

The Wasted Decade

Israel's Policies towards the Occupied Territories 1967-1977

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I, Ronald Ranta confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to provide a detailed historical narrative of Israel's relationship with the Occupied Territories between the years 1967 and 1977, using the most up-to-date archival material. The central argument of the thesis is that successive Israeli governments lacked a coherent and comprehensive long-term policy towards the Occupied Territories; it is the contention of this thesis that there is no documentary evidence to support the common belief that successive Israeli governments had a comprehensive long-term territorial policy. It is true that successive Israeli governments made decisions based on several long-term plans and approaches, such as the Allon Plan and the Functional Solution, but, when put into context and viewed as a whole, these decisions were neither coherent nor comprehensive and in any case were never formally adopted by the government.

In trying to explain why successive governments failed to put forward a coherent and comprehensive long-term policy, four major contributing factors have been identified: the faction-based politics of the Labour Party, the US position vis-à-vis Israel, New Zionism and the intention of successive Prime Ministers to avoid formulating a clear long-term policy. The need to maintain unity, and avoid a split amongst the factions, ensured that the Labour Party was unable and unwilling to take a clear and unequivocal stand on the issue of the Occupied Territories; the US diplomatic stance vis-à-vis Israel exacerbated existing divisions, while strengthening the positions of those who argued in favour of avoiding taking clear decisions on the Occupied Territories; the rise of New Zionism changed the dynamics and landscape of the Israeli political system in a way that weakened Mapai's, and later the Labour Party's, ability to dictate territorial policy; lastly, successive Prime Ministers (Eshkol, Meir and Rabin) made clear choices against the formulation of a coherent and comprehensive long-term policy.

Table of Content

Note on the transliteration	7
Acknowledgment	8
Introduction:	9-30
The Economy	13
The Settlements	15
The Military/Security Dimension	17
The Political and Diplomatic Spheres	19
Lack of Policy	21
The Labour Party Approach	22
The Transitional State Approach	26
Examination	29
 The Eshkol Period	
Introduction	31
Chapter One:	33-72
The Six Day War	33
The Military Administration	41
First Proposals	43
The 11 th and the 13 th of June	46
Jerusalem	49
The Ministerial Defence Committee	50
The 19 th of June	51
Johnson's Five Principles	56
Unification	59
The West Bank	63
The Allon Plan	65
Other Plans	67
Dayan	70
 Chapter Two:	 73-97
Merom Golan	73
Committees	76
The 30 th of October Decision	83
King Hussein	86
Resolution 242	88
The White House	90
Gunnar Jarring	91

The Labour Party	94
Chapter Three:	98-125
The Settlements	98
The Gaza Strip	101
Hebron	104
Meetings with Palestinians	108
Al-Ja'abri	111
Jordan	113
Economic Integration	118
Summary	122

The Meir Period

Introduction	126
--------------	-----

Chapter one:	129-158
---------------------	----------------

The War of Attrition	129
Golda Meir	131
The Electoral Platform	132
Dayan and Allon	135
The Oral Law	139
Labour Party Convention	143
The Rogers Plan	147
Rogers B	153

Chapter Two:	159-189
---------------------	----------------

Israel's Secret Peace Plan	159
Black September	161
Sadat	163
The Kitchenette	170
Israel's Contradictory Approach	173
The Rafah Plains	177
Hussein's Federal Plan	182

Chapter Three:	190-218
-----------------------	----------------

The Grand Debate	190
The Galili Document	198
The Yom Kippur War	202
The Fourteen-Point Document	206
The 1973 Elections	210
Meir's Meetings with Hussein	211

Summary	216
---------	-----

The Rabin Period

Introduction	219
--------------	-----

Chapter One:	221-244
---------------------	----------------

The Rabin Government	221
Syria and the Golan Heights	223
Jericho First	228
The NRP	232
Gush-Emonim	234
Ma'ale Adumim	237
Ofra	242

Chapter Two:	245-268
---------------------	----------------

Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula	245
Interim Agreements	248
Sebastia	249
Israel's Settlement Policy	254
The Palestinian Option	258
The 1977 Elections	260
Summary	266

Conclusion:	269-284
--------------------	----------------

The Golan Heights	270
The Sinai Peninsula	272
The Gaza Strip and the Rafah Plains	273
The West Bank	274
The Lack of Policy	276
Summary	283

Bibliography:	285-292
----------------------	----------------

Note on the Transliteration

The thesis uses the transliteration system adopted by the Encyclopaedia Judaica for both Hebrew and Arab names and terms.¹ The diacritical signs are written as vowels, for example הקיבוץ המאוחד is transliterated as Hakibbutz Hameuhad. The consonant א is not transliterated; instead its diacritical sign is used. In addition the consonant ע is rendered as (‘), this is also used in regards to the Arabic ع. In order to avoid confusion, the Hebrew consonant י when at the beginning of a name is transliterated as (Y), e.g. Yisrael Galili.

In order to make the vocalisation easier the Hebrew Consonant צ is transliterated as (Tz) as opposed to the normal (Z); in addition the Hebrew Consonants ה is (H), ק (K), ש (Sh or S). One exception has been the transliteration of the Arabic Consonants خ as (Kh) and ح (H).

To make it easier to vocalise, the Hebrew Consonant צ is transliterated as (Tz) as opposed to the normal (Z). To provide an example of the approach this thesis uses, the Hebrew Name יעקב הרצוג is transliterated as Ya’akov Hertzog.

Finally, in many cases, and where relevant, the English or internationally known term has been used, e.g. the Jewish Agency’s Settlement Department.

¹ “Transliteration,” Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1 (Second Edition, Farmington Hills, 2007), Page 197.

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Introduction

Government and Politics are interesting when problems are difficult. The most fascinating problems are likely to be on the agenda for a long time without being solved in any final sense. Attention may come and go. Individual episodes may find their treatment, but the same underlying problems will return.²

Following the Six Day War,³ Opposition member Uri Avneri asked for the government's inclination regarding the Occupied Territories. Avneri was particularly interested to know how the Eshkol government saw the future of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In his view there were four possible scenarios: to exchange the territories for peace with Israel's Arab neighbours, to annex the territories, to transform the territories into a Palestinian state, or to create a pseudo colony in the territories whereby Israel would informally annex the territories without allowing the Palestinians to become Israeli citizens. Avneri proposed that the best long-term option for Israel would be the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.⁴ The discussion that ensued involved not only those territories mentioned by Avneri, but also the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights and the future of East Jerusalem.⁵

In the aftermath of the Six Day War Israel faced a new reality. The war left Israel in possession of territories three and a half times its own size and a population of over one million Arabs. The occupation of Arab lands and people posed numerous problems for Israel, particularly with security and the economy, but also with some complex demographic and diplomatic challenges. Israel needed to take into account the complexity of these problems and define its approach towards them, not only in a manner that addressed the challenges but also in a way that corresponded to its national objectives. The problem of defining such an approach was further complicated by the need to reach a consensus within the confines of the National Unity Government. The government's first objective was to reach a decision regarding Israel's future borders, i.e. which of the territories it wanted to retain and from which it was willing to withdraw as part of a negotiated settlement. However,

² Ira Sharkansky, Ambiguity, Coping, and Governance: Israeli Experiences in Politics, Religion, and Policymaking (Westport, Praeger, 1999), Page 1.

³ The use of the term Six Day War (also known as the June War) throughout this thesis reflects the fact that the thesis deals with the Israeli state and government.

⁴ Knesset Transcripts/Booklet 32/Meeting 184/Page 2346.

⁵ Ronald Ranta, The Seventh Day (MSc, 2005), Page 25.

this decision was, to a certain degree, dependent upon whether the government adopted an Instrumental or Normative standpoint in relation to the territories.⁶ It was a question of whether the territories would be viewed in relation to their perceived military-strategic importance (i.e. Instrumental), or their perceived historical and religious significance (i.e. Normative). This question was applicable not only to the Occupied Territories as a collective notion, but also towards each individual territory. Additionally, the government needed to agree on a mechanism of administering the Occupied Territories as well as on the required level of economic and social interaction. This included making a decision on the viability and necessity of settlements.

On the 19th of June 1967, the Eshkol government managed to reach a consensus regarding most of the Occupied Territories. It decided to annex East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip and to withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Height in exchange for peace agreements. The government failed to reach a consensus in regard to the West Bank, as its vote on the matter ended in a stalemate.⁷ The government failed to decide on the issue of settlements and the matter was dropped from further discussions. The failure to decide on the issue of the West Bank is referred to as the ‘decision not to decide’.

However, in the absence of direct negotiations with its Arab neighbours, Israel eventually reversed its decision. The proclamations of the Khartoum Summit convinced many Israeli politicians of the lack of credible peace partners. The earlier government resolution, agreeing to a land-for-peace approach, was consigned to the history books.⁸ In this environment of uncertainty, policy makers appeared unable to agree on a clear vision for the future of the territories. Instead, they settled for a muddled and ad-hoc approach that did not address Israel’s future relationship with the Occupied Territories and its population. In a sense, Israel had de-facto decided not to make a decision on the long-term future of the territories.

⁶ Ofira Seliktar, *New Zionism and the Foreign Policy System of Israel* (London, Croom Helm, 1986), Pages 156-157

⁷ Rueven Pedatzur, *The Triumph of Embarrassment: Israel and the Territories after the Six Day War* (Tel Aviv, Yad Tabenkin, 1996) (Hebrew), Page 55

⁸ Dan Bavly, *Dreams and Missed Opportunities 1967-1973* (Jerusalem, Carmel, 2002) (Hebrew), Page 42.

This thesis examines the period from the aftermath of the Six Day War to the Labour Party's electoral defeat in 1977. The period chosen represents a particular chronological timeframe and the first attempt by the Labour Party at defining Israel's relationship with the Occupied Territories. The research contends that during this period, successive Israeli governments did not grasp the opportunity to define Israel's long-term relationship with the Occupied Territories. With the exception of East Jerusalem, Israel did not take a strategic decision regarding the territories; in fact, no coherent long-term policy was formulated, approved or implemented during the entire period. It is important to note that this is not an indictment against a specific government, as successive Israeli governments avoided defining Israel's long-term territorial policy. These governments were undermined by individual ministers, and hampered by the polarisation of views within the Coalition and the dominant Labour Party factions. Additionally, the Eshkol and Rabin governments lacked a consistent decision-making process and were troubled by weak leadership and internal fighting.

Internal and external forces played a significant part in the government's inability to conceive and implement such a policy. Internally, the rebirth of Israeli nationalism in the form of Religious Zionism or New Zionism,⁹ and renewed religious fervour, combined with the transitional state of the Israeli society - which underwent demographic as well as cultural changes - had the effect of hardening the government's position and causing a shift to the right among the electorate.¹⁰ The formation of Gush-Emunim can be seen as the culmination of this shift in public attitude. Externally, the lack, at times, of US pressure on Israel, the resumed hostilities with the Arab neighbours, the rise in terrorist attacks and the lack of suitable negotiation partners, all compounded the government's indecisions.

The purpose of this thesis is three-fold. First, the thesis provides a detailed historical analysis - based on the most up-to-date archival material - of Israel's relationship with the Occupied Territories, between the years 1967 and 1977. This analysis includes a detailed account of the specific challenges posed by the occupation of the territories and their population, and the approaches and plans that were proposed in order to

⁹ Seliktar, New Zionism Page X.

¹⁰ Samuel J. Roberts, Party and Policy in Israel: The Battle between Hawks and Doves (London, Westview Press, 1990), Page 39.

address them. Through the historical narrative, the thesis charts the evolution of policy-makers' approaches, plans, decisions and views towards the territories. Additionally, the thesis situates these issues within the context of Israel's political environment - domestic and international - including its relationship with the US, and the role played by the Labour Party and its elites. In short, this thesis provides an encompassing analysis of Israel's relationship with the Occupied Territories within a historical narrative, based on newly released primary sources.

Second, this thesis questions whether successive governments, under the leadership of the Labour Party, had a coherent and comprehensive long-term policy towards the Occupied Territories that addressed Israel's main concerns and was in accordance with its stated objectives. By examining Israel's decisions regarding the specific problems posed by the occupation, this thesis will demonstrate that successive Israeli governments had no such policy. This statement is made with regard to specific governments as well as successive governments. The research will show that, during the period, it was common practice for policies to be formulated and implemented on an ad-hoc basis, and for decisions that would only provide short-term solutions to be taken by the various bodies (most notably by or at the behest of the Defence Ministry and the Ministerial Settlement Committee). It would appear that none of the governments that form the subject of this thesis ever tried to define Israel's position vis-à-vis the Occupied Territories. On the contrary, these governments chose, for matters of self preservation and political convenience, not to do so. The majority of the plans formulated during the period never made it to the government and were never approved. The Allon Plan, which is considered to be the blueprint upon which the Labour Party's territorial approach was based, was never voted on or approved of. Even though some of the government's approaches and policies derived from the Allon Plan, the plan itself was never implemented as a whole. Moreover, on numerous occasions, the Labour Party, the government and even Allon himself took decisions that contradicted the Allon Plan.

Lastly, this thesis analyses the reasons behind this lack of long-term policy - a flaw that was displayed by each individual government and by successive governments during a 10-year period. There has never been substantial research into the reasons behind the inability of successive Israeli governments, under the leadership of the

Labour Party, to put forward a clear and comprehensive policy that would define its relationship with the Occupied Territories. In this respect this research is an attempt to resolve this long-standing question, by providing an explanation for Israel's lack of policy. Why is it that successive governments failed to deal with the problem? There has been some indirect research into this question, but the existing literature deals with the subject tangentially, either as part of a study into a related subject, or as part of a broader study of the Israeli state. In this respect, there has been a great deal of research on issues such as: the settlements, the military occupation, domestic factors behind Israel's territorial policies and the relationship between the Labour Party and the territories. However, no specific research has ever been conducted into the question of Israel's long-term approach towards the Occupied Territories and their population. Therefore, this research breaks new ground and provides a unifying framework for previous studies.

The following is a general review of the existing studies of Israel's approach towards the Occupied Territories, which were conducted either as part of a broader study of or an examination of a particular aspect. These studies are divided into four general categories: the economy, the settlements phenomenon, the military and security, and the political and diplomatic spheres. This survey provides important background information on the issues and subjects that will be examined in this thesis, and examines where gaps exist in our current understanding of the subject.

The Economy

There has been little published research on the subject of Israel's economic policies towards the Occupied Territories; the majority of the research has been carried out by Israeli government sources, in particular the Bank of Israel and the Defence Ministry. This research analyses the effects of Israel's economic relationship with the 'administered territories' and the main economic trends. It does not deal with Israel's economic decision-making process regarding the Occupied Territories, nor does it try to address the question of whether Israel had a long-term economic policy for the territories. This research generally points to the beneficial economic relationship and

highlights the positive effect this had on the Occupied Territories, in areas such as living standards, GDP, agricultural output and employment rates.¹¹

Nevertheless, the non-governmental literature is very clear about Israel's economic plans and policies towards the Occupied Territories: 'In the absence of a guiding policy, reality spun its own policy'.¹² The Israeli economy dictated to a large extent the level of integration and interaction. The majority of the decisions taken had less to do with government policy and planning and more to do with the 'inexorable economic forces on both sides'.¹³ The disparity between the economies was such that the territories became a net importer of Israeli produce, while offering in return the only commodity they had, i.e. cheap labour.¹⁴ The Open Bridges policy can serve as an example of this trend. The policy stemmed from Dayan's conviction that allowing free movement between the West Bank and the Arab world would help raise living standards and allow indefinite Israeli rule.¹⁵ However, Teveth claims that this policy did not stem from Dayan's drawing board. Instead, it was a response to Palestinian traders smuggling produce into Jordan.¹⁶ The ruling elites could not agree on the level of integration between the two economies and the desired economic relations, and this was highlighted by the clash between Sapir and Dayan.¹⁷ In ensuring that the interests of the home economy were protected, Israel's economic approach is probably best summed up by Larry Fabian: 'Israel would not allow them [the Occupied Territories] to be a net budget burden'.¹⁸

There is a dissenting view that argues that Israel might not have sought a specific policy but, over time, it became accustomed to the territories serving as a secondary

¹¹ Arie Bergman, Economic Growth in the Administered Areas 1968-1973 (Jerusalem, Bank of Israel Research Department, 1974), Pages 4-8.

¹² Shabtai Teveth, The Cursed Blessing: The Story of Israel's Occupation of the West Bank (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970), Page 336.

¹³ Mordechai Nisan, Israel and the Territories: A study in Control 1967-1977 (Ramat Gan, Turtledove, 1978), Page 36.

¹⁴ Shmuel Sandler and Hillel Frisch, "The Political Economy of the Administrated Territories", in Daniel J. Elazar (ed), Judea, Samaria and Gaza: Views on the Present and Future (Washington, American Enterprise Institute For Public Policy Research, 1982), Page 133.

¹⁵ Gershom Gorenberg, The Accidental Empire: Israel and the Birth of the Settlements, 1967-1977 (New York, Times Books, 2006), Page 131.

¹⁶ Teveth, The Cursed Blessing Pages 138-151.

¹⁷ Yael Yishai, Land or Peace, Whither Israel? (Stanford, Hoover Institution Press, 1987), Page 73.

¹⁸ Brain Van Arkadie, Benefits and Burdens: A Report on the West Bank and Gaza Strip Economies since 1967 (New York, Carnegie Endowment for International peace, 1977), Page 12.

market for its goods. This view suggests that Israel manipulated the territories' economy to suit its needs by encouraging the transition of cheap labour, regulating trade and restricting the flow of competing commodities.¹⁹ In conclusion, and to reflect on the prevailing consensus, Van Arkadie states that, while the government manipulated the economic interaction to its advantage, it did not 'conceive or attempt to implement any systematic, large-scale plan to alter the economic structure of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip' and there was no 'Israeli master-plan'.²⁰

The Settlements

There is no doubt that Israel established numerous settlements and outposts throughout the period in all of the territories it occupied. Moreover, there is no doubt that Israel formulated, approved and implemented settlement policies during the period. These, however, were driven more by interest groups and the personal agendas of Dayan, Allon and Galili, than by clear policies.²¹ Yishai argues that Israel's settlement activities can be divided into three periods; the Eshkol, the Meir and the Rabin periods. She describes the initial settlement period as 'semi-private initiatives that prompted the government's consent' and that during the Meir period, settlement activity increased, with the initiative increasingly coming from the government. However, she claims, 'there was a discernible gap between decisions and their implementation'. During the third period, she states that, even though settlement activity had increased, it was still 'indecisive'.²² Yishai describes the settlement policy as an unapproved Allon Plan, but that it was not the state that was in charge of the policy's implementation.²³ Gazit adds that this was a result of the state having a special settlement committee which only dealt with the authorisation of projects, but not with the fundamental implications of the settlement policy.²⁴ On the one hand, some of these projects did not emanate from the state, but from individuals and interest groups. On the other hand, this lack of a clear guiding policy matched the government's settlement approach. The government sought to create 'facts on the

¹⁹ Van Arkadie, Page 14.

²⁰ Van Arkadie, Pages 37-38.

²¹ Pedatzur, *The Triumph of Embarrassment* Pages 162-163.

²² Yishai, *Land or Peace* Pages 41, 46 and 53.

²³ Yishai, Page 195.

