brooks and Wohlforth 2000/01: 22). The defense burden was astoundingly high, constituting about 40 percent of the budget and 15-20 percent of GDP in the early 1980s – at least four times the U.S. level; Soviet foreign aid spending and subsidies to Eastern Europe were high as well, contributing to the untenable economic burden Gorbachev was forced to confront (Brooks and Wohlforth 2000/01: 22-23). The Soviet Union also lagged technologically with its Western rivals in areas

such as information processing – for example, there was a significant disparity in the number of computers – a fact that made Soviet policymakers very uneasy (Brooks and Wohlforth 2000/01: 24-25, 37, 40-42). Only by 1988, argue Brooks and Wohlforth, did Gorbachev’s foreign policy proposals begin to move in a more radical direction, with Soviet policymakers – and even many within the Soviet military – repeatedly asserting that the Soviet Union could no longer bear the costs of its international position (Brooks and Wohlforth 2000/01: 31-32).

These neorealist explanations point to permissive conditions that facilitated Gorbachev’s foreign policy change; at the same time, however, they are underdetermined. Janice Gross Stein (1994) reminds us that Soviet officials disagreed fundamentally about the appropriate direction of Soviet foreign and defense policy. Stein’s argument applies to the economic argument as well. The Soviet Union may certainly have faced severe economic constraints, which prompted *some* Soviet officials to question the wisdom of maintaining an expensive arms race. Yet Stein points to the wide variation of responses to the Soviet Union’s economic decline. Gorbachev’s immediate predecessors, Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko, responded quite differently than he did to fundamentally the same set of international conditions (Stein 1994: 158-9).

More importantly, however, as Robert Snyder (2005) has recently pointed out, materialist explanations are insufficient because they cannot explain the *magnitude* of Gorbachev’s foreign policy change. Gorbachev’s dramatic changes surprised even his own supporters among the political elite in the Soviet Union. His changes were met with powerful resistance from conservative politicians as well as the Soviet military-

industrial complex; moreover, popular pressures to pursue Gorbachev's changes were negligible (English 2000: 195, 201, and 205). To quote Robert English, "he [Gorbachev] could have sat idle and enjoyed his reign in regal comfort" (English 2000: 195). The policies undertaken by Gorbachev were thus not inevitable. Moreover, Gorbachev went well beyond "retrenchment," promoting a revolution in foreign policy in his advocacy of common security, universal human rights, and the renunciation of nuclear weapons (Snyder 2005: 57). With glasnost in full swing, Gorbachev unjammed foreign radio broadcasts and freed political prisoners, among them Andrei Sakharov (English 2000: 223). His changes were transformative. Many of his moves were unilateral, originating with Gorbachev himself and bypassing ministry and Central Committee channels (English 2000: 201).

Domestic political factors also served as permissive conditions in the case of Gorbachev's shift. Specifically, the group of people known as "new thinkers" in foreign policy proved to be a significant source of domestic support for disarmament and great power cooperation (rather than confrontation). New thinkers held that Soviet interests lay in rapprochement with the West – above all, with America – and liberalization at home (English 2000: 221; Lynch 1992: 32). Gorbachev became convinced that the confrontation of European blocs needed to be radically transformed in order to develop his goal of normal political and economic relations with the West (English 2000: 203). According to Gorbachev aide Anatoly Chernyaev, the new-thinking intellectuals forced him to come to terms with their liberal-integrationist *weltanschauung* (English 2000: 215). Yet, as William Zimmerman and

Deborah Yarsike emphasize, there was an identifiable group of people who had been “new thinkers” in foreign policy long before Gorbachev’s ascent (1992: 4).