²⁴ Shlomo Gazit, "The Steps towards the Yom Kippur War", in Ram Erez (ed), Civil-Military Relationships in Israel in times of Military Conflict (JCSS Memoranda no. 82, Feb 2006), Page 38.

ground' rather than spell out a particular policy. The old notion of 'another dunam' was replaced by 'another installation and another settlement'.²⁵

Israel's settlement policies and activities have been the subject of many extensive researches and studies, many of which have been utilised by this thesis. There are, however, three important and authoritative studies, which ought to be mentioned: Admoni, Harris and Demant. The main writings on the subject are based, to a large extent, on these three studies, with the exception of Gorenberg, who based his research on newly declassified archival material. Admoni, the former head of the Jewish Agency's Settlement Department, worked side-by-side with Israel's leaders and decision makers, and was involved in the establishment of all 76 settlements and outposts in the Occupied Territories; he based his book on these experiences. According to Admoni, and despite the fact that he provides some examples to the contrary, Israel's settlement activities in the Occupied Territories were not random but deliberate. He argues that settlement activities were in direct response to, and dictated by, Israel's security needs, which included the need to define Israel's future 'secure borders'.²⁶

In contrast to Admoni, Harris' research is unique in that it examines the issue from the viewpoint of political geography. He provides an analysis of both the political and environmental realities and the social and spatial implications of the settlement policy. Moreover, Harris underlines the importance of both the logistical and geographical considerations on the settlement programme. He maintains that Israel's settlement policy was primarily dependent on the 'shifting balance of personalities and attitudes within the domestic political system'. He argues that decision makers initially favoured a 'spatially limited policy concentrating on strategic belts', but shifted towards viewing colonisation as a permanent feature.²⁷

Demant argues that Harris' research does not fully explain the mechanics behind Israel's settlement decision-making process. Because of the scarcity of primary

²⁵ Yishai, Land or Peace Page 195.

²⁶ Yehiel Admoni, Decade of Discretion: Settlement Policy in the Territories 1967-1977 (Tel Aviv, Yad Tabenkin, 1992) (Hebrew), Page 19.

²⁷ W.W Harris, Taking Root: Israeli Settlements in the West Bank, the Golan Heights and the Gaza Strip 1967-1980 (New York, Research Studies Press, 1980), Pages 164-165.

sources at the time, Demant relied primarily on interviews, which were conducted with the leading members of the settler movement, as well as with numerous politicians and public officials associated with the settlement programme. Demant claims that settlement policies originated amongst a small group of decision makers, consisting mainly of Eshkol, Meir, Galili, Dayan, Allon and Peres. This group did not put forward a 'grand plan', but instead, a number of 'competing blueprints with mutual overlaps and big hiatuses in between them'. However, he states that, despite the vagueness of this settlement policy, many decision makers were 'pleased with the results'. He attributes the lack of clear settlement policy to the controversial nature of the issue: 'Domestically, the whole issue was so explosive that any clear-cut decision would probably have led to a breach within the government.'²⁸

The Military/Security Dimension

Hardly any research has been carried out on either the history of the military administration or Israel's national-security imperatives regarding the Occupied Territories. Of note are Gazit's partially autobiographical accounts of the formation and history of the military administration and Israel's occupation, Gordon's examination of the Israeli occupation, and Nisan's study of Israel's control of the territories, both of which deal with, among other things, the military aspect.

Israel's military/security approach can be divided into two components. The first deals with the security issues and the conduct of the Israeli Defence Force within the territories, while the second part deals with Israel's broader military/security outlook. Israel had three main guidelines in the Occupied Territories: non-intervention, open borders and invisibility.²⁹ According to Gazit, these guidelines were doomed to fail even if fully implemented. Moreover, he argues that the Israeli elites diverged and moved from these initial policies without understanding the greater implications of their actions.³⁰ Gazit takes this line of argument further; he suggests that Israeli government ministers never dealt with the strategic questions regarding the

²⁸ Peter Robert Demant, Ploughshares into Swords: Israeli Settlement Policy in the Occupied Territories, 1967-1977 (PhD, 1988), Pages 549-567.

²⁹ Yehuda Lukacs, Israel, Jordan and the Peace Process (Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 1997), Page 27

³⁰ Shlomo Gazit, Trapped (Tel Aviv, Zmora-Bitan, 1999) (Hebrew), Pages 288-291.

territories.³¹ This wait-and-see policy caused the IDF to pursue very limited goals in the Occupied Territories, as it was not given political guidance.³² In addition, it put a big strain on the military and commanders in the field and led to Dayan's retention of powers through the Defence Ministry.³³

With regard to the wider question of borders and security, the Israeli elites created new terminology: 'secure and recognised' borders. This presented a departure from the Ben-Gurion doctrine of pre-emption, towards a security doctrine based on strategic depth.³⁴ This new line of thinking was behind successive governments' decision to hold on to Sharm El-Sheikh, the Jordan Valley and the Rafah Plains. However, Roberts argues that the secure borders concept 'possessed an inherent elasticity' and was redefined according to political 'requirements'.³⁵ Nevertheless, there is no doubt that a new understanding developed within the IDF and the Defence Ministry regarding the strategic advantages with which the new territories provided Israel.³⁶ On the broader security issues, the IDF concluded that chances for peace were very limited and that a Palestinian independent state was against the interests of Israel. They advised the government to proclaim the Jordan River as Israel's eastern security border, not to withdraw from the Golan Heights, not to withdraw from Sharm El-Sheikh, and to find a 'special' status for the West Bank.³⁷ It created a situation in which the government was being advised by an organisation that was feeding it one particular view and was dependent on that channel of information.³⁸

³¹ Gazit, Pages 32-33

³² Gershon Kieval, Party Politics in Israel and the Occupied Territories (Connecticut, Green Wood, 1983), Preface.

³³ Shlomo Gazit, The Stick and the Carrot (Tel Aviv, Zmora-Bitan, 1985) (Hebrew), Pages 110-119.

³⁴ Zeev Maoz, Defending the Holy Land: A Critical Analysis of Israel's Security and Foreign Policy (The University of Michigan Press, 2006), Page 408.

³⁵ Roberts, Party and Policy in Israel Page 42.

³⁶ Chaim Nadel, Between the Two Wars: The Security and Military Activities to Achieve Readiness and Alert in the I.D.F from the end of the Six Day War to the Yom Kippur War (Tel Aviv, Maarachot, 2006) (Hebrew), Page 96.

³⁷ Rozenal Iamima (ed), Yitzhak Rabin: Prime Minister of Israel 1977-74/1995-92 part one 1967-1974 (Jerusalem, State of Israel National Archive, 2005) (Hebrew), Page 564.

³⁸ Yehuda Ben-Meir, Civil-Military Relations: The Israeli Case (New York, Columbia University Press, 1995), Page 25.

The Political and Diplomatic Spheres

There has been substantial research into the impact the occupation of Arab territories and population had on the Israeli political system. Moreover, there has been a great deal of research into Israel's relationships with the US and the Arab states, including the negotiations over the Occupied Territories. However, the main weakness of most of these studies, in particular those written in the 1980's and 90s, is their lack of primary sources. Of particular exception is Pedatzur's study of the Eshkol government's decision-making process in regard to the Occupied Territories. This is primarily because Pedatzur was provided with privileged access to primary sources by Yisrael Galili. Pedatzur contends that the decision-making process was held captive by a small group of politicians, who failed to properly deal with the Palestinian question. This group sowed the seeds of future conflicts by being unable to detach themselves from the concepts and understandings they acquired in the aftermath of the Six Day War; he refers to this phenomenon as the 'triumph of embarrassment'.³⁹

At the political party level, there have been several important studies into the relationship between Israel's political parties and the Occupied Territories. These are either studies associated with political science, or with ideology and the rise of the Right and New Zionism. This research will be discussed below in connection with the Labour Party's relationship with the territories.

The literature points to two main imperatives facing Israeli governments: deciding which track to follow regarding the West Bank, i.e. the Palestinian or Jordanian, and negotiating with Syria and Egypt over the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula. The first dilemma occupied policy makers for much of the Eshkol period. Israel eventually decided on a Jordanian Approach,⁴⁰ although it is questionable whether Israel ever pursued a Palestinian Approach seriously.⁴¹ Nonetheless, to argue that Israel actively pursued a Jordanian option would be something of an overstatement. It is true that Israel relinquished the Palestinian Approach quickly, but it is debatable whether any

³⁹ Pedatzur, The Triumph of Embarrassment Pages 258-259.

⁴⁰ Pedatzur, Pages 96-101.

⁴¹ Rafi Sutton, Lost Opportunities (Or Yehuda, Ma'ariv Book Guild, 1999) (Hebrew), Pages 31-42.

of Israel's policies towards the West Bank were based on true enthusiasm for the Jordanian option.

With regard to its negotiations with the Arab states, Israeli elites were willing in principle to exchange land for peace but, in practice, their reliance on delaying negotiations and arguing over methods led to diplomatic stagnation.⁴² Safran adds that Israel 'did not define formally and specifically' its end-game, but was willing to negotiate for a permanent peace. However, until such negotiations materialised Israel would retain the territories.⁴³ Arguably, while Israel did not decide *not* to seek peace, it did not actively pursue a peace policy.⁴⁴ Sasson, however, attributes the absence of an Israeli peace initiative and meaningful negotiations, in the period leading to the Yom Kippur War, to the lack of credible partners; 'there was no one to talk to'.⁴⁵ Isaac argues that Israel had two policies: one it had approved of, but could not implement, and another it was partially implementing, without fully agreeing upon. He claims that Israel agreed to the land-for-peace concept, but the lack of Arab reciprocity and popular backing meant the state 'had a map and could not say so'.⁴⁶ The map and concept that Isaac alludes to is based on Israel's 19th of June decisions. It is true that the Eshkol government made an attempt to define Israel's approach. However, the June decision cannot be understood as the basis for Israel's diplomatic approach: the document did not deal with the West Bank, it was revoked within months, Israel's ambassador to the US was unaware of it and it was never implemented.⁴⁷

One of the most important contributing factors to Israel's policies towards the Occupied Territories was the role played by the American administration. The US was 'anxious about the consequences' of instability and increased USSR involvement in the Middle East. The fact that Israel was 'partly unwilling, partly unable' to define

⁴² Michael Brecher, The Foreign Policy System of Israel: Settings, Images, Process (New haven, Connecticut, Yale University Press, 1973), Pages 562-563

⁴³ Nadav Safran, Israel: The Embattled Ally (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1978), Page 415-416.

⁴⁴ Dan Bavly, Dreams and Missed Opportunities 1967-1973 Page 17.

⁴⁵ Moshe Sasson, Talking Peace (Or Yehuda, Ma'ariv Book Guild, 2004) (Hebrew), Pages 274-275.

⁴⁶ Jean Rael Isaac, Israel Divided: Ideological Politics in the Jewish State (Baltimore, The John Hopkins University Press, 1976), Page 105.

⁴⁷ Bavly, Dreams and Missed Opportunities Page 37.

its end-game increased instability and forced the US involvement.⁴⁸ There is no doubt that successive Israeli governments accepted the notion of territorial concessions and land for peace, but it was ‘American pressure, rewards and incentives that made peace seem acceptable and the inevitable price worth paying’.⁴⁹

Lack of Policy

Three main views can be deduced from the literature regarding Israel’s territorial policies. First, Israel had a clear policy, at least with regards to its settlement activity, which it formulated, approved and implemented. In other words, Israel might not have had a clear territorial policy (for whatever reasons), but it did have a clear settlement policy. Settlements were built according to Israel’s ‘peace map’, i.e. the Allon Plan,⁵⁰ this view is shared by Admoni and Tzur.⁵¹ This view will be shown to be baseless. The thesis will demonstrate that, in fact, Israel did not have a clear long-term settlement policy based on the Allon Plan.

Second, Israel had decided not to make a decision and that this ‘non-decision’ was its policy of choice. Kieval asserts that the decision not to make a decision was a conscious one.⁵² Israel had implicitly rejected a formal policy in order to create ‘facts on the ground’ while claiming not to have taken a firm decision on the matter. According to Gorenberg, the avoidance of policy was a ploy that served the purpose of maintaining unity within the Labour Party and the Coalition: ‘It was easier to avoid decisions or keep them vague’.⁵³ Shlaim points to the Galili document to argue that they are basically policies of creeping annexation.⁵⁴ Roberts adds that the creation of settlements was part of Israel’s new security understanding.⁵⁵ Pedatzur argues that the political impasse was acceptable to Israel, because it allowed for policy flexibility and

⁴⁸ Safran, Israel: The Embattled Ally Page 424.

⁴⁹ Amnon Sella and Yael Yishai, Israel: The Peaceful Belligerent, 1967-1979 (London, Macmillan, 1986), Page 76.

⁵⁰ Tzvi Tzur, Settlements and the Borders of Israel (Tel Aviv, Yad Tabenkin, 1980) (Hebrew), Page 20.

⁵¹ Admoni, Decade of Discretion Pages 188-189.

⁵² Kieval, Party Politics in Israel Page 189.

⁵³ Gorenberg, The Accidental Empire Page 358.

⁵⁴ Avi Shlaim, The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World (London, Penguin Books, 2000), Pages 316-318.

⁵⁵ Roberts, Party and Policy in Israel Page 92.

political manoeuvres. He does not agree that the government had a clear policy, but contends that the lack of clear policy enabled the government to continue with its settlement activities.⁵⁶

Third, Israel did not have a clear policy and, because of domestic and international factors, was unable to produce one. In fact, Brecher contends that Israel, during the period, ‘lacked long-ranged planning in foreign policy’ and that its response to the Rogers’ proposals was based on ‘improvisation’.⁵⁷ According to Van Arkadie, Israel’s lack of a long-term economic policy was not deliberate, but its response to the economic forces and its security and political requirements.⁵⁸ Sasson contends that when it came to formulate a long term policy (1967-1977), Israel avoided doing so and the result was military occupation without a diplomatic end-game.⁵⁹

Two main approaches, or answers, to the question of Israel’s lack of policy, can be deduced from the literature, although it is important to note that none of the studies conducted was specifically designed to address this question. The two approaches can be broadly interpreted as the Labour Party Approach and the Transitional State Approach. This terminology does not exist in the literature and is used here for the sake of clarity. By explaining these approaches, the thesis provides some background information about the Labour Party and the Israeli political scene.

The Labour Party Approach

Beilin argues that the structure and the mechanism of operation of the Labour Party were the main reasons, among other things, behind Israel’s inability to put forward a clear long-term policy. It stems, in his view, from the process of unification the party underwent; Beilin refers to this as the ‘price of unity’.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Pedatzur, *The Triumph of Embarrassment* Page 161.

⁵⁷ Michael Brecher, *Decisions in Israel’s Foreign Policy* (London, Oxford University Press, 1974), Page 511

⁵⁸ Van Arkadie, *Benefits and Burdens* Page 36.

⁵⁹ Sasson *Talking Peace* Pages 274-275.

⁶⁰ Yossi Beilin, *The Price of Unity: The History of the Labour Party to the Yom Kippur War* (Tel Aviv, Revivim, 1985) (Hebrew), Pages 215-216.

The history of Israel's Labour Party has been a fractious and fragmented one. The party is better understood as a movement which supported diverse groups who occasionally split and/or joined forces. This process of splitting and forming new parties under the banner of the Labour movement has been endemic to politics in Israel. Therefore, it is no surprise that the unified party did not have clear views and tended to incorporate the divergence of opinion within it. The diverse views expressed within the party's factions regarding the Arabs, territorial compromise, Socialism, questions of security and foreign policy, and the nature of the Israeli state have been a feature of the party from its inception.⁶¹ There were three main topics of debate within the Labour movement. First was the power of the elites to dictate the agenda, suppress issues and dominate the nomination and patronage system; even though this arrogant behaviour served them well in the past,⁶² it came to represent a growing gap between the Labour elites and the public.⁶³ Second was the role that Socialism should play within the state. Third was deciding on the nature of the Israeli state, its attitude towards the Arab world, and its future borders. Latter-day Labour factions correspond, to a certain degree, to earlier splits along these debating lines.

Two previous episodes provide insight into the issues and problems that shaped the Labour Party: the Partition Plan and the Lavon Affair. In both cases, reaching a consensus within the party meant sacrificing party unity and, in both cases, a split in the party precipitated a crucial decision on a controversial issue. The Partition Plan divided the Labour movement into those who were willing to compromise and accept a two-state solution, and those who were not, although the initial signs of disagreement between the different constituents of the movement arose in the early 1930s and were connected to the nature of Socialism; at that juncture, Mapam and Mapai represented the two competing approaches. David Ben-Gurion, the leading figure of Mapai, accepted the Partition Plan out of necessity and as a diplomatic compromise. His counterpart in Ahdut-Ha'avoda, Yitzhak Tabenkin, was unwilling to accept the plan.⁶⁴ Initially, Ahdut-Ha'avoda was a faction within Mapai known as Siya Bet. The debate between Mapai and Ahdut-Ha'avoda concerned the nature of the

⁶¹ Beilin, *The Price of Unity* Pages 49-50.

⁶² Myron Aronoff, *Power and Ritual in the Israel Labour Party: A Study in Political Anthropology* (New York. M.E. Sharpe, 1993), Page 242.

⁶³ Aronoff *Power and Ritual* Page 167.

⁶⁴ Uri Izhar, *Between Vision and Power: The History of Ahdut-Ha'avoda-Poalei-Zion Party* (Yad Tabenkin, 2002) (Hebrew), Page 424

party and the state. Ben-Gurion advocated a policy of Statism and a movement away from the social policies advocated by Ahdut-Ha'avoda and Mapam. Statism represented a policy shift that occurred within Mapai as it changed from being a narrowly focused entity, into a party associated with the state and considered to be more representative of the nation.⁶⁵ Ahdut-Ha'avoda's opposition to the Partition Plan, and to Ben-Gurion's Statism, caused the faction to split and form an independent party.

During the Lavon Affair, the party's central apparatus was pitted against several of the party elites, including its leader. The affair revolved around the discovery of an Israeli terrorist organisation in Egypt that sought to implicate the Nasser regime in anti-British activities. The story became an affair because of one unanswered question: who authorised it? The party was unable to resolve the issue one way or the other without risking a major split. The affair went through several stages, which ended in a battle between Prime Minister Ben-Gurion and the party's apparatus. Ben-Gurion's unwillingness to accept the party's findings resulted in his resignation and the formation of an independent party (Rafi).⁶⁶ The affair, or more precisely one of its key figures Binyamin Gibli, is referred to as the banana skin that caused Ben-Gurion to slip.⁶⁷

The Lavon Affair, in particular its last stage, brought about realignment within the Labour movement.⁶⁸ The Mapai old guard appeared weak and out of touch when compared with the young technocrats and former army commanders of Rafi and Ahdut-Ha'avoda. The solution to the party's problems, which were proposed by the elites, was unification with Rafi and Ahdut-Ha'avoda. The process was seen as a way of preserving the status quo from the Mapai point of view;⁶⁹ Rafi and Ahdut-Ha'avoda viewed it differently. For Rafi it represented an opportunity, as Dayan put it, to take back the Labour Party from within.⁷⁰ Ahdut-Ha'avoda considered the

⁶⁵ Peter Medding, Mapai in Israel: Political Organisation and Government in a New Society (London, Cambridge University Press, 1972), Pages 225-226.

⁶⁶ Neill Lochery, The Israeli Labour Party: In the Shadow of the Likud (Reading, Ithaca Press, 1997), Pages 12-13

⁶⁷ Shabtai Teveth, Shearing Time/Calaban (Israel, Yish-Dor, 1992) (Hebrew), Page 477.

⁶⁸ Natan Yanai, Political Crises in Israel (Jerusalem, Keter, 1982) (Hebrew), Pages 173-174.

⁶⁹ Izhar, Between Vision and Power Pages 378-379.