The most important factor that explains Gorbachev’s dramatic foreign policy change appears to be Gorbachev himself. Gorbachev is widely regarded as an individual with high levels of cognitive openness and complexity. He was a good listener and open to new ideas, qualities that enabled him to learn from the massive amount of information he accumulated as the leader of the Soviet Union. Janice Gross Stein points out that Gorbachev, unlike some of his predecessors, was an “uncommitted thinker” on security issues. By being receptive to new representations of security problems, Stein argues, Gorbachev was able to learn from Soviet failures, such as in Afghanistan (Stein 1994: 173-180). From 1985-86, Gorbachev engaged intensively in the study of international relations, and he met, with increasing frequency, with representatives of foreign countries; foreign leaders and statesman; and members of the international scientific community (Stein 1994: 178-180; English 2000: 212-215). Gorbachev became convinced that the confrontation of European blocs needed to be radically transformed in order to develop his goal of normal political and economic relations with the West (English 2000: 203). He sought to strike a *modus vivendi* with America, which he came to believe was critical to bringing about predictability in Soviet foreign affairs (Lynch 1992: 32). Finally, the Chernobyl accident had a profound impact on Gorbachev’s learning as well. Gorbachev spoke somberly about this tragic incident and about the need to do everything possible to prevent nuclear war. At the Reykjavik summit of October 1986, he stunned Reagan and his advisers with his willingness to make huge

concessions in his effort to achieve total nuclear disarmament (English 2000: 217). Policies associated with the new thinking ultimately replaced those of Gorbachev's predecessors, first in the realm of domestic policy, and then with regard to foreign policy.

In short, my suggested theoretical framework appears to provide the basis for an adequate explanation of Gorbachev's transformative policy change in the 1980s. The Soviet leader's diminished perception of threat coupled with severe economic constraints were permissive conditions for Gorbachev's policy shift, as was the growing influence of the "new thinkers," who pushed for a different direction in Soviet foreign policy. Gorbachev's highly complex cognitive structure was the key causal factor, however, that explains why Gorbachev (rather than any of his predecessors) opted for a radically new course in Soviet foreign policy.

Ehud Olmert

Ehud Olmert, the current prime minister of Israel, began his political career as a hawk. Olmert was the son of one of the leaders of the Irgun, the underground organization led by Menachem Begin that aimed at ending the British mandate over Palestine. He had been active in right-wing politics since childhood and was first elected to the Knesset in 1973, when he was 28. Olmert strongly opposed the 1979 peace agreement with Egypt, refusing to support any concessions over the Sinai (which Israel agreed to relinquish as part of the agreement). As Mayor of Jerusalem from 1993 to 2003, he took hawkish positions and implemented hard-line measures, such as his decision to open the Western Wall tunnel in 1996, which sparked Palestinian riots.

In recent years, however, Olmert has apparently made a pronounced turn to the left, expressing dovish positions and taking actions that have incurred the wrath of his Likud party colleagues (now rivals). In 2004, he became the first prominent right-wing Israeli politician to publicly call for a withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.³⁴⁷ As a minister in the government led by Ariel Sharon, he worked behind the scenes to shape the disengagement plan from Gaza, which Sharon carried out in August 2005. Both Olmert and Sharon subsequently bolted from the Likud and, together with Shimon Peres, they formed the centrist Kadima party. Following Sharon's incapacitation due to a massive stroke, Olmert became the chairman of the new party, which, in the 2006 elections, won the most number of seats in the Knesset, leading him to become Prime Minister. While his government has not yet withdrawn from additional territories, Olmert has made it clear he is in favor of doing so. "Partitioning the land is a lifeline for Zionism," he has declared.³⁴⁸ In his first foreign policy speech after he got elected, Olmert expressed ideas that sounded no different than views typically expressed by Labor Party officials:

The existence of a Jewish majority in the State of Israel is not compatible with the continued rule over the Palestinian population in Judea, Samaria and Gaza...The choice between the desire to allow every Jew to live anywhere in the Land of Israel and the existence of the State of Israel as a Jewish state requires giving up parts of the Land of Israel.³⁴⁹

In this same address, Olmert went as far to endorse a Palestinian state: "We support the establishment of a modern, democratic Palestinian state," he declared. "The existence of two nations, one Jewish and one Palestinian, is the full solution to the

³⁴⁷ Joseph Berger, "Olmert Steps Out of Sharon's Shadow, Into the Fire," *The New York Times*, 7 January 2006.

³⁴⁸ Shimon Shiffer, "The Real Big Bang," *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 5 May 2006.

³⁴⁹ Yuval Karni, "Olmert: We Will Follow in Sharon's Footsteps," *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 25 January 2006, p. 4.

national aspirations and problems of each of the peoples”, he said.³⁵⁰ Olmert also has expressed regret over having opposed the Camp David Accords thirty years ago:

I voted against Menachem Begin. I told him it was a historic mistake, how dangerous it would be, and so on and so on. Now I am sorry he is not alive for me to be able to publicly recognize his wisdom and my mistake. He was right and I was wrong. Thank God we pulled out of Sinai.³⁵¹

Olmert even has spoken favorably about aspects of the ill-fated Oslo accords, much to the consternation of his hawkish colleagues. At an event held to mark the tenth anniversary of Yitzhak Rabin’s assassination, Olmert described the peace process led by the late prime minister, Peres, and PLO leader Yasser Arafat as a “very courageous step.” He expressed a sentiment of a dove:

I was against the Oslo Accords at the time. I have not changed my mind about that agreement. But it is certain that the agreement brought about the beginning of a process of sobering up among the Israeli public and the forming of a more realistic and balanced world view regarding the steps Israel must take in its contacts with the Palestinians. If not for Oslo, the timetables that led to disengagement would not have been the way they were.³⁵²

What led Olmert, the archetypal hawk, to make this apparent shift in a dovish direction? In all likelihood, Olmert was affected by public opinion, where the mainstream now supported Labor’s positions on the Palestinian issue, even when it did not vote for it in general elections. But why did Olmert shift his views while his erstwhile Likud party rival, Benjamin Netanyahu, chose to maintain his same hard-line positions? A comparison of the cognitive structure of Olmert and Netanyahu would, in all likelihood, reveal that Olmert is the more cognitively open and complex of the two and that he therefore has a greater penchant for changing his views. Yael

³⁵⁰ Greg Myre, “Acting Israeli Leader Backs a Palestinian State and Giving Up Parts of West Bank,” *The New York Times*, 25 January 2006.

³⁵¹ Ken Ellingwood, “Acting Israeli Premier is a Longtime Ally of Sharon,” *Los Angeles Times*, 5 January 2006.

³⁵² Dalia Mazori et al., “Olmert: ‘Oslo Woke Up the Public’,” *Ma’ariv*, 4 October 2005.

Aronoff (2001) has found Netanyahu to be cognitively rigid. By contrast, Olmert appears to be open to considering views that differ from his own. Many acquaintances of Olmert have pointed to the influence his family has had on his political views. His wife, Aliza, has long held dovish positions and has supported left-wing organizations; one of his sons refused to serve in the occupied territories and identified with “Yesh Gvul,” a peace group that supports soldiers who refuse such assignments; and one of his daughters volunteers for “Machsom Watch,” which monitors checkpoints.³⁵³ It is highly plausible, therefore, that it is Olmert’s cognitive openness that has led him to revise his long-held beliefs.

Future Cases

International relations theory has typically done a better job at explaining phenomena than predicting them. Kenneth Waltz has famously noted that “a theory’s ability to explain is more important than its ability to predict...Success in explaining, not in predicting, is the ultimate criterion of good theory” (Waltz 1997: 916). As Waltz points out, even theories of evolution do not predict anything in particular. Indeed, caution is warranted over claims to make any clear predictions based on the theoretical framework described above.