⁷⁰ Beilin, The Price of Unity Page 43.

unification a political necessity in order to preserve and expand its own political strength and as a way to block or constrain Rafi, as it feared the political power of Dayan.⁷¹ The unification process also exposed the generational shift that was taking place. The younger generation of leaders, coming mainly from Rafi and Ahdut-Ha'avoda, stated that they were bent on using the process to reshape the party. They felt that they and not the older, more hesitant and moderate leadership represented the views of Israelis.

The Labour factions' strife in the aftermath of the Six Day War shared similarities with both the Lavon Affair and the partition debate. 'Within Mapai, the conflict over the succession and the split between Rafi and Mapai became entangled with the territorial issue.'⁷² The Mapai elites were unwilling to plunge the party into a renewed ideological crisis, as occurred during the debate on the Partition Plan, nor risk a further split, as happened with Rafi. Lochery cites the importance of maintaining unity, and thus the difficulty in achieving a consensus, as one of the factors contributing to the decline of the party.⁷³ Beilin, Kieval, and others argue that it was the infighting which hampered the ability of the Mapai elites to conduct foreign policy as they did before the war. In a sense, the relationships between elites - especially Dayan and the Mapai leadership - eroded the authority and ability of the Labour elites to conduct and maintain their previous decision-making mechanisms. Kieval suggests that the reasons for this are engraved in the inter-party factionalism and the structural characteristics of the Israeli political system as a whole, as well as the Labour Party's, which allows small parties and factions to have disproportionate leverage on the decision-making process. These factions proved to be more adept at averting actions than promoting them.⁷⁴

The view that the problems within the Labour Party affected the decision-making process to such a degree that the government was unable to reach a consensus is not without merit. There have been several previous incidents in which the party's failure also represented the state's failure. Such was Mapai's political supremacy, that when

⁷¹ Izhar, *Between Vision and Power* Page 371.

⁷² Isaac, *Party and Politics in Israel* Page 126.

⁷³ Lochery, *The Israeli Labour Party* Pages 56-57.

⁷⁴ Yishai, *Land or Peace* Page 196.

it internally decided over a policy, it was as if Israel decided.⁷⁵ However, to argue that the internal strife within the Labour Party was the main reason behind the policy failure is to ignore the impact of other domestic factors. Although faction-based politics hindered policy making, they had caused considerable problems to various governments well before 1967. In fact, it can be argued that this factionalism is an essential characteristic of Israeli politics. Furthermore, this approach fails to take into account the factionalism and polarisation to which the Israeli society as a whole was subjected. Finally, it is interesting to note that the factions did not play an important part in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur war.⁷⁶

Transitional State Approach

Brecher, Sharkansky and Arian have suggested that, beyond the Labour Party, the Israeli state as a whole went through a transitional phase, which included demographic, political and cultural changes. These changes resulted in a shift in the views and the political power to the Right, which contributed to a deeper fragmentation of Israel's polity. Medding suggests that the history of Israel should be divided into two periods, i.e. before and after 1967.⁷⁷ The transition between the periods involved rapid changes to the Israeli state and society. Shapiro refers to the post-1967 period as the transition from the founding generation to the 1948 generation.⁷⁸ The founding generation had neither served as active fighters in the IDF nor in the resistance movements during the British mandate period.⁷⁹ An examination of the age differences among the leading politicians in Israel illustrates this. Eshkol and the leading politicians of Mapai were mostly in their late sixties and early seventies and had served most of their lives as politicians.⁸⁰ The younger generation, in their early forties or fifties, were native Israelis and had served as IDF commanders, or in the resistance movements.⁸¹

⁷⁵ Roberts, Party and Policy in Israel Page 3.

⁷⁶ Yishai, Land or Peace Page 196.

⁷⁷ Peter Medding, The Founding of Israeli Democracy 1948-1967 (New York, Oxford University Press, 1990), Page 3.

⁷⁸ Yonathan Shapiro, Democracy in Israel (Ramat Gan, Massada, 1977) (Hebrew), Pages 186-190.

⁷⁹ Beilin, The Price of Unity Page 45.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Yonathan Shapiro, Politicians as a Hegemonic Class: The case of Israel (Tel Aviv, Sifriat Hapoalim 1996) (Hebrew), Page 111.

The changes affecting the state were not limited to demographics. The manner of the Israeli victory in the Six Day War had a detrimental effect on the state.⁸² The Occupied Territories were referred to as the liberated ones and this 'Liberation' of biblical Israel assumed messianic and prophetic proportions. An increase in immigration and investment followed a wave of nationalistic and religious fervour that swept through the state, signalling the revival of a new form of Zionism, i.e. Religious Zionism or New Zionism.⁸³ In Seliktar's view the occupation brought to the fore a territorial discussion not touched upon since the partition era. This discussion revealed a 'growing dissonance' between the Labour Party's foreign policy and the public's perception of the Occupied Territories.⁸⁴ Lustick refers to this dissonance as the 'breakdown of the Green Line as a Hegemonic Conception'.⁸⁵ The public was overwhelmingly in favour of retaining most if not all of the territories.⁸⁶ The shift in the public's perception and the inability of the Labour Party to respond meant that interest groups took it upon themselves to influence the state's foreign policy. Israel's settlement policy and approach to the territories cannot be understood fully without taking into account the role of these groups, in particular the role of Gush-Emunim.⁸⁷ Aronoff states that before the Six Day War the public accepted Mapai's national agenda. However, in the aftermath of the war, the gulf between the party and the public grew, and the party elites were no longer seen as representing the state.⁸⁸

This situation was starkly different from the one prevailing before the Six Day War. The government decision in 1965 to slow down an overheating economy led directly to a serious economic recession.⁸⁹ Immigration, one of the most important social indicators in Israel, reached unheard-of lows, while the numbers of emigrants were at record highs.⁹⁰ As a result of this economic hardship, declining immigration and increased emigration, the state of Israel did not resemble the epitome of the Zionist

⁸² Michael B. Oren, Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East (New York, Oxford University press, 2002), Page 309.

⁸³ Tom Segev, Israel in 1967 (Jerusalem, Keter Books, 2005) (Hebrew), Page 104.

⁸⁴ Seliktar New Zionism Page 154.

⁸⁵ Ian Lustick, Unsettled States: Disputed Lands (New York, Cornell University Press, 1993), Pages 387-390.

⁸⁶ Sella and Yishai, Israel: The Peaceful Belligerent Page 167.

⁸⁷ Harris, Taking Root Pages 135-138.

⁸⁸ Aronoff, Power and Ritual Pages 242-243.

⁸⁹ Izhar, Between Vision and Power Page 394,

⁹⁰ Segev, Israel in 1967 Page 145,

dreams; the nationalistic parties, Gahal in particular, were seen as losing their way.⁹¹ A famous joke at the time asked for the last person leaving the country to switch off the lights.⁹²

It all changed on the 15th of May 1967. Israel stood in the middle of an unfolding crisis following Nasser's decision to move Egyptian troops into the previously demilitarised area of the Sinai Peninsula. The period between the 15th of May and the 5th of June is known in Israel as the 'Hamtana' (Waiting Period). During this period the leadership of Eshkol was publicly challenged by members of his own party, as well as by members of the Coalition, the Opposition, Israeli Defence Forces, the press, and the public.⁹³ The 'Waiting Period' can be seen as a period in which the younger leadership was pushing for war, while the older leadership was trying to find a political way out.

Before the Six Day War, Eshkol used a number of decision-making committees, which included his closest political allies and senior members of the Mapai party, to formulate and examine potential policies. The inclusion of Gahal and Rafi within a National Unity Government and the distrust of Eshkol for the members of his party, who tried to depose him during the Hamtana period, diminished the capacity of those structures. The government resorted to an ad-hoc decision-making process in which various ministers, in particular Dayan, Allon and Eshkol, each appeared to operate on his own accord, either through their ministries, or in Dayan's case, through the IDF. This occurred because of Eshkol's increasingly difficult position in the government, and with the inclusion of his political enemies, leading to the system being threatened with paralysis. The government was not formulating policies nor was it in charge of an increasingly ad-hoc process. Instead, the responsibility was taken on by individuals and interest groups with personal agendas.

Bavly argues that, during the 1967-1973 period, Israel operated within a limited perspective and relied on the wrong axioms.⁹⁴ Prominent officials and politicians within the administration described the decision-making process during the period as

⁹¹ Shapiro, Politicians as an Hegemonic Class Page 108.

⁹² Segev, Israel in 1967 Page 52.

⁹³ Segev, Page 267.

⁹⁴ Bavly, Dreams and Missed Opportunities Pages 14-24.

‘non-existent’, ‘lacking definitions and targets’ and ‘unprofessional’. Eban described it as ‘amateurish’ and being ‘based on improvisation’.⁹⁵ Important decisions were taken by Israeli leaders ‘on a spontaneous basis ... relying on personal intuition’. Coalition governments in Israel lacked the scope and political clout to offer a clear approach on the territorial problem. There was a lack of transparency in the decision-making process, which was dominated by a small group of elites, free of supervision by the government and the Knesset.⁹⁶ Furthermore, the division within the government and the state froze all new ideas, resulting in a wait-and-see policy.⁹⁷ Bavly compares Israel’s policies towards the Occupied Territories to Barbara Tuchman’s notion of the ‘*March of folly*’: an event in which a state or an actor behaves in a way that goes against his best interests, and while knowing or being aware of the folly of his actions, he nevertheless continues.⁹⁸

There are two important problems with this approach. First, this approach examines the impact structural changes had on the Israeli state and its territorial policy without examining the role played by the elites and their images. Second, while explaining the importance of domestic factors this approach fails to mention the significance of the international ones. In this respect, both approaches fail to recognise an important aspect of Israeli policy making, namely the US involvement and the occasional pressure it put on Israel.⁹⁹ With policy makers unable to reach a consensus, the role of the broker fell increasingly on the US. The more Israeli elites disagreed amongst themselves, the more the US got involved.¹⁰⁰

Examination

The literature is biased in its handling of the subject. In other words, the literature portrays the bias that is inherent in its scope and context. The literature does not set out to explain Israel’s lack of clear long-term territorial policies. The ideas and approaches that have been raised by researchers were done within the confines of

⁹⁵ Yehuda Ben-Meir, National Security Decision-Making: The Israeli Case (Tel Aviv, Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1987) (Hebrew), Pages 85-86.

⁹⁶ Nisan, Israel and the Territories Page 22.

⁹⁷ Teveth, The Cursed Blessing Pages 335-338.

⁹⁸ Bavly, Dreams and Missed Opportunities Page 19.

⁹⁹ Brecher, Decisions in Israel’s Foreign Policy Page 456.

¹⁰⁰ Safran, Israel the Embattled Ally Page 429.

their own research into a related subject, with an emphasis on their own subject matter. None of them researched or discussed *all* the elements influencing Israel's territorial policies, but that is not to say that they did not raise valid points. Those that have written on the subject concede that there is more to what they have provided. Pedatzur has limited his research into the internal workings of the Eshkol government.¹⁰¹ Yishai admits that what goes on in Israeli politics 'only partly shapes Israeli perceptions of the territorial issue'. She says that her book is only an explanation of Israeli domestic factors influencing Israeli territorial policy.¹⁰² Nisan argues that he is merely presenting the problem not explaining it.¹⁰³ Kieval explains that he is only focusing on structural problems associated with Israel's political fragmentation.¹⁰⁴ In short, despite the fact that the literature mainly agrees with the assertion that Israel lacked a long-term policy towards the Occupied Territories during the period in question, it is remarkable that no systematic research has ever been conducted on the reasons behind this.

With the exception of Gorenberg and Pedatzur, the main weakness inherent in the existing literature is the lack of primary sources. Therefore, in order to build upon and expand the previous knowledge, this thesis is based on recently declassified archival material, the majority of which was only made public in 2007. Consequently, the research fills existing gaps in our knowledge and understanding, which will help further research on the subject and advance our understanding of Israeli history and politics. This research, while providing new information, is only a part of an ongoing pursuit to further the understanding of Israel's relationship with the Occupied Territories. It provides a few more pieces to the puzzle, so that one may be able to get a clearer picture of what has happened and why. In a way, this links to the choices Israel's present leaders face. The current situation is a continuation of their inability to decide over the future of the territories. It is the same debate, using the same lines of argument.

¹⁰¹ Pedatzur, The Triumph of Embarrassment Page 17.

¹⁰² Yishai, Land or Peace Preface.

¹⁰³ Nisan, Israel and the Territories Page XI Preface.

¹⁰⁴ Kieval, Party Politics in Israel Preface.

The Eshkol Period

Introduction

The dowry pleases you but the bride does not.¹

Prime Minister Levi Eshkol's eloquent metaphor summed up Israel's and the Labour Party's attitudes towards the Occupied Territories. Israel did not plan to take over the territories.² It had made no plans for the aftermath of such an event and had only started to formulate plans for the territories during the war,³ a fact that explains the chaotic nature of the early stages of the occupation. While not wishing to take over 'Arab' land before the Six-Day War, and being very mindful of the implications of such action, the government became increasingly zealous to achieve just that during the war.⁴ The war resulted in Israel conquering an area three and a half times its size, with one and a half million Arabs under Israeli control.

Several attempts were made during and immediately after the war to look into the future of the Occupied Territories.⁵ The various committees and individuals that analysed the situation - either at the behest of the government, particular ministers or the IDF's Intelligence unit (AMAN) - reached several but similar conclusions. Two of these were that Israel must formulate a long-term policy for dealing with the territories and that any delay in finding a long-lasting solution would undermine national security and put Israel in a difficult position vis-à-vis the international community. In contrast, these individuals and committees did not reach similar conclusions regarding the policies Israel must adopt.

On the 19th of June 1967, the government under Eshkol had taken a historic decision to annex East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip and to agree, in principle, to return the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights to Egypt and Syria respectively, as part of

¹ Shlaim, The Iron Wall Page 255.

² Gazit, Trapped Page 27-28.

³ Eitan Haber, Today War will Breakout: The Reminiscences of Brig.Gen Israel Lior (Jerusalem, Edanim Publishers, 1987) (Hebrew), Page 267.

⁴ Segev, Israel in 1967 Page 365.

⁵ Gazit, Trapped Pages 138-148.

peace agreements.⁶ These decisions, however, for reasons that will be discussed later, were overturned. In regard to the West Bank, the government failed to reach a consensus and, therefore, decided to postpone any decision on the future of the region.⁷ This inability of the government to reach a decision on the future of the West Bank would be a hallmark of the period.

The Eshkol period will be discussed over the next three chapters. The first chapter will examine the domestic and international environments in which the Israeli government operated as well as provide a detailed account of the main concepts and considerations which formed the basis for its territorial approach. Additionally, the chapter will analyse the various plans and policies proposed in relation to the Occupied Territories and the government's response to them. The second chapter will chart the evolution of Israel's territorial policies, from the erosion of the 19th of June decisions and the breakdown of political consensus to the adoption of an uncommitted approach. This chapter will demonstrate that, due to the government's inability, and Eshkol's unwillingness, to put forward a clear long-term policy, Israel's territorial policy was taken over by individual ministers, in particular Dayan and Allon, and interest groups. The final chapter will examine how these developments affected Israel's territorial policies. Through the use of specific examples (e.g. the Hebron settlement, Israel's economic policies and the debate over the government's preferred West Bank approach) this chapter will show that the Israeli government, under the leadership of Eshkol, did not have a coherent and comprehensive long-term territorial policy.

The following chapters will also demonstrate that, due to the lack of suitable peace partners, the absence of American pressure, weak leadership, the unification of the Labour party, the rise of New Zionism, the activities of individual ministers and the fragmentation of its decision-making process, the Eshkol government was unable to reach a consensus regarding the long-term future of the Occupied Territories during its entire time in power.

⁶ ISA/8164/8-a/Record of Government Meeting/afternoon session/19.6.1967/Pages 21-23.

⁷ ISA/8164/8-a/Record of Government Meeting/morning session/19.6.1967/Page 100.

Chapter one

The War

Several days after the end of the Six-Day War, Defence Minister Moshe Dayan expressed his views on the conduct of the government and the army in the period leading up to and during the war. Dayan did not spare any criticism from either the government or the army. He accused Prime Minister Eshkol of being over-reliant on the US administration, as well as mismanaging the country in the period leading up to the war. In regard to the war, he claimed that the government had not complemented the army's operational plans with clear diplomatic and territorial objectives.⁸ According to Dayan, it was the least planned and worst prepared war in Israel's history. Reactions to the day-to-day events determined the direction of the war, even though the army was successful at exploiting the chances that came its way.⁹

On the 1st of June 1967, Dayan took his place as Israel's new Defence Minister, replacing Eshkol.¹⁰ This followed a week of intense political manoeuvring within both the Coalition and the Opposition parties. It came about as a result of Eshkol's perceived paralysis in the face of an unfolding crisis; one that started with Gamal 'Abd El-Nasser's decision to move troops into the demilitarised Sinai Peninsula and his decision to close the Straits of Tiran. After a particularly embarrassing incident, in which Eshkol seemed to stutter and stumble during a live radio broadcast to the nation, public confidence in him evaporated. Demands for his removal from office were made by members of the Opposition, the press, the army and even amongst his own Mapai party members.¹¹ Threats to dissolve the ruling coalition were made by several parties, in particular the National Religious Party.¹² They demanded the formation of a National Unity Government that would include Rafi and Gahal (Herut-Liberal Bloc), and the removal of Eshkol from the Defence Ministry, which

⁸ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall* Page 242.

⁹ Moshe Dayan *Story of My Life* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976), Pages 380-381.

¹⁰ Eshkol served as both Prime Minister and Defence Minister from 1963 to 1967.

¹¹ Interview with Aharon Yadlin/29.9.2007.

¹² Segev, *Israel in 1967* Page 283.

incidentally was also one of the pre-conditions set by both Rafi and Gahal.¹³ Former Chief of Staff Dayan was the Opposition's preferred candidate.

Contrary to popular perception, Dayan's addition to the government did not hasten the decision to go to war. This decision came as a result of the inability of the US administration, headed by President Lyndon Johnson, to put forward a constructive solution to the diplomatic impasse that had been reached. Despite the army's top brass clamouring for action, and deep held fears for the country's existence expressed by the press and the public, Eshkol tried to avoid war. He, as well as most of the ministers, believed in the army's capability, but feared an international backlash if Israel went ahead without America's approval. The final decision came on the 3rd of June 1967, during the Head of Mossad Meir Amit's mission to Washington, where he received what was understood to be a 'yellow light' for operations against Egypt.¹⁴

Israel's war plan was clear from the outset. It called for an early air strike to neutralise the Egyptian air force, which was to be followed by a three-pronged armoured thrust into Sinai, sweeping through the Egyptian stationary defensive set-up, and advancing towards the Suez Canal.¹⁵ The Israeli war planners had their sights focused on the Egyptian front. IDF units on the Jordanian and Syrian borders were ordered to remain in defensive positions. This was done despite warnings from AMAN (IDF's Intelligence unit) that King Hussein might be tempted to 'bite the bullet' and join the war.¹⁶ As a precaution, the Israeli government sent a message to King Hussein not to interfere with the war, promising in return to honour Jordan's territorial integrity.¹⁷

Having examined the plans, Dayan requested that two important changes should be included. He wanted the IDF to surround the Gaza Strip but not enter it. Dayan felt, (and Eshkol backed him), that conquering the Gaza Strip would be unwise and that encircling it would eventually lead to its capitulation without fighting. Dayan referred

¹³ ZA/18/2-1e/Record of Herut's Central Committee Meeting/2.6.1967/Page 2.