In its examination of a select number of cases, this project has focused on a qualitative content analysis of an extensive array of primary and secondary source material. The intended result is a rich, in-depth interpretive account of the relevant personality characteristics that help to explain the dovish shifts underwent by Shimon Peres and, to a lesser extent, Yitzhak Rabin and, in turn, their abilities to affect one of

³⁵³ See Gideon Alon, “Israel’s Most Pragmatic Politician,” *Haaretz*, 11 January 2006; Steven Erlanger, “Long on Outskirts of Power, Olmert Looks to Lead Israel,” *The New York Times*, 27 March 2006, A8.

the most dramatic foreign policy changes in Israel's history. By complementing systemic-structural and domestic political factors with cognitive factors, this approach provides a better understanding of both why these leaders changed directions and how they were able to affect the direction of their state's foreign policy. A similar application of this integrated, multi-level approach to future cases would be beneficial to scholars who seek a richer understanding of foreign policy change than studies that avoid the individual level of analysis can analytically provide.

APPENDIX A

Interview Questions Template

What specific criteria should the qualitative analyst use in ascertaining a leader's cognitive structure? The following is a set of suggested questions that would be useful for the analyst aiming to construct the levels of cognitive openness and complexity of a particular leader in the hopes of determining whether he/she will likely be a catalyst, an enabler, or an opponent of foreign policy change.

Questions For Determining a Leader's Level of Cognitive Openness:

1. Is the leader's circle of advisers expansive and diversified, or limited and homogeneous?
2. Are political aides free to challenge the leader's positions?
3. How well does the leader listen to the views of others?
4. Does the leader solicit the views of others?
5. How does the leader react when confronted with information that contradicts his/her own beliefs? Does the leader value such information, or is he/she dismissive of it? Does the leader adopt contrary views on key issues after being confronted with new information?

Questions For Determining a Leader's Level of Cognitive Complexity:

1. Does the leader describe people or situations using subtle distinctions, or does he/she typically employ binary terms (e.g., friend vs. enemy) in describing them?
2. Does the leader use conditional language (e.g., *if*, *as long as*, etc.) in describing his/her position, or is absolutist language more typically employed (e.g., words like *always*, *never*, or *without a doubt*)?
3. Does the leader value ambiguity, or does he/she avoid it (or even scorn it)?
4. Does the leader see many dimensions in his or her surroundings, or does he/she tend to view the world in binary terms (e.g., good vs. evil)?
5. Does the leader view conflicts in positive-sum or zero-sum terms?

As emphasized in Chapters 2 and 3, and demonstrated in the empirical chapters, leaders will actually fall somewhere in between the two ideal types of cognitively open and cognitively closed systems, as well as in between the two ideal types of cognitively complex and cognitively simple systems. Our cases of Peres and Rabin, for example, revealed that both were cognitively open and complex individuals, but Peres was more cognitively open and complex than Rabin, which helps to explain his more extensive and rapid transformation. The aforementioned template of questions should yield similar results for researchers focusing on the same subjects; it is a modest attempt to systematize the process of qualitative content and discourse analyses in determining a leader's cognitive structure.

To a certain extent, however, it is difficult to completely avoid the biases of the interviewees attesting to a leader's personality traits (where interviews are concerned) as well as those of the researcher tasked with interpreting the information. The analyst should exercise no small amount of discretion, therefore, in analyzing the data and, importantly, should avoid making definitive claims about the results. Relying on multiple sources of information, as has been done in the present study, should enhance the plausibility of one's conclusions.

APPENDIX B

List of Interviews

The following is a list of individuals interviewed for this research project. The majority of interviews took place in Israel in the fall and winter of 2006 during the fieldwork phase of this study; the remainder took place in Washington, D.C. The list below is presented in chronological order.

1. **Ambassador Samuel L. Lewis**, Washington, D.C., 28 August 2006
 - Ambassador Lewis got to know Peres as United States Ambassador to Israel, from 1977 to 1985.
2. **Elkana Galli**, Tel Aviv, 5 July 2001, 29 September 2006, 27 October 2006
 - As Paris Correspondent for Israeli newspapers *Davar* and *Yedioth Ahronoth* in the late-1950s, Galli closely followed Peres's activities in France.
3. **Ambassador Gad Yaacobi**, Tel Aviv, 9 October 2006
 - The late Gad Yaacobi had known Peres since 1958, when both were active in Mapai's Young Guard. They subsequently served together in several governments including the first Rabin government (1974-1977) in which Yaacobi was Minister of Transportation, and in the Governments of National Unity (1984-90), in which Yaacobi was Minister of Economics and Planning and, beginning in 1987, Minister of Communications.
4. **Maj.-Gen. (Ret.) Meir Amit**, Ramat Gan, 10 October 2006
 - During the 1950s, Major-General (Ret.) Amit was the number two in command of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). He was Director of Military Intelligence (Aman) from 1962 to 1963 and Director of the Mossad from 1963 to 1968. In 1977, he was elected to the Knesset, where he remained a member until 1982. To this day, he maintains a close friendship with Peres.
5. **Maj.-Gen. (Ret.) Dan Tolkowsky**, Tel Aviv, 15 October 2006

- Maj.-Gen. (Ret.) Tolkowsky was Commander of the Israeli Air Force from May 1953 to July 1958.
6. **Dr. Mordechai “Morale” Bar-On**, Jerusalem, 16 October 2006
 - Dr. Bar-On was Moshe Dayan’s personal assistant during the Sinai Campaign. He also was a Member of Knesset in the 1980s on the Ratz (Citizen’s Rights Movement list) slate.
 7. **Ambassador Alon Pinkas**, Tel Aviv, 17 October 2006
 - Ambassador Pinkas first began working for then-Opposition leader Peres in 1991, becoming his foreign policy adviser. He remained Peres’s foreign policy adviser when Peres was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1992, but he left that post the following year.
 8. **Yossef Nahmias**, Tzahala, 18 October 2006
 - Nahmias was the Defense Ministry’s Representative in Europe from October 1954 until 1956, during Peres’s years as Director-General of the Defense Ministry. Nahmias worked closely with Peres in France during those years.
 9. **Ambassador Uri Savir**, 22 October 2006 [emailed answers to written questions]
 - Ambassador Savir served as Director-General of the Foreign Ministry between 1993 and 1996, during Peres’s tenure as Minister of Foreign Affairs and, following Rabin’s assassination, Prime Minister. He was Israel’s chief negotiator during the Oslo Accords. In 1999, he became President of The Peres Center for Peace.
 10. **Dr. Nimrod Novik**, Herzliya Pituach, 23 October 2006
 - Dr. Novik was recruited by Peres aide Yossi Beilin in 1983 to serve on “The First 100 Day Team” in advance of the 1984 national elections. He then served as chief foreign policy adviser to Peres when the latter was Prime Minister (1984-86), then Vice Premier and Foreign Minister (1986-88). He continued to advise Peres for another six months when the latter became Vice Premier and Finance Minister in 1991.
 11. **Atty. Moshe Shachal**, Tel Aviv, 30 October 2006
 - Elected to the Knesset in 1971, Shachal was Deputy Speaker of the Knesset and Chairman of the Labor Party Knesset faction between 1981 and 1984.

From 1984 until 1996, Shachal served in the cabinet with Peres in several governments including the two National Unity Governments and the Rabin-led government. He resigned from the Knesset in June 1996.

12. **Dr. Ron Pundak**, Tel Aviv, 31 October 2006

- Dr. Pundak played an important role in starting the Oslo peace process in 1993. Today, he is Executive Director of The Peres Center for Peace.

13. **Shulamit Aloni**, Kfar Shmaryahu, 1 November 2006

- Aloni has known Peres since her teenage years. As youth, both were active in Mapai. She joined the Labor Party in 1959 and was elected to the Knesset in 1965. In 1973, she left Labor to found the Ratz party (Citizens Rights Movement). As leader of the Meretz party (a merger of Ratz with Shinui and Mapam), she served as a minister, along with Peres, in Rabin's second government.