¹⁴ Jeremy Bowen, Six Days: How the 1967 War Shaped the Middle East (London, Simon and Shuster, 2003), Page 86.

¹⁵ Nadav, Israel: The Embattled Ally Page 245.

¹⁶ Benny Morris, Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict 1881-2001 (Tel Aviv, Am Oved Publishers, 2003) (Hebrew), Page 304.

¹⁷ Shlaim, The Iron Wall Page 243.

to the Gaza Strip as a 'nest of wasps' bristling with problems.¹⁸ Dayan also felt that not instructing the army to take Sharm El-Sheikh and securing the Straits of Tiran was a mistake, arguing that the war was fought over the right of passage through the Straits. Furthermore, he warned the army generals not to get Israel entangled in a war over the West Bank or Jerusalem. Fearing a war on several fronts, he insisted the fighting should be concentrated against the Egyptian army and be fought in Sinai.¹⁹ The first digression from the plan occurred early on the first day of fighting (the 5th of June 1967). General Gavish, Head of Israel's Southern Command, sent an urgent request to Chief-of-Staff Yitzhak Rabin for permission to send troops to occupy the Gaza Strip. Gavish complained that Israeli troops were coming under fire from Egyptian and Palestinian forces in the Strip.²⁰ Knowing Dayan's predisposition towards Gaza, Rabin decided to approve Gavish's request without consulting him.²¹

Encouraged by misleading early reports of Egypt's success, Syria and Jordan decide to join the war. By the time their forces entered the war the Egyptian army was 'on the ropes'; its air force had been eliminated in a series of coordinated air strikes, while its ground forces were rolled back by the rapidly advancing Israeli armoured thrust. Jordanian air force and artillery units began attacking Israeli targets in and around West Jerusalem, reaching as far as the outskirts of Tel Aviv.²² Dayan's fears of a multiple-front war became a reality. Yet despite the attacks, he called for restraint and warned against diverting troops to the new fronts before the army was allowed to conclude its operations on the Egyptian one. Israeli forces were ordered to remain in defensive mode. The Israeli government tried to invalidate one of the newly-created fronts by offering Hussein a way out. Eshkol sent him a message, imploring him to cease all hostilities; by his own admission, Hussein refused.²³

As the situation on the Egyptian front and the scale of Egypt's impending defeat became clearer, the voices calling on the IDF to divert attention to the Jordanian front grew. Around midday, Employment Minister Yigal Allon and Minister-without-

¹⁸ Dayan, *Story of My Life* Page 331.

¹⁹ Yossi Goldstein, *Eshkol: Biography* (Jerusalem, Keter Publishers, 2003) (Hebrew), Page 569.

²⁰ Yossi Goldstein, *Rabin: Biography* (Tel Aviv, Schocken, 2006) (Hebrew), Page 171.

²¹ Goldstein, *Eshkol* Page 569.

²² Heather Bleaney and Richard Lawless, *The First Day of the Six Day War* (London, Dryad Press, 1990), Pages 10 and 16.

²³ Goldstein, *Eshkol* Page 569.

Portfolio Menahem Begin (leader of the Gahal party) declared that this was a historic opportunity for Israel. In a meeting that day they urged the government to order the conquest of East Jerusalem and the West Bank.²⁴ Eshkol appeared to be siding with the duo, but demanded time to consider the diplomatic repercussions of such an act.²⁵ Several ministers were against the conquest of East Jerusalem, including Foreign Minister Abba Eban and the religious NRP Ministers Haim-Moshe Shapira and Zerach Warhaftig. Shapira and Education Minister Zalman Aran suggested that the government consider handing over the city, once it had been occupied, to international jurisdiction.²⁶ Shapira would later claim he meant for international jurisdiction to be applied only in the holy places.²⁷ In reply, Eshkol commented that even if Israel took over the West Bank and East Jerusalem, it would have to withdraw from these areas in the end.²⁸ Rabin argued along similar lines, remarking that, while the IDF was destroying the Jordanian air force, talk of taking over the West Bank was unnecessary.²⁹ In a meeting later that day to discuss the future of the West Bank, Dayan proposed to take control over the Samaria mountain ranges, stretching from Jerusalem to Jenin (these included the cities of Bethlehem, Ramallah and Nablus). Dayan was against taking over the whole of the West Bank or East Jerusalem (at that stage), fearing an international backlash.

During the second day of the fighting, the government convened to discuss its options, with ministers voting for the conquest of the mountain ranges (as advocated by Dayan), and for the army to seize the city of Hebron, as well as to surround the old city of Jerusalem. A government vote on whether to storm the old city ended in a draw.³⁰ During the meeting, Meir Amit inquired whether Israel would seek to annex the West Bank and wanted to know more about the diplomatic state of affairs the government would have to face should the worse come to worst.³¹ According to Amit, this lack of long-term strategic planning was characteristic of the Eshkol government,

²⁴ ISA/YAOH (Yigal Allon Oral History)/Meeting 4/Page 21.

²⁵ ISA/8164/6-a/Record of Government Meeting/5.6.1967/Pages 3-4.

²⁶ ISA/8164/6-a/Pages 7 and 10.

²⁷ Uzi Benziman, Jerusalem: City without a Wall (Jerusalem, Schocken, 1973) (Hebrew), Page 15.

²⁸ Morris, Righteous Victims Page 306.

²⁹ Segev, Israel in 1967 Page 365.

³⁰ Shabtai Teveth, Moshe Dayan: The Soldier, the Man, the Legend (London, Weidenfeld And Nicolson, 1972), Page 385.

³¹ Morris, Righteous Victims Page 306.

during and after the war.³² At the same time across the border in Jordan, realising the extent to which the situation has deteriorated, King Hussein implored the US and British governments to intervene on his behalf and impose a ceasefire, citing his fear for the survival of his Hashemite kingdom.³³ Eshkol offered Hussein a way out, but demanded that the king agree to immediate peace talks; a generous proposition, but one to which Hussein could not agree.³⁴

After agreeing to postpone the conquest of the old city, the ministers deliberated over the Syrian front. Dayan argued against opening another front; he warned against antagonising the Soviets. According to Dayan, the Syrian army had not advanced into Israel, and its artillery attacks on northern Israel were manageable and did not pose an imminent danger. On this issue, Rabin and Dayan did not see eye to eye, which cannot be said about Rabin and David 'Daddo' El'azar, Head of the Northern Command, who were particularly adamant.³⁵ On the Syrian question Dayan became increasingly isolated; the majority of ministers were in favour of dealing with the Syrians 'once and for all', but agreed to leave the final decision to Dayan and Eshkol.³⁶

One of the main concerns expressed by ministers was of a possible international condemnation - a fear which increased with every new territory the army had conquered, but one which eventually turned out to be totally misplaced. The US administration was starting to accept that some territories would remain in Israel's possession. During the first days of fighting, Walt Rostow (the National Security Advisor) wrote to President Johnson suggesting that the US should act, upon the cessation of violence, to find a permanent solution to the Middle East problem, adding that the US should not allow for a return to the pre-war borders.³⁷ The US position was further clarified when Walworth Barbour (US ambassador to Israel), while conveying King Hussein's urgent request for a ceasefire to Eshkol, did not seek an Israeli commitment on the West Bank. In Barbour's view it was too late.³⁸

³² Interview with Meir Amit/14.6.2007.

³³ Oren, *Six Days of War* Page 225.

³⁴ Goldstein, *Eshkol* Page 571.

³⁵ Segev, *Israel in 1967* Page 409.

³⁶ Oren, *Six Days of War* Page 262.

³⁷ Gorenberg, *The Accidental Empire* Page 54.

³⁸ Segev, *Israel in 1967* Page 378.

In the early hours of the morning, on the 7th of June, Eshkol was informed that the UN Security Council had agreed to a general ceasefire that would come into effect at 22-00 later that night. Eshkol immediately called Dayan, ordering him to send the army into the old city. At a ministerial-level meeting later that morning, Dayan announced that orders had been given to storm the old city.³⁹ Despite a Jordanian acceptance of the UN-brokered ceasefire, fighting in and around the city continued throughout the morning. Israeli officials claimed that as long as the ceasefire was not agreed to by Egypt and Syria, the fighting would go on. By night time the majority of the West Bank was in Israeli hands. Eshkol explained that there were now new opportunities to bring about peace in the area, declaring his wish to establish a committee that would advise him on possible avenues he could pursue. Eshkol commented that ‘these were historic days for Israel and for the Jewish people’.⁴⁰ He expressed his views regarding the territories several times that day, professing a deep desire to keep the Gaza Strip as part of Israel, referring to it as ‘a lily with many thorns’, while examining the possibility of relocating its population.⁴¹

Around late afternoon on June the 7th, news that the IDF had managed to seize the old city of Jerusalem prompted a mad rush of government ministers to the site. Dayan, initially sceptical about the need to conquer the old city, and wanting to avoid what he called ‘all that Vatican’, was the first on the scene. In full military attire and accompanied by Head of the Central Command General Uzi Narkiss and Rabin, he was the first minister photographed entering the old city, stealing the limelight from Eshkol in the process. On that day, Dayan declared, ‘We have returned to our most holy places, returned in order never to be separated from them again’.⁴²

On June the 8th, the daily broadsheet Ha’aretz asked the government, in its editorial, to complete the task and conquer the Golan Heights.⁴³ Goaded on by the press, the entire leadership appeared to be in frenzy for further conquests. Allon claimed that, when it came to seizing the territories, he did not understand why occupying the Sinai

³⁹ Goldstein, *Eshkol* Page 571.

⁴⁰ Goldstein, Page 574.

⁴¹ Segev, *Israel in 1967* Page 390.

⁴² Gorenberg, *The Accidental Empire* Page 37.

⁴³ Segev, *Israel in 1967* Page 407.

Peninsula, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank was acceptable, while the Golan Heights were 'off the table'.⁴⁴ Allon's opinion was echoed by the IDF's high command and most of the ministers, including Eshkol. However, not all shared this view. Warhaftig and Aran expressed concern about a possible Soviet intervention, in response to an Israeli assault on the Golan Heights.⁴⁵ Dayan, admonishing the ministers for their enthusiasm, refused to consider any attack on the Golan Heights.⁴⁶

In the early hours of June the 9th, and not for the first time, Dayan changed his mind and ordered the northern command to advance up the Golan.⁴⁷ When ministers found out about the order they were exasperated. They supported his decision but not the manner in which it was carried out.⁴⁸ However, this would not be the last time (during and after the war) that Dayan exhibited fickle behaviour.⁴⁹ By June the 10th, with the fighting in the Golan Heights going Israel's way, Ambassador Barbour strongly advised Israel to agree and adhere to the UN's unconditional call for a ceasefire, if it did not want to jeopardise its gains.⁵⁰ Fearing that the UN would force Israel to halt before the conquest of the Golan had been completed, Eshkol urged El'azar to finish the job, promising him that the government would do its best to stall.⁵¹ The UN-proposed ceasefire came into effect on the 11th, but Israeli forces continued to fight until the 13th, at which point the entire area was under Israeli control. The immediate result of these actions was a break-up of relations with the Soviet Union.⁵²

The war brought about numerous changes, one of which saw Israel occupying territories three and a half times its size; but the transformation also occurred on other levels such as political, diplomatic and ideological. Politically, the war had elevated Dayan to the status of a national hero, which created great tension with Eshkol. Furthermore, it had brought to the fore a territorial question that was thought to have been settled with the acceptance of the Baltimore Plan. This territorial pre-independence debate threatened to challenge Mapai's long-held view of accepting the

⁴⁴ Segev, Page 407.

⁴⁵ Oren, Six Days of War Page 261.

⁴⁶ Interview with Shlomo Hillel/23.9.2007.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Goldstein, Eshkol Page 575.

⁴⁹ Interview with Hillel.

⁵⁰ Oren, Six Days of War Page 298

⁵¹ Oren, Page 300.

⁵² Oren, Page 299.

temporary 1949 ceasefire borders, which put the party at odds with several of its Coalition allies, most notably Ahdut-Ha'avoda.⁵³ The war had also left the country with a National Unity Government, which incorporated a 'wall to wall' Coalition of the Right, the Left and the religious parties. Thus, the task of maintaining unity within the Coalition was made very difficult by the controversial and polarising issues on the agenda.

On the diplomatic front, the war had provided Israeli decision makers, for the first time, with the necessary bargaining chips to achieve a long-lasting peaceful resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Eshkol expressed hope that the government would have the sufficient wisdom and intellect to deal with 'this property and I do not only refer to the real estate'.⁵⁴ In addition, the war instigated a change in the involvement of the super powers in the region, in particular the increasing Israeli dependency, diplomatically and militarily, on the US.

Ideologically, the war brought about a Zionist revival, albeit in a new form. New Zionism fused together religious and nationalist elements, which resulted in a change in the way most decision makers viewed the conflict. In Seliktar's view, it brought about a gradual shift from an Instrumental to a Normative approach, in particular with regards to the West Bank.⁵⁵ The war was talked about in biblical and even messianic terms, and not only in the religious circles. Eshkol remarked that, for the first time, Jews could pray at the Wailing Wall, at the Grave of Rachel and the Machpela Cave.⁵⁶ The Ma'ariv daily newspaper described the conquest of East Jerusalem as though 'the messiah had arrived to Jerusalem when he was tired, grey, and riding a tank'.⁵⁷

As far as the military was concerned, the two main threats to Israel's security prior to the war were now a distant memory, as Syria was no longer able to pose a risk to Israel's northern settlements and water supplies, and the threat posed by Egypt to Israel's right to a free passage through the Straits of Tiran had also been eliminated.

⁵³ Seliktar, New Zionism Page 156.

⁵⁴ ISA/8164/6-a/Record of Government Meeting/11.6.1967/Page 6.

⁵⁵ Seliktar, New Zionism Pages 156-157.

⁵⁶ ISA/8164/6-a/Record of Government Meeting/11.6.1967/Page 4.

⁵⁷ Oren, Six Days of War Page 401.

The new territories also changed the strategic balance in the region. Israel had acquired strategic depth allowing it to change its long-held pre-emptive strike doctrine. However, beyond the strategic gains and achievements, and with the obligation to govern the population now under occupation, the war also brought changes to the army's traditional role.⁵⁸

The Military Administration

The occupation of the territories raised some urgent issues with which the Israeli government had to contend, such as the restoration of public and social services and the resumption of day-to-day life. These entailed setting up an Israeli administrative body to govern the territories. In 1961, Meir Shamgar, the army's Judge Advocate General, following a study into the army's previous experience in governing the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula,⁵⁹ set up regional administrative commands. These would handle civilian matters in accordance with international law regarding occupied land. Shamgar also set out clear guidelines and procedures regarding behaviour towards the population under occupation. These were later integrated into the army's officer training programme. In addition, regional commanders and their personnel were appointed, with former General Haim Hertzog taking responsibility over the West Bank.⁶⁰ The Military administration and regional commands were set up in the belief that they would soon be required. But as time went on, and no apparent need for a military administration arose, the resources allocated for it understandably decreased.⁶¹ Therefore, it is no surprise that, despite the original contingency plan by the army, the appointment of officials and the preparatory work done by Shamgar and others, the early conduct of the military administration left much to be desired.

During the Waiting period General Hertzog attempted to staff his command and organise his men in anticipation for the possible occupation of the West Bank. This proved a difficult thing to do. Neither Dayan nor Narkiss had time for him, as they were preoccupied by ongoing events. On the first day of fighting, Shamgar sent a

⁵⁸ Nadel, Between the Two Wars Page 21.

⁵⁹ In the aftermath of the Suez War in 1957.

⁶⁰ Teveth, The Cursed Blessing Pages 10-11.

⁶¹ Teveth, Page 11.

memo to the army's heads of command, reminding them of the principles of international law regarding military procedures in Occupied Territories and the conduct of its forces when in contact with the local population.⁶² On the same day, requests were made by regional commanders for clear guidelines regarding setting up military administrations in the areas occupied. Many of the officers had no prior knowledge of the previous appointments and arrangements. On the 7th of June, Dayan and Narkiss appointed General Moshe Goran as Governor of the Gaza Strip, and placed the West Bank under the jurisdiction of Narkiss. There was no mention of Hertzog or his unit.⁶³

Hertzog's first week in command was described as an 'absolute confusion'.⁶⁴ His administrative units suffered from lack of manpower and adequate resources. They had insufficient communication lines, which harmed their ability to coordinate their activities. Orders given by Hertzog were not carried out. Combat units were either unaware of the role of the administrative units, or simply disregarded them. Furthermore, in each of the West Bank regions, local commanders - facing chaotic circumstances in the absence of clear instructions - were asked to use their own initiatives.⁶⁵ This was not the case in the Gaza Strip where unused combat units were sent to the Sinai front, leaving behind only logistic and support units, which were assigned to operate under appointed Governor General Goran.⁶⁶ When asked by Narkiss how he planned to restore the basic services to the Arab population, Hertzog proposed using the existing workforce of the Palestinian public sector. The army wanted to avoid using Israeli professionals, who were already in short supply due to the national conscription. Narkiss agreed and gave his blessing to the plan. Dayan would later use it as one of the cornerstones of his 'enlightened occupation' approach.⁶⁷

Before the war broke out, Dayan had nominated General Yehuda Nitzan to coordinate the army's activity with regard to civilian matters. Within the first few days of the fighting Nitzan was able to conclude that the army and the Ministry of Defence were

⁶² Gazit, The Stick and the Carrot Page 46

⁶³ Gazit, Page 47.

⁶⁴ Teveth, The Cursed Blessing Pages 97-98.

⁶⁵ Gazit, The Stick and the Carrot Page 48.

⁶⁶ Gazit, Page 49.

⁶⁷ Teveth, The Cursed Blessing Page 25.

lacking the capacity to govern the territories. The scale of the task meant that additional resources and expertise were required, especially in the West Bank. In the aftermath of the war, Nitzan recommended that responsibilities over civilian affairs in the territories should be shared by all relevant government ministries. This led to a reorganisation of the army's administrative units, and to the establishment of a special committee, to coordinate the government's activities. The committee comprised the government ministries' Directors-General, under Ya'akov Arnon, Director-General of the Treasury.⁶⁸ It also marked the end of Hertzog's tenure; on the 15th of June, his command was annulled and the West Bank was placed under the command of Narkiss.

First Proposals

On the 6th of June, while the outcome of the war had not yet been determined, Eshkol summarised the problems Israel's decision makers were facing:

In front of us are the problems of our relationship with Egypt: the status of Sinai and Gaza, the question of free passage through the Gulf of Eilat and the Suez Canal, the status of the West Bank, the status of the old city of Jerusalem, the question of the demilitarised areas in the north, the issue of control over water, finding a solution to the refugee problem and the problems with the Arab population in the Occupied Territories.⁶⁹

The need to formulate comprehensive long-term policies with regard to the newly-occupied territories inspired many within the army and the government to put forward their ideas. During those early days, three interesting and thought-provoking proposals were handed to Israeli decision makers. These plans were designed to deal principally with the West Bank and its Palestinian population. The first of these proposals was submitted to the Chief-of-Staff and the Ministry of Defence on the 9th of June. It was the brainchild of the AMAN research department, headed by General Shlomo Gazit, the would-be coordinator of IDF activities in the Occupied Territories. Senior officers in AMAN felt that Israel had to dictate the proceedings in the early diplomatic activity. On the one hand, this would act to nullify any Arab proposal that

⁶⁸ Teveth, Page 54.

⁶⁹ Nadel, Between the Two Wars Page 14.

might come up, while on the other hand, it would show the world that Israel was sincere in its desire to resolve the conflict.⁷⁰ The AMAN proposal called for the abrogation of the 1949 ceasefire agreements and for minor border modifications as part of new agreements which would be based on peace negotiations. In regard to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, AMAN recommended the establishment of an independent, though demilitarised, Palestinian state. Furthermore, they argued that the old city of Jerusalem should become an open city, modelled on the Vatican. The plan was never officially discussed and no comments were made by the Ministry of Defence and the General Staff.⁷¹

Another thought-provoking proposal was handed to the Ministry of Defence and General Staff on the 14th of June, with Eshkol reportedly receiving a copy as well.⁷² Its authors had been members of Israel's Intelligence community. They held talks during the war and immediately after with many Palestinian notables in the West Bank. This was done with the approval and support of both the head of AMAN General Aharon Yariv, and Narkiss. The authors identified the Palestinian issue as the most crucial element in the Arab-Israeli conflict. In their view, Israel had an opportunity to resolve this conflict once and for all by adopting what would become known as a Palestinian Approach. From their discussions with Palestinian notables, the authors sensed that there was a desire to reach a separate peace agreement with Israel, a move which would effectively bypass King Hussein. In their remarks the authors called on the Israeli leadership to seize this unique and historic opportunity.⁷³ They urged the government to work without delay towards the establishment of an independent, though demilitarised, Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Israel, they advised, should annex East Jerusalem, the Latrun Pass, and the Gilbo'a Mountain. In order to allow for an honourable accord, they proposed transferring some Arab lands in Israel to the newly-created state and assigning a special status to the Christian and Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem.

⁷⁰ Gazit, *Trapped* Pages 138-139.

⁷¹ Gazit, Page 139.

⁷² Moshe Sasson, *Talking Peace* Page 91.

⁷³ Dan Bavly, *Dreams and Missed Opportunities 1967-1973* (Jerusalem, Carmel, 2002) (Hebrew), Pages 247-251.

For the proposed solution to succeed, a step-by-step plan was drafted, with several goals being mentioned as points of reference. These included resolving the issue of the Palestinian refugees (re-settlement, repatriation, international support, monetary compensation), convening a gathering of all Palestinian leaders in the West Bank and producing a declaration of intent, ensuring the economic viability of the Palestinian state, free passage between the West Bank and Gaza as well as free port services in Israel.⁷⁴ The authors warned that a non-resolution of the issue would ‘sow the seed of future violence’,⁷⁵ but even *this* did not bring the proposal to the fore, and it was subsequently dropped. Examining the current political approaches which are regularly discussed around the subject of the Middle East, the similarities with the above-mentioned proposals are simply remarkable.

Another proposal, which called for a Palestinian Approach, was handed to AMAN and the Defence Ministry on the 11th of June. It was written by Professor Yuval Neeman, the Dean of the Tel Aviv University and a special assistant to Yariv during the war. Neeman called for the creation of a Palestinian state, but argued that it should be done as part of an Israeli-Palestinian Federation, with Israel being in charge of foreign and defence issues. He proposed that the ceasefire lines should be declared Israel’s future borders, while acknowledging the possibility of future land trades as a result of international pressure.⁷⁶ Similarly to the previous proposals, the Ne’eman document was never officially discussed.⁷⁷

During those first days, many additional proposals were submitted, although these did not deal with the long-term future of the Occupied Territories, e.g. the Yekotiali-Danin document. Of all the proposals, only one made a significant contribution to Israel’s initial policy-formulation process. General Arie Shalev and Foreign Ministry representative Hanan Bar-On worked alongside Dayan during the war. They suggested that the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula should be returned to Syria and Egypt respectively in exchange for peace treaties. Furthermore, they proposed that the West Bank should either form the basis of a Palestinian autonomous region or be returned to Jordan, in exchange for peace. In both scenarios, the authors suggested

⁷⁴ Bavly, Pages 247-251.

⁷⁵ Sasson, Talking Peace Page 274.

⁷⁶ Gazit, Trapped Page 139.

⁷⁷ Bavly, Dreams and Missed Opportunities Page 137.

some border modifications in the Jerusalem area, the Latrun Pass and around the city of Qalqilya.⁷⁸ The Shalev-Bar-On plan appealed to Dayan and he adopted some of its recommendations, in particular the parts referring to Sinai and the Golan.⁷⁹

In a meeting with his staff on the 12th of June, Dayan expressed, for the first time, his views on the future of the territories. He believed Israel did not need an additional 1.2 million Arabs. He made it clear that there were only two viable options with regards to the West Bank, i.e. the establishment of an autonomous Palestinian entity with Israel in charge of its security and foreign affairs, or withdrawing from the West Bank and handing over the responsibility for the area to Jordan. On the subject of the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights Dayan felt that Israel should not rush to offer anything, but instead wait and see what Egypt and Syria offered. He was willing to consider an Israeli withdrawal in return for peace treaties and the demilitarisation of these areas, with some minor border adjustments. In addition, he decided to establish a special exploratory committee, headed by Hertzog, which would examine the main issues and report back to him.⁸⁰

The 11th and the 13th of June

Dayan's apparent desire to dictate Israel's territorial policy concerned Eshkol. When Eshkol heard of Dayan's exploratory committee he immediately dismissed it, fearing that Dayan was trying to establish in the territories his own fiefdom.⁸¹ In response, he ordered Dayan to refrain from acting independently, and to leave the territorial policy matters to the government.⁸² Over the following days, Eshkol used two ministerial meetings to establish a new committee under his control that would advise him on the territorial problems, effectively bypassing Dayan and the Defence Ministry. The ministerial committee for the territories was headed by Sapir, who wanted no part in it; the committee convened once on the 15th of June and was disbanded on the 18th.⁸³

⁷⁸ Moshe Dayan, *Story of My Life* (Tel Aviv, Edanim, 1976) (Hebrew), Pages 490-491.

⁷⁹ Bavly, *Dreams and Missed Opportunities* Pages 35-36.

⁸⁰ Gazit, Pages 140-141.

⁸¹ Gazit, *The Stick and the Carrot* Page 129.

⁸² Gazit, *Trapped* Page 141.

⁸³ Pedatzur, *The Triumph of Embarrassment* Page 117.

Eshkol wanted to find a forum in which he could nullify Dayan's contribution, while continuing to operate as he did before the war. In the pre-war period, policy formulation regarding security and foreign affairs was dominated by a special informal committee headed by Eshkol, which included Golda Meir (the former Foreign Minister and Secretary general of Mapai), Pinhas Sapir (the Finance Minister), Ya'akov-Shimshon Shapira (the Justice Minister) and, on occasions, Eban. In addition, Eshkol made use of several other forums, depending on the issue. These included the Ma'arach Political Committee (comprising the senior Mapai and Ahdut-Ha'avoda members), the Ministerial Defence Committee, and the 'Sarinu' forum, headed by him, and comprising ministers close to him.⁸⁴ The challenge facing Eshkol was to find a useful mechanism of reaching a consensus and dictating policies, while preserving the National Unity Government, which included two of his fiercest political antagonists before the war (Dayan and Begin). Eshkol was unable to find an appropriate forum and had to go through several different ones, changing his mind according to the political reality. Not only was it a question of preserving his hegemony on the decision-making process, but it was also the need to navigate through the process while having to manage with reduced influence. He was no longer serving as Defence Minister, and his political allies had failed to stand by him during the Waiting period.⁸⁵

The two ministerial meetings on the 11th and the 13th of June illustrated Eshkol's method of operation. The first meeting dealt primarily with the question of Jerusalem, and was attended by all ministers. It was an attempt to reach a unanimous decision on a matter that enjoyed broad consensus among ministers. Eshkol, favouring the unification of Jerusalem, felt the ministers should differentiate between Jerusalem and other territories when voting over the city's future.⁸⁶ Eshkol stated that Jerusalem had been 'liberated and united', arguing that the government 'should do what it needs to do quickly', i.e. formally unify the city.⁸⁷ The ministers did not need convincing and all agreed to the need to unite the city, with the exception of Aran, who raised several concerns regarding the possible repercussions the act would have on future Israeli-Arab relations and the political damage that could be caused by the need to do an

⁸⁴ Pedatzur, Pages 34-35.

⁸⁵ Pedatzur, Page 36.

⁸⁶ ISA/8164/6-a/Record of Government Meeting/11.6.1967/Page 43.

⁸⁷ ISA/8164/6-a/Page 43.

abrupt u-turn in the face of international pressure.⁸⁸ Haim-Moshe Shapira convinced the rest of the ministers that the government should unify the city quietly, and without much fanfare. He proposed to extend the municipal borders of West Jerusalem, so to include East Jerusalem, without having to vote on unification or annexation. Police Minister Eliyahu Sasson added that this is how things were done in 1949.⁸⁹ The proposal was accepted unanimously and a special committee was established to look into the future boundaries of the Jerusalem municipality.⁹⁰

In contrast, the meeting on the 13th was an attempt by Eshkol to marginalise Dayan, and clarify to him that Israel's future foreign and security policies would remain in the hands of the Prime Minister. The meeting on the 13th dealt with the need to define Israel's long-term policies and was attended only by Eshkol, Eban, Dayan, Allon, Minister-without-portfolio Yisrael Galili and Yigal Yadin.⁹¹ The meeting established the basis for the conduct of the military administration, and led to the establishment of the Directors-General Committee to oversee the activities of the government ministries in the territories. It was the first time that Israel's long-term territorial policy was deliberated, with ministers hinting they would be willing to offer Egypt and Syria peace treaties, on the basis of Israeli withdrawal to international borders. This meeting was an example of the prevailing mood among ministers, with most believing that the bulk of the territories would be returned as a result of international pressure. In an interview given on the 11th, Eshkol echoed those very sentiments, conceding that Israel would probably have to withdraw from the Golan Heights in order to appease US and international pressure.⁹² Eshkol had previously informed the US ambassador to the UN Arthur Goldberg that Israel would return all the territories it conquered in return for peace.⁹³

⁸⁸ ISA/8164/6-a/Page 38.

⁸⁹ ISA/8164/6-a/Page 50.

⁹⁰ Gazit, The Stick and the Carrot Page 223

⁹¹ Goldstein, Eshkol Pages 580-582

⁹² Pedatzur, The Triumph of Embarrassment Page 96

⁹³ David A. Korn, Stalemate: The War of Attrition and Great Power Diplomacy in the Middle East, 1967-1970 (Boulder, Westview Press, 1992), Page 13

Jerusalem

The attempt to limit Dayan's contribution to the decision-making process had succeeded only in part. Dayan did leave the territorial policy formulation in the hands of Eshkol, the government and the various special committees but, with the military administration coming under the Defence Ministry's jurisdiction, Dayan had an alternative avenue to influence policy. He believed neither Eshkol nor Sapir had sufficient understanding of the Arab mentality, meaning that they were both incapable of governing the territories.⁹⁴ Furthermore, when it came to the core issues, the indecisiveness exercised by ministers prompted Dayan to 'relieve' them from their day-to-day duties in the territories. As a result, his relations with Eshkol and the Mapai old guard deteriorated, even though most ministers appeared to be content with his running of the territories.⁹⁵ Dayan's decisions with regards to Jerusalem are a case in study.

On the 10th of June, and before the government managed to discuss the small matter of Jerusalem, events had already been shaping a new reality. In the courtyard of the Wailing Wall stood the Moors Quarter with its decrepit houses - a product of Jordanian rule. On the 8th of June, and accompanied by the mayor of Jerusalem Teddy Kollek, David Ben-Gurion arrived at the site and was horrified. He became furious when he realised that public toilets were situated directly in front of the Wailing Wall, and demanded that Kollek do something about it. On the same day, during a meeting between Dayan and the proposed military governor of East Jerusalem General Shlomo Lahat, Dayan asked Lahat to find 'a way' for hundreds of thousands of Jews to visit the wall through the narrow alleys and the small courtyard.⁹⁶ In coordination with civilian engineers, and supported by Kollek, the army started demolishing the Moors Quarters, expelling dozens of local families in the process. When, on the 11th, Eshkol called Narkiss to enquire about rumours of the demolishing of buildings, Narkiss claimed he did not know anything about it. Dayan and Kollek urged the contractors to finish the job quickly before the government succumbed to

⁹⁴ Interview with Danny Halperin/6.9.2006.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Benziman, Jerusalem Pages 37-40

international pressure and had to cease the work.⁹⁷ It is alleged that when Kollek asked Justice Minister Shapira about the legality of the demolitions, the latter replied, ‘Do it fast, and god will help’.⁹⁸

The government needed to decide on the fate of the Temple Mount with regards to the control over the site, and whether to allow Jews to pray there. While ministers argued, Dayan decided to bar Jews from praying at the Temple Mount, placing it under the control of the WAKF. Furthermore, against the wishes of the army, Dayan decided to remove all the barriers between the two parts of the city, using army engineers for the job. He also relinquished the need for permits, against the advice of Narkiss, and decided to allow Muslims to pray at the Temple Mount, with immediate effect.⁹⁹ According to Gorenberg, this was a pattern: ‘Actions of great importance, taken by Dayan or those beneath him, without authorization, improvised to fit the moment’s demands as they saw it, borne on euphoria.’ This set a precedent for state officials, the army, or private individuals to act ‘not in line with government policy, but in order to set it’.¹⁰⁰

The Ministerial Defence Committee

On the 14th and 15th of June the Ministerial Defence Committee held discussions about the territories, where it produced the first official recommendations to the government. These bore resemblance to the suggestions made in the Shalev-Bar-On plan. On the matter of the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights the committee advised the government to accept the notion of an Israeli withdrawal, while warning that it should only do so if several conditions were met. These conditions included the abrogation of the 1949 ceasefire lines and the signing of peace treaties. The committee also insisted that Israel demand the right to pass through the Tiran Straits, the demilitarisation of the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights, a guarantee for the continuation of the flow of water from the Jordan tributaries, as well as the removal of

⁹⁷ Gorenberg, *The Accidental Empire* Page 44.

⁹⁸ Segev, *Israel in 1967* Page 422 .

⁹⁹ Teveth, *The Cursed Blessing* Pages 104-105.

¹⁰⁰ Gorenberg, *The Accidental Empire* Page 45.

the Arab economic embargo. The committee suggested that, as long as there was no peace, Israel would continue to hold these territories.¹⁰¹

The committee was unable to reach a decision on the future of the West Bank, though it did look into several proposals regarding its governance, i.e. making it an autonomous region or semi-autonomous region, or the formation of cantons and military rule without any citizenship.¹⁰² It suggested that the West Bank remain under Israeli control until a long-lasting constructive solution was found. The committee went on to suggest that Israel negotiate with Hussein in an attempt to promote good relations and achieve economic integration between the two states, while declaring the Jordan River as Israel's eastern border. It also recommended that East Jerusalem should be annexed, with special arrangements to be made for the Christian and Muslim holy sites. The committee deliberated over the Gaza Strip, but could not reach a decision. Dayan disagreed with the committee over several issues and submitted his own proposals to the government. He suggested that Israel annex the Gaza Strip, and that any long-term solution for the West Bank should be based on a Palestinian Approach. He envisioned a semi-autonomous Palestinian entity, with Israel in charge over its foreign and security policies.¹⁰³

The 19th of June

On the 18th and 19th of June, the government convened to discuss its position with regards to the Occupied Territories. These meetings were held in response to a US request that Israel reveal its position prior to discussions in the UN on the 19th.¹⁰⁴ Allon stated that 'what has been decided here is not meant for the assembly [the UN General Assembly], but for talks with the Americans'.¹⁰⁵ Eshkol remarked that Israel was forced to tell the US what it had planned. He advised the ministers not to shy away from setting clear policies, explaining that Israel could not operate in a vacuum

¹⁰¹ ISA/8164/7-a/Record of Government Meeting/morning session/18.6.1967/Pages 61-65.

¹⁰² ISA/8164/8-a/Record of Government Meeting/morning session/19.6.1967/Page 18.

¹⁰³ ISA/8164/7-a/afternoon session/18.6.1967/Pages 96-103.

¹⁰⁴ Bavly, Dreams and Missed Opportunities Page 37.

¹⁰⁵ ISA/8164/8-a/Record of Government Meeting/afternoon session/19.6.1967/Page 60.

and would need to consider the views of the international community.¹⁰⁶ These meetings were the government's first attempt at defining Israel's territorial policy; it would be the first and last time the government clearly laid out its position on the matter. Despite dissenting views, the government, taking their cue from the recommendations of the Defence Committee, was able to reach a consensus on the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula and East Jerusalem.

The government decided to annex East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, although Eshkol remarked that while they were willing to die over Jerusalem, the thought of incorporating an additional four-hundred-thousand Arabs left a bad taste in the mouth.¹⁰⁷ The decision was in accordance with the understanding reached on the 13th on the issue of East Jerusalem. With regards to Egypt, the government agreed to withdraw to the international border in return for a peace treaty, excluding the Gaza Strip. The government based its decision on the international border between Egypt and Mandatory Palestine which included the Gaza Strip as part of the British mandate.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, they decided to look into the idea of relocating the Gaza Strip's population before annexing it. Begin questioned how the government would transfer hundreds of thousands of Arabs from Gaza, and suggested that it might be possible to do so, but only if they were transferred to Northern Sinai.¹⁰⁹ It is important to note that, at that time, the Gaza Strip was regarded by even the dovish Mapam ministers as essential to Israel's national security.¹¹⁰ It was further decided that the peace treaty with Egypt would be conditional on Israel's right to pass through the Tiran Straits and the Suez Canal, and on the demilitarisation of the Sinai Peninsula.¹¹¹

With regards to Syria, the government proposed a peace treaty based on an Israeli withdrawal to the international borders and in accordance with Israel's security needs.¹¹² Eshkol acknowledged, later that day, that this meant an Israeli retention of the 1949 disputed demilitarised areas.¹¹³ In addition, the government conditioned its

¹⁰⁶ Pedatzur, The Triumph of Embarrassment Pages 51-52.

¹⁰⁷ ISA/8164/8-a/Record of Government meeting/morning session/19.6.1967/Page 56.

¹⁰⁸ Segev, Israel in 1967 Page 245.

¹⁰⁹ ISA/8164/8-a/Record of Government Meeting/morning session/19.6.1967/Page 32.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Victor Shem-Tov/6.9.2006.

¹¹¹ ISA/8164/8-a/Record of Government Meeting/afternoon session/19.6.1967/Page 98.

¹¹² ISA/8164/8-a/afternoon Session/Page 100.

¹¹³ ISA/8164/8-a/afternoon session/Page 29.

withdrawal on the demilitarisation of the Golan and an agreement not to sever Israel's water supplies from the Jordan River's tributaries. Until such an agreement was signed the government agreed to continue holding and administering the territory.¹¹⁴ Several ministers remarked that Israel would probably end up holding most of the territories for a long time, believing there would be no willingness from the Arab side to negotiate.¹¹⁵ Despite this, Eshkol remarked that he did not believe the world will allow Israel to retain possession of the Golan Heights.¹¹⁶ The decisions regarding the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip are known as 'the decisions of the 19th of June'. These decisions were kept secret from the IDF and the Knesset. Rabin only learned of these decisions from the US administration when he became Israel's ambassador to Washington.¹¹⁷

One of the few dissenting views was expressed by Sasson. He advised his colleagues to 'be realistic and demand only the feasible and the possible'.¹¹⁸ He proposed that Israel withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights without a formal peace treaty.¹¹⁹ According to Sasson, because the Arab states would not agree to formal peace treaties, Israel should present them with a proposal to withdraw to the international border in return for essential security arrangements (Israel's water sources, naval passage and full demilitarisation).¹²⁰ Since 'the Syrians will not sign a peace agreement with Israel' Israel must say 'we have no interest in sitting there [the Golan Heights] other than to guarantee our security'.¹²¹

The apparent consensus reached regarding the Occupied Territories did not apply to the West Bank, this despite the fact that the area stood at the centre of the discussions. A motion, proposed by the Health Minister Israel Barzilai, to decide on the issue of the West Bank was rejected.¹²² The discussion revolved around whether to adopt a Palestinian or Jordanian-based approach, with only five ministers (Barzilai, Sapir, Aran, Shimshon Shapira and Haim Shapira) supporting a Jordanian Approach. The

¹¹⁴ ISA/8164/8-a/morning session/19.6.1967/Page 100.