14. **Vice Premier Shimon Peres**, Tel Aviv, 3 November 2006

- Interviewed when he was Vice Premier in the Olmert-led government, Peres began his career in public service as an aide to Israel's first Prime Minister and Minister of Defense David Ben-Gurion. In 1952, he was appointed Deputy Director-General of the Ministry of Defense, becoming its Director-General in 1953. Peres was elected to the Knesset in 1959, and served in every major post including Prime Minister, Defense Minister, Foreign Minister, and Finance Minister. The longtime leader of Labor left the party in 2005 to join Sharon's newly formed Kadima party. On 13 June 2007, Peres was elected the ninth President of the State of Israel.

15. **Dr. Yair Hirschfeld**, Tel Aviv, 6 November 2006

- Dr. Hirschfeld was one of the two original initiators of the Oslo peace process in 1993.

16. **Dr. David Kimche**, Tel Aviv, 8 November 2006

- Dr. Kimche was Director-General of the Israeli Foreign Ministry from 1980 to 1987. During this period, he worked closely with Peres when the latter was Prime Minister and, subsequently, Foreign Minister.

17. **Zeev Schiff**, Ramat Aviv Gimel, 10 November 2006

- The late Zeev Schiff was the defense editor of the newspaper *Haaretz*, which he joined in 1955. By his own account, he had known Peres well since the early 1960s.
18. **Akiva Eldar**, Tel Aviv, 12 November 2006
- Akiva Eldar is the chief political columnist and editorial writer for *Haaretz*. He assisted in the writing of Matti Golan's biography of Peres, *Peres: The Road to Peace*.
19. **Gideon Levy**, Tel Aviv, 14 November 2006
- Gideon Levy, today a journalist for *Haaretz*, was Peres's aide and spokesman between 1978 and 1982 during Peres's years as Opposition leader.
20. **Ambassador Asher Ben-Natan**, Tel Aviv, 15 November 2006
- In 1956, Ambassador Ben-Natan was chosen to replace Yossef Nahmias as the Defense Ministry's Representative in Europe. Subsequently, he replaced Peres as Director-General of the Ministry of Defense when Peres became Deputy Minister of Defense. When Peres was Minister of Defense, Ambassador Ben-Natan served as Special Adviser to the Ministry of Defense.
21. **Mordechai Ben-Porat**, Or Yehuda, 16 November 2006
- Mordechai Ben-Porat got to know Peres in the 1950s, when Peres was Director-General of the Minister of Defense. In 1964, he worked closely with Peres in establishing the Rafi party. He later served as Peres's colleague in the Knesset and in the first Government of National Unity in the mid-1980s.
22. **Yael Dayan**, Tel Aviv, 16 November 2006
- The daughter of Gen. Moshe Dayan, Yael Dayan has known Peres well since her childhood years. She joined Peres's primary campaign in 1992. After Peres's loss to Rabin in that campaign, Dayan was elected to the Knesset later that year and went on to serve for the next ten years. For most of these years, Dayan was one of the "shminiya" – the eight Labor party doves who were instrumental in moving the party in a dovish direction.
23. **Yishayahu Ben-Porat**, Herzliya Pituach, 17 November 2006
- The late Ben-Porat first got to know Peres at the end of 1953, when Peres served as Director-General of the Ministry of Defense and Ben-Porat was the

correspondent for *Yedioth Ahronoth*, a position he held until 1958. Ben-Porat went on to become one of the newspaper's senior commentators and the author of numerous books.

24. **Aliza Eshed**, Jerusalem, 19 November 2006

- Aliza Eshed was an aide to Peres from 1969 to 1977, and from 1984 until 1990.

25. **Ambassador Naphtali Lau-Lavie**, Jerusalem, 19 November 2006

- Ambassador Lau-Lavie was a special adviser to then-Defense Minister Peres, from 1974 until 1977.

26. **Ambassador Zalman Shoval**, Tel Aviv, 20 November 2006

- Ambassador Shoval was a colleague of Peres in the Rafi party before joining the Likud. He was first elected to the Knesset in 1970, representing the Rafi slate.