¹¹⁵ ISA/8164/8-a/afternoon session/19.6.1967/Page 29.

¹¹⁶ ISA/8164/8-a/morning session/19.6.1967/Page 54

¹¹⁷ Bavly, Dreams and Missed Opportunities Page 37.

¹¹⁸ ISA/8164/7-a/Record of Government Meeting/afternoon session/18.6.1967/Page 63.

¹¹⁹ ISA/8164/7-a/Page 64.

¹²⁰ ISA/8164/7-a/Pages 67-70.

¹²¹ ISA/8164/7-a/Pages 69-70.

¹²² ISA/8164/8-a/morning session/19.6.1967/Page 89.

rest adopted some form of a Palestinian Approach, while only Begin differed, advocating an outright annexation. Begin argued that Israel ‘did not sacrifice its sons in order to create an additional Arab state’, or indeed, to return the area back to Jordan.¹²³ Furthermore, Begin feared that the establishment of Arab cantons or ghettos, in an age of decolonisation, would be a mistake. Begin questioned how ‘seasoned and intellectual politicians’ could even raise the idea of cantons which he described as an ‘Arab ghetto’.¹²⁴ Therefore, Begin proposed that Israel declare its sovereignty over the West Bank.¹²⁵

Justice Minister Shapira, in agreement with Begin, asked how in an age of decolonisation Israel could think it could control the lives of the Palestinians. He did not think anyone would accept it, suggesting Israel either annex the West Bank and deal with the demographic repercussions (echoing Begin’s proposal), or negotiate with Hussein over it. He warned that the world would accuse Israel of being the bearer of colonisation and imperialism, effectively trying to create an Israeli colony in the West Bank. Shapira claimed that any decision made by Israel, other than withdrawal, would be regarded as annexation by international standards. Shapira, however, acknowledged that some territorial modifications were essential (e.g. East Jerusalem, and some areas near Qalqilya).¹²⁶

Sapir warned the government that, by annexing the West Bank, Israel would find it difficult to maintain a Jewish majority.¹²⁷ Aran added another note of caution, warning that, by annexing the West Bank, ‘Israel might manage to snatch defeat from the claws of victory’. He suggested that Israel instead negotiate with Hussein, stating ‘a great deed did God do by giving us this thing called Hussein, on whom we can drop this burden [the West Bank]’.¹²⁸

Dayan also advocated a Jordanian Approach, but a slightly different version of it. Dayan proposed a joint Israeli-Jordanian control over the West Bank. Jordan’s role would be restricted to administrative matters, while Israel would control the territory

¹²³ ISA/8164/8-a/Page 31.

¹²⁴ ISA/8164/8-a/Page 29.

¹²⁵ ISA/8164/8-a/Page 33.

¹²⁶ ISA/8164/8-a/Page 39.

¹²⁷ ISA/8164/7-a/afternoon session/18.6.1967/Pages 112-113.

¹²⁸ ISA/8164/7-a/Page 80.

militarily. He suggested declaring the Jordan River as Israel's security border, beyond which no Arab army will be allowed to advance. Additionally, Dayan proposed the establishment of army bases on the West Bank's mountain ranges.¹²⁹

The idea of negotiating with Hussein was rejected by the Ahdut-Ha'avoda ministers Allon, Galili and Transport Minister Moshe Carmel, who viewed the problem mainly from a strategic-military perspective - that is to say an Instrumental Approach. For them, the best way to achieve long-term security was to retain either part, or the whole, of the West Bank. In this respect their ideas were closest to Begin's. However, while accepting the demographic considerations, they were unwilling to grant citizenship to the population in those territories Israel chose to retain. Galili declared that he was willing to accept the social and political problems that could arise from Israel maintaining its control over the West Bank. Acknowledging Shapira's 'colonial' warning, Galili proposed solving the demographic problem through some form of a Palestinian-administered autonomy.¹³⁰

Allon, echoing Galili, proposed a territorial-strategic solution that took into account Israel's national security needs, stating that 'peace agreements are the weakest form of guarantees regarding future peace and security'.¹³¹ Allon acknowledged the demographic problems associated with controlling the West Bank. He admitted that, if he was forced to choose between adding the Palestinian population of the West Bank to Israel and withdrawing from the West Bank, he would choose the latter. He, therefore, proposed establishing an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank that would be surrounded by Israel.¹³² Allon argued against a return to the pre-war situation, proposing instead to unilaterally annex several strategically important areas. In those areas, Allon proposed creating facts on the ground that would emphasise Israel's refusal to return to the pre-war border.¹³³ Allon asserted that the government must decide soon on the future of the West Bank. He went on to argue that Israel would not be able to retain areas in which it did not settle; Allon suggested settling in

¹²⁹ ISA/8164/7-a/afternoon session/18.6.1967/Pages 104-105

¹³⁰ ISA/8164/8-a/morning session/19.6.1967/Page 14.

¹³¹ ISA/8164/8-a/Page 43.

¹³² ISA/8164/8-a/Page 44.

¹³³ ISA/8164/8-a/Pages 46-47.

the Jordan Valley, the Jerusalem area and the Hebron mountain ranges.¹³⁴ Allon's comments prompted Eshkol to remark that every minister was deciding for himself what is good for Israel, 'We are playing chess with ourselves'.¹³⁵

Trade Minister Zeev Sherf argued that there was no need to decide, as there were no peace partners and no real chance of reaching peace at the moment. He, therefore, proposed to leave the matter of the West Bank for the time being and to re-examine it in a few weeks' time, once Israel was able to assess the 'international mood'.¹³⁶ Sherf's proposal was accepted and the debate regarding the West Bank was postponed.¹³⁷ In other words, ministers decided not to decide. However, the government did not take a strategic decision to prevaricate in order to increase its 'margins for manoeuvre' or in order to leave open its diplomatic options; it was genuinely unable to reach a decision. The differences amongst ministers were so great that they were unable to reach a consensus, or even a majority view, on the matter. The failure to produce a policy for the West Bank is referred to as 'the decision not to decide'.¹³⁸

Johnson's Five Principles

On the 19th of June, President Johnson laid out the US administration's position regarding the situation in the Middle East. In his speech Johnson proposed 'five great principles of peace in the region'. First, 'that every nation in the area has a fundamental right to live and to have this right respected by its neighbours'. Second, 'justice for the refugees ... There will be no peace for any party in the Middle East unless this problem is attacked with new energy by all'. Third, 'the right of innocent maritime passage must be preserved for all nations'. Fourth, 'limits on the wasteful and destructive arms race'. Fifth, 'respect for political independence and territorial integrity of all the states of the area'.¹³⁹ Johnson put the onus on the sides, arguing that only direct negotiations between the sides could lead to a peaceful resolution.

¹³⁴ ISA/8164/8-a/Page 49.

¹³⁵ ISA/8164/8-a/Page 51.

¹³⁶ ISA/8164/8-a/Page 23.

¹³⁷ ISA/8164/8-a/Page 100.

¹³⁸ Gazit, *Trapped* Page 137.

¹³⁹ www.presidency.ucsb.edu

According to Johnson ‘an immediate return to the situation as it was on June 4’ was ‘not a prescription for peace but for renewed hostilities’. But Johnson steered clear of describing the final borders, preferring instead the term ‘territorial integrity’. In addition, Johnson did not mention the Palestinian element, other than when stressing the importance of resolving the refugee problem.¹⁴⁰ Arguably, the US did not foresee a viable long-term solution based on a Palestinian Approach for either the West Bank or the Gaza Strip.

From the perspective of the Israeli government, Johnson’s argument (‘no return to the pre-war situation’) was a de-facto American acceptance of Israel’s right to hold on to parts of the territories. Israeli decision makers did not expect Johnson to argue along those lines. It is conceivable that the Israeli government would have modified its 19th of June decisions had it known Johnson’s position in advance. The government would have argued for an Israeli withdrawal to ‘recognised and secure borders’ (Dayan’s suggestion) as opposed to withdrawing to the international border.

Encouraged by the US position, Eban presented Dean Rusk (the US Secretary of State) with Israel’s position, as stated in its 19th of June decisions. Eban claimed to have been surprised when he first learned of these ‘moderate’ decisions. From Eban’s perspective, these decisions signalled Israel’s desire for peace.¹⁴¹ Eban commented later that the US administration viewed these decisions as being far-reaching.¹⁴² Rusk was overall pleased with Israel’s position, but the ‘non-decision’ regarding the West Bank, and the unresolved status of East Jerusalem troubled him (Israel did not inform him of the decision to annex the city). Rusk cautioned against unifying the city, advising Eban to seek accommodation with Hussein instead.¹⁴³ The US conveyed Israel’s willingness to negotiate on the basis of its 19th of June decisions to Syria and Egypt. Both states did not reciprocate, which helped to justify the feeling in Israel that these were not adequate partners for negotiations. This reinforced the view (expressed

¹⁴⁰ Gorenberg, The Accidental Empire Pages 55-56.

¹⁴¹ Gideon Rafael, Destination Peace: Three Decades of Israeli Foreign Policy, a Personal Memoir (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981), Page 163.

¹⁴² Abba Eban, My Life (Tel Aviv, Ma’ariv Book Guild, 1978), Page 430.

¹⁴³ FRUS/Volume XIX/Johnson Administration/Arab-Israeli Crisis and War 1967/Document 314/Telegram from US UN Mission to the State Department/22.6.1967.

by Dayan, Allon, Galili, Sherf and Begin) that Israel should be allowed to hold on to the territories indefinitely, or until suitable peace partners emerged.¹⁴⁴

In recent years there has been some controversy over Israel's willingness to negotiate at the time. According to Shlaim, Eban did not actually ask Rusk to convey Israel's intentions to Egypt or Syria, and so no offers were ever really made to those states.¹⁴⁵ In fact, Allon acknowledged that Israel's statement of intent was meant merely for American ears.¹⁴⁶ Bavly argues that because of its own interests in the region, the US decided not to convey Israel's position to Egypt and Syria, informing Israel that both states refused to reciprocate.¹⁴⁷ If true, this would place a great deal of the responsibility for the failure of the Israeli initiative on the American administration. Nevertheless, it is known that Israel did convey its position to the US. Regardless of what happened next, there is no doubt that the lack of reciprocation, whether it was intentional or not, played into the hands of Israeli hardliners.¹⁴⁸ The lack of a diplomatic breakthrough provided ammunition to those ministers, i.e. Allon, Galili and Dayan, who argued in favour of retaining areas Israel deemed essential for its national security.¹⁴⁹

Israel's 19th of June decisions were not intended solely for the American administration; they were also motivated by the desire to clarify Israel's position in the Middle East, prior to a debate on the matter at the UN. The Soviet delegation, supported by the Arab states, demanded that Israel withdraw unconditionally to the pre-war borders.¹⁵⁰ The USSR and the Arab delegations believed that, when 'push came to shove', the US would support a resolution condemning Israel and calling for unilateral Israeli withdrawal. This assumption was based on the Suez Crisis precedent.¹⁵¹ However, the US refused to accept the Soviets' demand, claiming that an Israeli withdrawal to the pre-war lines would only serve as a precursor to the

¹⁴⁴ Aryeh Shalev, Peace and Security in the Golan (Tel Aviv, The Centre for Strategic Studies Jaffe Tel-Aviv University, 1993) (Hebrew), Page 60.

¹⁴⁵ Shlaim, The Iron Wall Page 254.

¹⁴⁶ ISA/8164/8-a/Record of Government Meeting/afternoon session/19.6.1967/Page 60.

¹⁴⁷ Bavly, Dreams and Missed Opportunities Page 38

¹⁴⁸ Ranta, The Seventh Day Page 47

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Yadlin.

¹⁵⁰ Eban, My Life Page 426.

¹⁵¹ Rafael, Destination Peace Page 169

resumption of hostilities.¹⁵² Among the permanent members of the Security Council, the American position was supported by France and Britain, i.e. the two former Middle East colonial powers. The French delegation suggested that peace could only be achieved through dialogue between the sides, even though De-Gaulle blamed Israel for the outbreak of the war and imposed a military embargo on it. The British concurred, with Foreign Secretary George Brown calling for an Israeli withdrawal in conjunction with peace negotiations.

In contrast to the Americans, Brown discussed the intricate details of the problem, arguing that the UN should not recognise an Israeli move to unify Jerusalem. The move, according to Brown, would ‘isolate them not only from world opinion, but will also lose them the support which they have’. This remark, as well as a similar statement made by Britain regarding the inadmissibility of acquiring territories by means of war, were seen in Israel as an attempt by Britain to appease the Arab side.¹⁵³ Brown’s remarks further increased the pressure on the Israeli government to speed up its plans to annex East Jerusalem.

Unification

The British comments on a unified Jerusalem provided the subtext for the Israeli government’s vote on annexation and were used by Eshkol to open a government debate on the subject.¹⁵⁴ The government had previously decided to annex the city, as part of its 19th of June decisions. Only the municipal boundaries of the proposed unified city were left undecided. For advice on the issue of municipal boundaries, the government established a special ministerial-level committee, headed by the Justice Minister. The committee adopted a ‘moderate map’ that excluded Bethlehem and several outlying villages in order not to ‘cut’ the West Bank in two.¹⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the proposed map tripled the size of Jerusalem, and added many Arab villages and

¹⁵² Eban, My Life Page 423.

¹⁵³ Neill Lochery, Loaded Dice: The Foreign Office and Israel (London, Continuum, 2007), Pages 120-121.

¹⁵⁴ ISA/8164/9-a/Record of Government Meeting/25.6.1967/Pages 4 and 11.

¹⁵⁵ Benziman, Jerusalem Pages 55-56.

open spaces (e.g. surrounding hills) which were never part of Jordanian Jerusalem.¹⁵⁶ The committee claimed to have increased the municipal boundaries in order to provide 'room' for future city growth if necessary. The main considerations expressed by the committee were of political and military nature, as opposed to urban planning. Areas were linked to, or cut from, Jerusalem according to their perceived strategic importance. The main idea behind the proposed map was to surround the unified city with populated 'strategic ridges',¹⁵⁷ with these urban changes being presented as reversible (which arguably they were anything but).¹⁵⁸

Between the 20th and 27th of June the government deliberated over the map presented to it by the committee. Despite Eban's insistence that a vote to change the status of the city prior to the conclusion of UN discussions on the matter would harm the Israeli cause, the government proceeded to vote on the special committee's recommendations. The map was approved unanimously.¹⁵⁹ Following the recommendations of the Justice Minister, the government decided to annex the city by 'adjusting' the judicial system. A new section was added to a 1948 regulatory law, stating that the judicial and administrative law of the state would apply to any part of the land of Israel the government saw fit.¹⁶⁰ The government - wanting to avoid publicity - proposed to extend the municipal boundaries of West Jerusalem to include East Jerusalem, as opposed to formally unifying or annexing the city, hoping a clever use of Semantics would 'do the trick'.

The following day, the Knesset was convened for a special session.¹⁶¹ With the exception of the Communist party and the Arab MKs, the Knesset voted unanimously in favour of the new law.¹⁶² The vote was followed by a government decree, stating that the new lands (the extended boundaries of Jerusalem) were part of Israel, and therefore Israel's law and sovereignty applied in them.¹⁶³ In order to disguise the real purpose of the new law, the extended municipal boundaries were only ever mentioned

¹⁵⁶ Gazit, Trapped Page 226.

¹⁵⁷ Meron Benvenisti, Jerusalem: The Torn City (Jerusalem, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973) (Hebrew), Pages 55-56.

¹⁵⁸ Pedatzur, The Triumph of Embarrassment Page 118

¹⁵⁹ ISA/8164/9-a/Record of Government Meeting/26.6.1967/Pages 20-21.

¹⁶⁰ ISA/8164/9-a/Page 17.

¹⁶¹ ISA/8164/9-a/Record of Government meeting/27.6.1967/Page 17.

¹⁶² Gazit, The Stick and the Carrot Page 224.

¹⁶³ Pedatzur, The Triumph of Embarrassment Page 120.

as coordinates (i.e. point 1678613520 north towards point 1673613678).¹⁶⁴ The Foreign Ministry was required to explain the move as a bureaucratic procedure to help operate public services in the territories; Begin called it urban integration.¹⁶⁵

The decision to annex East Jerusalem was taken without a serious discussion on the long-term implications of such an act. Despite Eshkol's initial remarks and the remarks made by the special ministerial committee, the decision was taken in full knowledge that it was not reversible. The decision was spurred on by overwhelming public support and was made possible by a rare consensus among the major political parties. Israeli leaders, fearing an international backlash, decided to act before international pressure forced Israel to withdraw from the territories.¹⁶⁶ The decision clearly paid dividends, as the UN Security Council waited until May 1968 to officially condemn Israel's decision; much of the delay was due to American diplomatic obstructions. The American administration 'strongly deplored' Israel's unilateral action, but did not put any pressure on Israel to reverse its decision.¹⁶⁷

The UN debate dragged on for nearly two months as the American and Soviet delegations were unable to reach a compromise. Finally, this lack of a consensus seemed to disappear during the last few days when, on the 20th of July, the US and the USSR proposed a joint draft resolution. Presented by Arthur Goldberg (US Ambassador to the UN) and Andrei Gromyko (Soviet Foreign Secretary), the Goldberg-Gromyko draft-resolution called on all states to withdraw immediately from all territories acquired during the war. The withdrawal would be accompanied by a statement calling on all states to recognise each other's right to live in peace and security, ensuring the rights of maritime passage, finding a just solution for the refugee problem and allowing for UN peace-keeping deployment in the region.¹⁶⁸

To the Israeli government the Goldberg-Gromyko draft resolution was unacceptable. Eban complained vociferously to Goldberg, with Israel objecting on the grounds that the sides were not required to negotiate a settlement. Israel did not believe the UN

¹⁶⁴ Benvenisti, Jerusalem Page 140.

¹⁶⁵ Segev, Israel in 1967 Pages 47-8.

¹⁶⁶ ISA/8164/9-a/Record of Government Meeting/27.6.1967/Page 14.

¹⁶⁷ FRUS/Volume XIX/Johnson Administration/Arab-Israeli Crisis and War 1967/Document 338/Telegram from US Embassy in Israel to the State Department/29.6.1967.

¹⁶⁸ Rafael, Destination Peace Page 165

was an honest broker and refused to allow UN peace-keepers to be stationed in the territories. In addition, Israel refused to accept a return to the pre-war borders, distancing itself from its 19th of June decisions.¹⁶⁹ In order to alleviate Israeli fears, Johnson promised Israel that a withdrawal would not precede the other conditions mentioned in the resolution and would occur only at the final stage.¹⁷⁰ To the surprise of all sides concerned the Arab delegations refused to accept the compromise.¹⁷¹ This refusal played into the hands of those in the Israeli government, who refused to see the Arabs as peace partners.

The debates in the UN, coupled with requests made by some hawkish ministers, by the press, as well as the general public opinion, all strengthened the demand in Israel to keep the territories indefinitely. The claim ‘there is no one to talk to’ became prevalent as the Arab refusal to compromise helped foster a climate of denial in Israel. This, in turn, helped to erode the perception, among policy makers, of the Occupied Territories as diplomatic bargaining chips. The failure of the expected international demand for an Israeli withdrawal to materialise proved to Israelis that the world would not, or could not, force them to withdraw. Finally, the US acceptance of the ‘no return to pre-war boundaries’ concept proved Israel could distance itself from the 19th of June decisions and keep at least some parts of the territories without suffering any repercussions. In the cacophony of the hectic diplomatic activity, Israel’s refusal to accept the Goldberg-Gromyko compromise became a distant echo. In fact, ministers in Israel doubted whether an additional American diplomatic initiative, in the UN, was either desirable or necessary. They believed the ‘existing stalemate ... is exercising a positive influence’ on the Arab sides.¹⁷²

On the 2nd of July, in the midst of the UN diplomatic activity, Ya’akov Hertzog met with King Hussein. The talks, which were held in London, were part of a secret channel of communication that had existed between the states for years (as a matter of fact, Hertzog had already met the King several times before the Six-Day War). Due to its inability to formulate a clear policy towards the West Bank and the general unease

¹⁶⁹ FRUS/Volume XIX/Johnson Administration/Arab-Israeli Crisis and War 1967/Document 314/Telegram from US Embassy in Israel to the State Department/4.8.1967.

¹⁷⁰ Rafael, Destination Peace Page 168

¹⁷¹ Rafael, Page 167

¹⁷² ISA/3978/3-f/Cable from Rafael to Goldberg/31.8.1967/Page 5.

felt by some of the ministers towards Hussein, the government hoped to learn more by listening to the King's position first, and therefore instructed Hertzog not to propose anything on its behalf. The King arrived in London from Washington, where he was advised by the Americans to pursue peace with Israel, informing him that they would not impose a diplomatic settlement on Israel. The King explained to Hertzog that the Arab world was at a crossroads, but agreed that achieving peace was the preferred destination. Hussein did not put forward any proposals; instead he asked for time. The King was hoping that he would be able to convene an Arab summit, one in which the moderate sides would set the tone for peace negotiations with Israel, before he would proceed to present his views.¹⁷³

The West Bank

In its 19th of June decisions the government avoided defining its preferred approach or making any decisions regarding the West Bank. The meeting with Hussein did not resolve these issues either, but in order to at least overcome the obstacles presented by the West Bank, the government commissioned two reports, the first of which came from the Foreign Ministry and was presented on the 13th of July. The report outlined and analysed seven possible solutions, as far as the Foreign Ministry was concerned.

1. Annexation - the report advised against annexation. The option was listed as unrealistic because of the demographic problem.
2. Withdrawal or returning the West Bank to Hussein - The report suggested that this option was unrealistic. It would not solve Israel's security problems.
3. Returning part of the West Bank to Hussein provided it was demilitarised and provided he accepts Israel's annexation of Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip - The report concluded that this would be a favourable solution from an Israeli perspective, but Hussein would probably consider it unacceptable.
4. Leaving the problem without a clear solution, i.e. continuing the 'non-decision' - This option would allow Israel greater flexibility but would pose many social and political problems. It would also raise the suspicion that Israel

¹⁷³ Avi Shlaim, Lion of Jordan: The Life of King Hussein in War and Peace (London, Allen Lane, Penguin Books, 2007), Page 257.

5. The establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank - The report added that the establishment of a Palestinian state would create a breakthrough in Israeli-Arab relations. However, it warned that the newly-created Palestinian state might appear illegitimate to the Arab world, being an Israeli creation. The report concluded that this was the most favourable option, but it did not go as far as to recommend it. The report suggested that in order for this solution to be feasible Israel would need to annex the Gaza Strip and transfer its population to the West Bank.
6. A Palestinian state linked to Jordan - This option was listed as a possibility only as long as Jordan accepted an Israeli army presence in the West Bank, the annexation of Jerusalem, and the relocation of the Gaza Strip population to the West Bank. The report did not clarify whether the Palestinians or Hussein would agree to this solution, and warned of the implications to Israel's security if the Hashemite rule collapsed.
7. An Israeli/Palestinian confederation - This option would solve Israel's security problems but would pose the same political and social problems as annexation.¹⁷⁴

The second report was handed to Eshkol on the 20th of July. It was written by a special committee Eshkol had established to advise him on the territorial issue, and which included Haim Hertzog and Moshe Sasson. In contrast to the Foreign Ministry's report, this committee concluded that Israel should negotiate with King Hussein. In the Hebrew literature this committee is referred to as 'the committee of the four' (literally). The authors argued for an intensive diplomatic effort to reach a peace settlement with Hussein. The report suggested that Israel did not have time on its side as it risked losing a historic opportunity. The committee ruled out the idea of creating a Palestinian entity as being undesirable for Israel. After conducting extensive discussions with Palestinian notables, they concluded that only a minority of which were willing to 'go it alone' (without the support of the Arab world) and establish an independent Palestinian state. The report suggested that Israel conduct an

¹⁷⁴ ISA/7921/2-a/Foreign Ministry Report/13.7.1967.

intensive diplomatic effort in order to reach a peace settlement with Hussein and that such a settlement should be conditional on: an Israeli annexation of the Gaza Strip; the resettlement of the Gaza population in the West and East Banks; demilitarisation of the West Bank; minor border modifications; and the establishment of a joint Israeli/Jordanian control over the West Bank. The authors concluded that until such a settlement was achieved, the West Bank should be administered as a separate entity and be placed under the jurisdiction of a separate government department headed by a minister, and that most of the junior administrative positions should be manned by Arabs.¹⁷⁵

The most remarkable aspect about these two reports is that they contradicted each another. The committee of the four dismissed the Palestinian Approach while the Foreign Ministry report referred to the Jordanian Approach as unfeasible. The reports' conclusions - dismissing both approaches - must have confused ministers and there is no doubt that the lack of consensus among the committees further inhibited the government's ability to formulate a clear long-term policy for the West Bank.

The Allon Plan

Allon's involvement in the territorial debate was not limited to the Golan Heights. On the 26th of July Allon presented the government with a plan to resolve the political impasse that had been reached with regards to the West Bank. The plan, later to be known as the Allon Plan, was the first attempt by a minister to propose a coherent long-term territorial policy. In the introduction to his plan, Allon explained the importance of establishing clear policies with regards to the territories. He advised the government to act quickly, before the US and the USSR managed to find a compromise resolution on Israel's behalf. Allon's plan did not deal with the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights; he explained that these would be dealt with separately. The main features of the Allon Plan are summarised below.

¹⁷⁵ ISA/7921/2-a/The Inter-Departmental Committee's Report/20.7.1967.

The Allon Plan:

1. The establishment of the Jordan River as Israel's eastern border.
2. In order to guarantee Israel's security, the following territories would be annexed.
 - A 10-15km-wide strip along the Jordan Valley from Beit-She'an Valley to the north part of the Dead Sea.
 - A several-km-wide strip from the northern-most part of the Dead Sea to northern Jerusalem.
 - The Hebron Mountain or at least the area from the Judean Desert to the Negev.
 - Minor modifications in the Hebron Mountain and the Latrun regions.
3. In the annexed areas Israel would establish settlements and permanent military bases according to its security needs.
4. In East Jerusalem, new Jewish neighbourhoods would be built in addition to the repopulation of the Old City's Jewish quarters.
5. In the areas not annexed by Israel, negotiations would start with local notables for the establishment of an autonomous Palestinian region, which would be linked to Israel by security and economic pacts.
6. Israel would work with the international community to resolve the refugee problem and would allow their resettlement in the West Bank and/or Sinai.
7. The Gaza Strip would be annexed by Israel once its population has been resettled.
8. An administrative office would be established to deal with the territories and the resettlement of refugees.
9. The new borders would be delineated by the Ministerial Defence Committee and the IDF's general staff.¹⁷⁶

Allon viewed the territories from an Instrumental point of view. As such, he defined West Bank areas according to their perceived military-strategic value, and called for the annexation of those deemed essential for national security; the rest of the West Bank was assigned for the establishment of a Palestinian autonomy. The Allon Plan

¹⁷⁶ YTA/15Allon/6/2/The Allon Plan/26.7.1967.

was based on the notion that Israel had no interest in controlling the Palestinian population. According to Yadlin, it was about securing 'greater Israel's demographic integrity rather than its geographic integrity'.¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, the plan, with its emphasis on agricultural settlements and their added value in terms of security, represented a return to the way of thinking prevalent during the mandate period. Allon understood well that Israel would not withdraw from the areas it wished to settle.

The Allon Plan, however, was not received well and, when the government met to discuss its merits, ministers dismissed it as unsuitable on strategic grounds. The plan was dismissed by the Right (Gahal), the Centre (Mapai) and the Left (Mapam).¹⁷⁸ According to Allon, ministers, influenced by Eshkol, refused to take a stand on the territorial issue before the Arab world expressed its willingness to negotiate with Israel. In short, the government preferred to maintain its 'non decision'.¹⁷⁹ The plan did not fare better when presented to Ahdut-Ha'avoda members. The party base, led by Tabenkin, and Hakibbutz Hameuhad were in favour of the Greater Israel ideal. Tabenkin warned against the establishment of a Palestinian autonomous region and accused Allon of giving away the West Bank.

Other Plans

Despite the reluctance shown by the government and Ahdut-Ha'avoda towards accepting it, the Allon Plan did not disappear from the political scene. Moreover, the plan slowly took on a life of its own and was discussed at great length during a special meeting of the Ma'arach political committee on the 18th of August. This committee was composed of the Mapai and Ahdut-Ha'avoda ministers and the purpose of the meeting was to discuss Israel's territorial policy. The committee was presented with three alternative plans, i.e. the Allon Plan, a settlement plan by Ra'anana Weitz (Head of the Jewish Agency's Settlement Department), and an additional plan created by Dayan.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ Interview with Yadlin.

¹⁷⁸ ISA/YAOH/Meeting 3/Page 14.

¹⁷⁹ ISA/YAOH/Page 17.

¹⁸⁰ Pedatzur, The Triumph of Embarrassment Page 148.

The Weitz Plan bore a stark resemblance to the Allon Plan. When asked to comment on it, Allon endorsed it as a ‘settlement interpretation’ of his plan. Weitz proposed the establishment of 30-50 settlements in the West Bank, with the bulk of which to be situated along the Jordan Valley from Beit-She’an to the northern Dead Sea, and recommended that they be established in unpopulated areas. This would allow for the creation of a Palestinian entity in the areas not settled by Israel, including the Gaza Strip. However, according to Weitz, Israel would still maintain its military control over the territories.¹⁸¹ Weitz and Allon professed not to have known about each other’s plans, but this would appear highly unlikely. On the 27th of July, the date the Allon Plan was submitted to the government, Allon outlined in his diary two settlement plans. The second settlement plan included the establishment of 24 settlements: four in the Golan, one near Tirat-Tzvi, two near Qalqilya, three in Gush Etzion, two in the Latrun Area, three in the Gaza Strip and nine in the Jordan Valley. The page in Allon’s diary is titled R. Weitz, and is dated 27/06/67.¹⁸² Furthermore, Allon’s close collaboration with Weitz on the Eliqa settlement would suggest that they had at least some knowledge of each other’s ideas and aims.¹⁸³ Whether they were working together to influence territorial policy is unclear.

The Dayan plan presented the committee with a different approach to the West Bank; the plan in its later incarnations was known as the Functional Solution. It was first presented to the Ministerial Defence Committee on the 14th of August and was further elaborated upon, on the 3rd of September, at a Rafi meeting.¹⁸⁴ Dayan also approached the issue of the West Bank from a strategic-military perspective; the West Bank provided Israel, for the first time, with strategic depth. This convinced Dayan that there was no need for a static defence (army bases along the Jordan Valley, which was one of Allon’s suggestions), proposing instead a plan based on a ‘mobile defence’. According to Dayan, this would be achieved by creating five permanent army bases on the mountain ranges of the West Bank. In order to support Israel’s position in the West Bank, and alongside the army bases, Dayan proposed the establishment of large urban settlements. These, in addition to the army bases, would break the territorial integrity of the West Bank and ensure Israel’s control over the region. Furthermore,

¹⁸¹ Weitz, *An Overview of the History of the Settlement of Israel* Page 93.

¹⁸² YTA/Allon personal notes/Allon’s Diary/1967.

¹⁸³ The Eliqa incident will be discussed in the second chapter.

¹⁸⁴ LPA/5-3-1967-24/Record of Rafi’s Secretariat Meeting/3.9.1967.

Dayan dismissed Allon's settlement philosophy, arguing that agricultural settlements had little security value. Additionally, Dayan envisioned that the administrative responsibilities of the West Bank would be shared between Israel and Jordan; the population would continue to hold Jordanian citizenship, i.e. a Functional Solution.¹⁸⁵ Allon acknowledged that Dayan's plan provided better security for Israel, but at a demographic cost.¹⁸⁶

The committee did not actually agree on either of these plans, but its members responded favourably to Weitz's. There was a broad consensus about the fact that the Dayan plan did not provide an answer to Israel's demographic problem. Eshkol commented that the Dayan plan would add more Arabs to Israel's population, while the government was trying to avoid exactly that. Nevertheless, the committee was receptive to the security elements in the Dayan plan and recommended it to the government. Two days later, the government voted for the creation of military bases across the mountain ranges, evidently acknowledging the importance of the military elements in the plan.¹⁸⁷

Mapam made public its peace plan on the 18th of August. Mapam was the only party to present a concrete peace plan, which resembled the government's 19th of June decisions, but whether that was deliberate, remains unclear. Mapam, whilst acknowledging that the status of Jerusalem had already been decided, proposed:

1. The Golan Heights should be returned to Syria with some border modifications.
2. The Gaza Strip should be annexed to Israel.
3. The Sinai Peninsula should be returned to Egypt and be demilitarised.
4. The West Bank should be returned to Jordan with some minor border modifications.
5. Israel should strive to solve the refugee problem.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ YTA/15Galili/85/7/The Dayan Plan/(no date).

¹⁸⁶ Yossi Melman and Daniel Raviv, A Hostile Partnership: The Secret Relationship between Israel and Jordan (Tel Aviv, Yedioth Ahronoth, 1987) (Hebrew), Page 71.

¹⁸⁷ Pedatzur, The Triumph of Embarrassment Page 149.

¹⁸⁸ Victor Shem-Tov, One of Them (Kibbutz Dalia, Maarachot, 1997) (Hebrew), Pages 82-83. Interview with Shem-Tov.

It was apparent that the main disagreement among Coalition members was about the West Bank. While the Israeli government's position with regards to the West Bank remained unclear, four schools of thoughts emerged: the Reconciliationist, the Functionalist, the Territorialist and the Annexationist.¹⁸⁹ The first three approaches dominated the Israeli way of thinking on the West Bank, without any gaining ascendance among decision makers.

1. The 'Reconciliationist Approach' - as expressed by Mapam - called for the return of the West Bank to Jordan with some minor border modifications.
2. The 'Functionalist Approach' - as expressed by Dayan - envisioned an Israeli military control over the West Bank with a joint Israeli/Palestinian or Israeli/Jordanian administrative rule.
3. The 'Territorialist Approach' - as expressed by Allon - proposed to annex parts of the West Bank for security reasons and, in the territories not annexed, either to create a Palestinian entity or to return them to Jordan altogether.
4. The 'Annexationist Approach' - as expressed by Begin - called for the annexation of the West Bank, with some form of transitional period in which its residents' civil rights would be assessed, after which they might be able to acquire citizenship.

Dayan

While the government and its various committees debated over Israel's long-term policy approach without reaching any clear decisions, the Defence Ministry and the IDF dealt with the reality of the occupation. Dayan, while briefing the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, explained that the Defence Ministry and the IDF administered the territories according to government policies. He was, however, unable to elaborate on these policies, and whether or not the government had formulated any.¹⁹⁰ The main reason Dayan did not detail the government's economic or political long-term policies was that there were none. In reality, most of the

¹⁸⁹ Lukacs, *Israel, Jordan and the Peace Process* Page 6.

¹⁹⁰ ISA/8161/7-a/Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee (KFDC) briefed by Dayan/28.6.1967/Page 15.

economic and political policies for the territories originated in the Defence Ministry. The lack of clear policies created a culture of ‘wait-and-see’ which put a strain on the Ministry of Defence and the IDF, and led to the retention of administrative powers by the ministry.¹⁹¹ This fitted well with Dayan’s general perception of his fellow ministers who, he believed, unlike him, did not understand the Arab mentality and lacked long-term vision.

Dayan believed Israel would have to keep the territories for an extended period of time; a successful solution, or any solution for that matter, was not forthcoming. This left Israel with a reality of having to manage the territories and their population without creating a ‘pressure cooker’. Israel had to do so while improving the living standards of the local population and without allowing the territories to become an economic burden on its own economy. For Dayan, the way to manage the territories was through Arab self-rule (Minhal A’tzmi) and economic integration with Israel. Dayan did not accept the proposition that the West Bank and the Gaza Strip should remain separate economic entities in order to preserve their status as bargaining chips.¹⁹²

As for the IDF and the military administration’s conduct in the Occupied Territories, Dayan established his guidelines, which were based on three principals, i.e. non-intervention, open borders and non-visibility.¹⁹³ Dayan felt it was essential that Israeli officials had minimum contact with the local population and ordered the IDF to remain as far as possible from large population centres in order to allow day-to-day life to proceed uninterrupted (the ‘Invisible Occupation’). Dayan made it clear to the Palestinians that all matters concerning the military administration or the conduct of the army would be dealt with exclusively by the Ministry of Defence. Dayan did not expect the population to love Israel or accept its rule, but asked that they refrain from anti-Israel activities and cooperate with the administration.¹⁹⁴ He remarked that if he had to choose to be occupied, he would have preferred being occupied by Israel over any other nation.¹⁹⁵ Despite Dayan’s apparent omnipotence, the important policies did

¹⁹¹ Gazit, *The Stick and the Carrot* Pages 110-119

¹⁹² ISA/6304/10-c/Government Regulations in the Held Territories/23.6.1967.

¹⁹³ LPA/4-04-1951-48/Report on the Held Territories by Shlomo Gazit/Dec 1969.

¹⁹⁴ ISA7921/3-a/Record of Dayan’s Meeting with the Samaria mayors/12.10.1967.

¹⁹⁵ Interview with Halperin.

not originate with him, or with the government. Israel's inability to put forward a clear territorial policy meant it had to adapt to the existing reality. Arguably, the defining policy of the military administration was the Open Bridges policy. Dayan claimed in his memoirs that this policy was his brainchild; in reality it had very little to do with him.

During the early weeks of the occupation, IDF officers uncovered attempts by West Bank traders to smuggle their produce across the Jordan River. After the matter was brought to his attention and because of lack of resources to stop the trend, Narkiss decided to turn a blind eye. Dayan, however, was quick to spot the inherent advantages when informed of the incidents a few weeks later. Dayan was allegedly against the Open Bridges at first, but eventually changed his mind after spotting an opportunity - an ability for which Dayan was renowned.¹⁹⁶ The exportation of excess agricultural produce to Jordan increased Palestinian living standards while protecting the Israeli market from cheap imports. The Open Bridges policy came into effect on the 21st of August and, from Dayan's perspective, it served as a 'pressure release valve' for the Palestinians and ensured the West Bank would not become an economic burden.¹⁹⁷ Dayan may not have conceived the policy, but he understood its advantages and therefore authorised it, long before the government was aware of it.¹⁹⁸

In short, Dayan's vision was self-contradictory. On the one hand, Dayan pushed for economic integration and the establishment of army bases and Jewish settlements in the West Bank. On the other hand, he genuinely wanted to improve the living standards of the Palestinian population, to provide them with the opportunity to resume normal lives without Israeli intervention, to allow them to exercise self-rule and even maintain their ties with the Arab World, i.e. a 'Benevolent Occupation'.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Lukacs, *Israel, Jordan and the Peace Process* Page 182.