27. **David Landau**, Tel Aviv, 21 November 2006

- Until recently, David Landau was the editor of *Haaretz*. He edited Peres's 1995 memoirs, *Battling for Peace*.

28. **Eitan Haber**, Ramat Gan, 21 November 2006

- Eitan Haber, an author and journalist, served as head of the Prime Minister Rabin's Bureau from 1992 until 1995.

29. **Avraham Burg**, Tel Aviv, 21 November 2006

- Avraham Burg became an adviser to Peres in 1985. In 1988, he was elected to the Knesset on the Labor Party slate while Peres was the Chairman of the party and leader of the opposition. Burg was a member of Labor's dovish "shminiya" group.

30. **Jean Frydman**, Jaffa, 21 November 2006

- Jean Frydman is a longtime friend of Shimon Peres, having known him since the mid-1950s. Frydman, living in France, founded a company for radio station called Europe Number One. Peres, then-Director-General of the Ministry of Defense, spent a considerable amount of time in Paris those days in his efforts to secure arms deals with the French.

31. **Haim Israeli**, Tel Aviv, 22 November 2006

- Haim Israeli has known Peres since 1952. He was Secretary of the Defense Minister's Bureau. In 1956, he became the Director of the Defense Minister's Bureau. Subsequently, he was appointed Assistant to the Defense Minister, a title he kept after being promoted to Deputy Director of the Defense Ministry.
32. **Dan Margalit**, 23 November 2006 [telephone interview]
- Dan Margalit is an Israeli journalist and columnist who has known Peres since 1965, when Margalit was covering the national elections for the newspaper *Haaretz*.
33. **Shlomo Nakdimon**, Ramat Aviv, 26 November 2006
- Shlomo Nakdimon is a journalist and author. He has known Peres since 1957 while Peres was Director-General of the Ministry of Defense and Nakdimon, a journalist who wrote for *Herut*, the opposition newspaper affiliated with the rightwing Herut party. From March 1978 until March 1980, he served as Communications Adviser to then-Prime Minister Menachem Begin.
34. **Yechiel Kadishai**, Tel Aviv, 26 November 2006
- Yechiel Kadishai was the longtime personal secretary and spokesman for Prime Minister Menachem Begin.
35. **Former President Yitzhak Navon**, Jerusalem, 29 November 2006
- Yitzhak Navon has known Peres since 1952, when he served as the Bureau Chief for Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion while Peres was the Director-General of the Ministry of Defense. In 1965, Navon joined Peres in the Rafi party and was elected to the Knesset that year. Navon later served as Deputy Knesset Speaker and Chairman of the Knesset Committee on Foreign and Defense Affairs. In 1978, he was elected the fifth President of Israel, the title Peres holds today.
36. **Aryeh Avneri**, Tel Aviv, 30 November 2006
- Aryeh Avneri is a former investigative reporter for *Haaretz*, a former senior correspondent for *Yedioth Ahronoth*, and an author of numerous books.
37. **Levy Ishak Hayerushalmi**, Tel Aviv, 30 November 2006
- Levy Ishak Hayerushalmi is a journalist, publicist and former deputy editor of *Ma'ariv*. He got to know Peres in the 1950s, when he served as Defense

Minister Pinhas Lavon's spokesman. (Lavon was appointed Minister of Defense following Ben-Gurion's resignation in 1954.)

38. **Dr. Yoni Peres**, Hakfar Hayarok, 30 November 2006

- Dr. Peres is one of Shimon Peres's two sons.

39. **Ruth Dayan**, Tel Aviv, 30 November 2006

- Ruth Dayan was Peres ally, colleague and mentor Gen. Moshe Dayan's wife for 36 years until their divorce in 1971.

40. **Pinhas Yurman**, Tel Aviv, 3 December 2006

- Pinhas Yurman worked with Peres for eight years when Peres was Deputy Minister of Defense and, later, one of the leaders of Rafi.

41. **Avraham Katz-Oz**, Tel Aviv, 3 December 2006

- Avraham Katz-Oz has known Peres since 1968, when both men were active in the *Noar Haoved* youth movement. He began working with him in 1977 following the national elections in which Peres lost, becoming the leader of the opposition; Katz-Oz became chairman of the Labor Party's Organizational Department. In the 1980s, he served as Minister of Agriculture in the Government of National Unity.

42. **Ambassador Nissim Zvili**, Tel Aviv, 4 December 2006

- Ambassador Zvili is a longtime Labor Party member who has known Peres since 1977. In the 1980s and 1990s, he was part of the *shminiya*, the dovish faction within the Labor Party, and he was elected to the Knesset in 1992.

43. **Dr. Yossi Beilin**, Jerusalem, 6 December 2006

- Dr. Beilin first got to know Peres when he began to work as Labor's spokesman in 1977. Since then, he served as Peres's adviser, Cabinet Secretary (when Peres was Prime Minister), Deputy Foreign Minister (when Peres was Foreign Minister), and Peres's deputy in the Finance Ministry. He was Peres's longest-serving and, many believe, most influential aide. Despite political differences, they have maintained a close relationship.

44. **Baruch Askarov**, Tel Aviv, 15 December 2006

- Baruch Askarov was Peres's personal spokesman in the 1984 election campaign. When Peres became Prime Minister, he continued as Peres's personal aide.
45. **Professor Tsvia Walden**, Beit Berl, 20 December 2006
- Dr. Walden is Shimon Peres's daughter.
46. **Dr. Israel Peleg**, Shfayim, 21 December 2006
- Dr. Peleg was hired by Shimon Peres as his aide and spokesman in July 1977. He became spokesperson for the Labor Party's campaign in 1981 and was the media director in the 1984 election campaign. That year, he became the director of the Government Press Office, a position he maintained until 1987.
47. **Dr. Ephraim Sneh**, Tel Aviv, 22 January 2007
- Dr. Sneh has known Peres since his appointment by then-Defense Minister Rabin as the Governor of the West Bank in 1985 during Peres's premiership. He headed Labor's campaign team in 1988 before being elected to the Knesset in 1992 on the Labor Party slate.
48. **Professor Moshe Maoz**, 18 April 2007 [telephone interview]
- Dr. Maoz was a member of an academic advisory group during Peres's premiership.
49. **Dr. James Schlesinger**, Washington, D.C., 27 April 2007
- Dr. Schlesinger was U.S. Secretary of Defense from 1973 to 1975 under Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford. He became acquainted with Peres when the latter became Minister of Defense in 1974.
50. **Ambassador Thomas Pickering**, Rosslyn, VA, 16 July 2007
- Ambassador Pickering served as the United States's Ambassador to Israel from 1985 to 1988, when Peres was Prime Minister (1984-1986) and then Foreign Minister (1986-1988).
51. **Dr. Harold Saunders**, Washington, D.C., 18 July 2007
- Dr. Saunders joined the U.S. State Department in 1974 as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near East and North Africa. From 1973 to 1975, he worked closely with Secretary of State Henry Kissinger on Mideast affairs. As

Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East and South Asia, he participated in the 1978 Camp David Peace Accords.

52. **Ambassador Dennis Ross**, Washington, D.C., 25 July 2007

- For more than twelve years, Ambassador Ross was the U.S. point man on the Middle East peace process, serving in both the George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton administrations.

53. **Ambassador Martin Indyk**, Washington, D.C., 28 August 2007, 9 October 2007

- Ambassador Indyk was U.S. Ambassador to Israel (1995-1997, 2000-2001) and Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs (1997-2000).

54. **Atty. Joel Singer**, Washington, D.C., 7 September 2007

- Joel Singer is the former head of the Israeli Foreign Ministry's legal department (1993-1996) and one of the framers of the Oslo accords.

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