¹⁹⁸ ISA/8161/7-a/KFDC briefed by Dayan/25.7.1967/Page 21.

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Shulamit Aloni/8.11.2007.

Chapter Two

Merom-Golan

The erosion of the 19th of June consensus as a result of the activity of individual ministers, the acceptance by the American administration of Israel's right to hold on to parts of the territories and the perceived lack of suitable peace partners, were all elements that combined to create a territorial policy vacuum. Faced with the impossible task of reaching a new consensus regarding the Occupied Territories, within the confines of the National Unity Coalition, Eshkol chose to maintain political stability by leaving the matter unresolved. In other words, the government did not pursue a clear long-term policy. The policy vacuum was exploited by individual ministers, most notably Dayan and Allon, and interest groups - associated with either New Zionism or the pre-state anti-partition Zionist Left. On the 23rd of June, Hakibbutz Hameuhad (the united kibbutz) movement convened to discuss the post-war situation. Originally a non-political grass root movement, it considered itself to be a vehicle for the realisation of Zionist aspirations. This movement was first and foremost a settler movement, which had contributed to the creation of numerous settlements in the state's pre-independence era. In the post-independence era the movement became the main electoral base for Ahdut-Ha'avoda, enabling the movement to express its political aspirations.

The meeting was dominated by the founder of Ahdut-Ha'avoda Yitzhak Tabenkin. For him, the war represented a historical opportunity for the fulfilment of the Zionist dream; an opportunity to correct Mapai's mistake of accepting the partition plan. Tabenkin called for the annexation of the territories and the immediate establishment of settlements in order to increase Israel's security. According to Tabenkin, settlements represented the natural way for the development and strengthening of the economic, social and military spheres of Jewish life.¹ Hakibbutz Hameuhad followed in Tabenkin's steps by calling on the government to: abrogate the 1949 ceasefire agreements: unify Jerusalem: continue to hold the territories: make no differentiation

¹ Izhar, Between Vision and Power Page 21.

between the territories held: establish settlements: and refuse to conduct peace negotiations on the basis of the pre-war borders.²

Several of Tabenkin's followers took his words literally. During the meeting they discussed the possibility of establishing a settlement on the Golan Heights. It is unclear whether they informed Tabenkin, but it is safe to assume that he would have supported them. After organising themselves as a group, they announced their intentions to harvest the fields and tend to the cattle abandoned by the Syrians in the Golan. On the 14th of July, the group established Eliqa (later to be known as Merom Golan) - the first settlement in the territories.³ The establishment of Eliqa created a precedent in that the Israeli government had allowed a semi-private initiative, backed by high ranking officials, to create 'facts on the ground' and influence policy. In its 19th of June decisions, the government had decided to withdraw from the Golan Heights in return for peace. During the discussions leading to this decision, the only areas mentioned in conjunction with settlements were Hebron, East Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley.⁴

For the idea of the Eliqa settlement to materialise, the group enlisted the help of the Upper Galilee Regional Council, General David El'azar, Allon and Weitz. On the 9th of July, the group met with the Upper Galilee Regional Council, which agreed to allocate funds and assist the group with their agricultural undertakings in the Golan. Although there was no mention at that point of complicity, it is hard to imagine that they were unaware of the implications their actions would have. After the war, the IDF declared the Golan Heights a military zone, accessible only with permits.⁵ Through Dan Lerner (Commander of the IDF's forces in the Golan and a member of Hakibbutz Hameuhad), the Eliqa group enlisted the support of El'azar. The head of the Northern Command provided the group with permits, food supplies and tractors. Later on, El'azar authorised IDF soldiers to stand guard the settlement.⁶ On the 30th of

² Izhar, Page 421-422

³ Pedatzur, The Triumph of Embarrassment Page 178.

⁴ ISA/8164/7-a/Record of Government Meeting/afternoon session/18.6.1967/Pages 104-105

⁵ IDF's Edicts and Orders in the Golan Heights/Order no.9/18.7.1967.

⁶ Tzur, Settlements and the Borders of Israel Pages 25-26.

July the army moved the settlers to a disused Syrian army base and authorised their stay. The order was signed by Akiva Finkelstein, military governor of the Golan.⁷

The most important contribution to the group's effort came from Allon and Weitz, who were both privy to the group's plans; Allon would later claim that it was he who organised the group. Allon operated on the basis that Israel would never withdraw from the Golan Heights.⁸ On the 3rd of July, a few days after the Eliqa group found a suitable area to settle, Allon submitted a proposal to the government for the establishment of 2-3 agricultural work camps in the Golan Heights.⁹ Allon did not mention the Eliqa group to the government. He knew the government would rule out any request to settle the Golan and decided to circumvent any obstacles that might have arisen from treating these camps as settlements, by proposing the establishment of agricultural work camps.¹⁰ In addition, Allon provided the group with funds, which were diverted from the Employment Ministry without the knowledge or authorisation of the government.¹¹

Weitz understood from the onset that the principal motive behind the establishment of agricultural work camps was to settle the Golan.¹² Nevertheless, Weitz and his deputy Yehiel Admoni agreed to provide substantial funds to the group, through the Upper Galilee Regional Council, for the purpose of establishing Eliqa. It is important to note that the Agency had conducted surveys in the Golan and looked into establishing settlements before meeting with the Eliqa group. Arguably, the Agency was acting on its own accord, even though it would not normally act independently.¹³ Therefore, it is plausible that the Settlement Department provided funds to the settlers with the tacit authorisation of government officials. According to Pedatzur, Agricultural Minister Haim Gvati and Eshkol both knew of and approved these money transfers.¹⁴ During the war, Weitz discussed with Eshkol the need to conduct surveys in the territories in

⁷ Pedatzur, The Triumph of Embarrassment Page 167.

⁸ ISA/YAOH/Meeting 6/Page 11.

⁹ Yehiel Admoni, Decade of Discretion Page 22.

¹⁰ ISA/YAOH/Meeting 6/Page 12.

¹¹ ISA/YAOH/Page 11.

¹² Gorenberg, The Accidental Empire Page 76.

¹³ Interview with Nahman Bernstein/6.6.2007.

¹⁴ Pedatzur, The Triumph of Embarrassment Page 179

order to determine land ownerships, water supplies and evaluate development plans. Eshkol thought Weitz was crazy, but gave him his authorisation nevertheless.¹⁵

Committees

On the 27th of August, six weeks after the Eliqa group established the first outpost, the government convened to discuss its policy regarding to the Golan Heights. On the agenda was the creation of agricultural work camps. Eshkol made it clear these camps were necessary for the purpose of working the land: ‘It’s clear that you neither destroy orchards nor start permanent settlements ... but if orchards exist, you have to maintain them.’¹⁶ The government decided to approve the establishment of these agricultural work camps, which meant that an ad-hoc committee had to be set up and be responsible for defining the size and locations of these camps. Gvati claimed ‘the government’s decision is sufficient ... in consultation with the Agriculture Ministry [Gvati], the Defence Ministry [Dayan], and the Employment Ministry [Allon], we will decide how to do it [establish agricultural work camps].’¹⁷ Furthermore, the government authorised the establishment of an additional agricultural camp in El-Arish (Sinai).¹⁸

With Allon and Dayan at its helm, the new ad-hoc committee deviated from the task given to it by the government. Its first briefing paper was titled ‘Discussion on outposts in the Held Territories’. The committee decided to establish two Nahal outposts in the Golan Heights,¹⁹ in the Baniyas area and in El-al, and agreed to provide official authorisation for the existing outpost of Eliqa. Furthermore, it authorised the creation of a Nahal outpost in El-Arish, and looked into the possibility of establishing a fourth outpost in El-Hama (Golan). In its briefing, the committee stated that the government had empowered it to decide on settlement matters.²⁰

¹⁵ Raanan Weitz, An Overview of the History of the Settlement of Israel (Jerusalem, Bialik Institute, 2003) (Hebrew) Page 91.

¹⁶ Gorenberg, The Accidental Empire Page 97.

¹⁷ Admoni, Decade of discretion Page 25.

¹⁸ ISA/6692/15-c/Government’s Decision/29.8.1967.

¹⁹ Nahal- (Fighting Pioneer Youth) army units that combine military service with agricultural settlements.

²⁰ Pedatzur, The Triumph of Embarrassment Page 182.

On the 1st of September, the leaders of the Arab world, with the exception of Algeria and Syria, gathered in Khartoum to discuss the situation in the Middle East. The Arab leaders agreed to coordinate their activities to ensure Israel withdrew to the pre-war boundaries. The summit's concluding resolution called for 'no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, and no negotiations with Israel' (known as the three no's). There has been a lot of controversy as to what the resolution 'really' meant. Gorenberg argues that the resolution was a genuine attempt at a two-state solution through third party mediations. However, the only problem was that 'the leaders at Khartoum negotiated for a formula for what Israel should accept, then encoded it in bellicose rhetoric'.²¹

In Israel, the resolution's three no's were interpreted as a rejection of Israel's peace initiative.²² For the government, the Khartoum resolutions served as a reality check. After the Six-Day War there were expectations among Israeli politicians that the Arab states would stand in line for a just peace, and would accept any condition Israel might have.²³ The resolution had the unwanted effect of swaying the debate within the Israeli government in favour of those who saw no credible negotiation partners. Galili remarked that it was unfair to expect Israel to assume a passive grip on the territories while the Arab world refused to negotiate with it.²⁴ On the 3rd of September, and in the shadows of the Khartoum Summit, the ad-hoc committee briefed the government on the conclusions it had reached, with Dayan reminding the ministers that the committee was actually authorised by the government to make decisions about settlements in the Golan Heights. Eshkol, who earlier criticised Dayan's independent activities in the territories, did not object to the committee's 'new range of activities'. Tourism Minister Moshe Kol (Independent Liberal Party) was the only one to state the obvious, remarking that the government had not authorised the committee to look into the matter of settlements.

The government meeting ended without a decision. By failing to reach a decision, the government all but decided to leave the matter in the hands of Gvati, Allon and

²¹ Gorenberg, The Accidental Empire Page 109.

²² Interview with Hillel.

²³ Bamahane, Interview with Moshe Dayan, 27.5.1968.

²⁴ Pedatzur, The Triumph of Embarrassment Page 177.

Dayan; showing, not for the first time, an unwillingness to deal with the complexity of the territorial issue. In leaving the future of the existing settlement in Eliqa undecided, the government effectively authorised it. There were direct implications to this non-decision, i.e. by not reprimanding the committee, the government provided it with the authority to formulate and implement territorial policies on its behalf. The ad-hoc committee proceeded to include in its territorial planning the Settlement Department and private organisations.²⁵

By failing to decide, the government allowed for a decision of great significance, i.e. the establishment of settlements in the Occupied Territories, to be taken by an ad-hoc committee, without ever discussing its long-term implications. In fact, by leaving the matter in the hands of the ad-hoc committee, the Eshkol government effectively retracted its 19th of June decisions without proposing an alternative long-term solution. Arguably, the consensus behind the 19th of June decisions evaporated due to several international factors, i.e. the position of the American administration, the lack of suitable peace partners and international pressure.

The urgency of reaching a clear policy stance regarding the territories captured, particularly the complex and multilayered question of the West Bank, began to recede as the prospect of imminent negotiations grew dimmer.²⁶

The ensuing policy vacuum was exploited by Allon and Dayan, as well as interest groups with specific territorial agendas. The actions taken by Allon and Dayan (through the ad-hoc settlement committee) resulted in Israel adopting an incoherent territorial policy.

On the 10th of September, Allon presented the government with a proposal to allow the ad-hoc committee to establish settlements in Gush-Etzion and the Jordan Valley. According to the proposal, Israel would annex both areas. Allon argued that the government had already authorised the committee to establish agricultural work camps in the Golan Heights, and it should therefore provide it with the same authority

²⁵ Pedatzur, Pages 184-185

²⁶ A.J Spyer, The Decline of Statism: The Changing Political Culture of the Israeli Labour Party and the Party's Policy Proposals regarding the West Bank, 1967-1992 (PhD, 2003), Page 116.

with regards to the Gush-Etzion and Jordan Valley areas.²⁷ Eshkol supported the idea of settling in Gush-Etzion. He explained to the government that Weitz had informed him of a large group of people that were willing to settle there if the government approved it.²⁸ Eshkol did not mention that he had been contacted by former Gush-Etzion members, who wanted to resettle there.²⁹ Gvati objected to the idea of resettling Gush-Etzion, stating that the government had not yet decided on the future of the West Bank and that a decision to settle Gush-Etzion would entail appropriating land. Gvati believed it would be prudent to decide over the future of the West Bank prior to agreeing on settlements.³⁰ While the issue of settling Gush-Etzion and the Jordan Valley clearly troubled him, Gvati did not object to settling the Golan Heights. Justice Minister Shapira explained that Gush-Etzion had a different status to the other areas, as the land was legally owned by Jews before the War of Independence.³¹ Additionally, Gush-Etzion was one of the sites suggested by Dayan as suitable for the construction of a military base.

There was some confusion among ministers regarding what exactly the government was asked to approve. Justice Minister Shapira reminded the government that, despite the approval of the work camps, no firm decision had been taken regarding the long-term future of the territories, while Galili replied that no firm decision had been taken 'yet'.³² Galili went on to say that the government needed to keep the Golan and was certain that ministers had recanted their earlier approval of the 19th of June decisions.³³ The ministers in general and Eshkol in particular were confused about the legality of establishing outposts, settlements and military bases in the territories. This was apparent in the language they used when referring to the territories. The territories were described by ministers as 'Freed Territories' (Meshuhrarim),³⁴ Eban talked about 'Held Territories',³⁵ the 'Committee of the Four' discussed the future of

²⁷ YTA/15Allon/6/2/3/Allon's Gush-Etzion Proposal/10.9.1967.

²⁸ Akiva Eldar and Idith Zertal, Lords of the Land: The Settlers and the State of Israel 1967-2004 (Or Yehuda, Zmora-Bitan, 2004) (Hebrew), Page 20.

²⁹ ISA/7920/7-a/Summary of Eshkol's first Meeting with the Gush-Etzion group/16.8.1967.

³⁰ Pedatzur, The Triumph of Embarrassment Page 191

³¹ Pedatzur, Page 210.

³² Pedatzur, Page 108.

³³ Pedatzur, Page 70.

³⁴ ISA/1404/3-a/Government Memo/25.7.1967.

³⁵ ISA/6304/10-a/Letter from Eban to the Government's Secretary/16.8.1967.

the ‘Occupied Territories’,³⁶ and several government documents referred to them as ‘territories held by the IDF’.³⁷

In order to clarify this uncertainty, the government requested the advice of Theodor Meron (the Foreign Office Attorney General). In his opinion, Meron argued, there was in fact legal precedent for settling in the Gush-Etzion area. This area had previously been owned and occupied by Jews, and Israel could claim the settlers were simply returning to their homes. With regards to the Jordan valley, Meron claimed that the situation was more complicated, as similar claims would not have legal justification. With regards to the Golan Heights, Meron informed the government that, in legal terms, the area was an occupied territory, and therefore according to the Geneva Convention (which Israel had signed), Israel was categorically prohibited from establishing civilian settlement there. Israel’s claim for legal ambiguity regarding its control over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip was not totally unjustified, keeping in line with the previous rule by Egypt and Jordan. However, Meron added that the international community would not accept an Israeli counter-claim. According to the Geneva Convention, international law prohibits states from annexing occupied territories or settling their populations in them. The Attorney General explained that international law indeed applied to civilian settlements, but not to military outposts. Therefore, the establishment of temporary army bases on what had previously been public lands would be legally permissible. Meron accepted the government’s claim for establishing Nahal outposts in the territories in order to carry out agricultural work.³⁸ Meron’s legal advice opened the way for the establishment of temporary Nahal outposts.

On the 22nd of September, Eshkol met representatives of former Gush-Etzion residents. Eshkol explained that no firm decision had been taken regarding the future of the West Bank, but promised to look into their request and give them an answer within a few days.³⁹ Allegedly, the Gush-Etzion group told Eshkol they were ready to establish an outpost in the area with or without the government’s consent, to which

³⁶ ISA/7921/2-a/The Inter-Departmental Committee Report/20.7.1967.

³⁷ ISA/6304/10-a/Memo from the IDF to ministers/23.6.1967.

³⁸ ISA/7921/3-a/Theodor Meron’s Legal Opinion/14.9.1967.

³⁹ ISA/7920/7-a/Summary of Eshkol’s second Meeting with the Gush-Etzion group/22.9.1967.

Eshkol replied with ‘go on!’.⁴⁰ It is interesting to note that the settlers, which included several of the would-be founders of the Gush-Emunim movement, were politically supported by The Land of Israel Movement (known in Hebrew as the Movement for Greater Israel). This movement was founded by disillusioned members of the Labour Party and included members of every political orientation associated with New Zionism and committed to the idea of establishing ‘the land of Israel as a unified national entity’.⁴¹ The land of Israel was defined as the territories ‘now in the hands of the Jewish people’, i.e. Israel and the Occupied Territories.⁴²

Two days later Eshkol received a settlement plan for Gush-Etzion from the Settlement Department, which had worked on the plan for some time in the knowledge that the Gush-Etzion area would be resettled.⁴³ Eshkol informed the government that he had approved the settlement in Gush-Etzion, which would be established in accordance with Dayan’s plan, i.e. the same plan the government, the Ministerial Defence Committee and the Ma’arach political committee had previously rejected. For the majority of the ministers this was the first time they had heard of this decision. Barzilai complained that they (the ministers) only agreed to vote on the issue of agricultural work camps and Nahal outposts, but not on civilian settlements.⁴⁴

Ministers, the majority of whom were purposely or voluntarily excluded from the territorial decision-making process, became upset with the conduct of the government. They complained to Eshkol that it was not a question of whether Gush-Etzion was to be a civilian or military outpost, but whether the decision-making process had been taken out of the hands of the government.⁴⁵ Ministers were frustrated at not being informed about all settlement activities, and complained that the work done by the ad-hoc committee was not sufficiently transparent. Eshkol explained that they did not need to know everything and that no formal decision had been made, even though it was apparent that some policies had been already formulated and implemented.⁴⁶ According to Allon, Eshkol agreed that the ad-hoc committee, and later the

⁴⁰ Admoni, *Decade of Discretion* Page 53

⁴¹ Sella and Yishai, *Israel: The Peaceful Belligerent* Page 153.

⁴² Isaac, *Israel Divided* Page 53.

⁴³ Pedatzur, *The Triumph of Embarrassment* 1996 Page 192

⁴⁴ Pedatzur, Page 193

⁴⁵ Pedatzur, Pages 74-75

⁴⁶ Pedatzur, Page 75

Ministerial Settlement Committee (MSC), would establish settlements where they saw fit, as long as it was done within the parameters of the Allon Plan.⁴⁷ Furthermore, Eshkol acknowledged that the important decisions should be taken by the MSC because ‘the government was of minor importance’.⁴⁸ Allon himself admitted that the government only acted as a rubber stamp; fulfilling its role by agreeing with the motions put before it.⁴⁹

The activity of the ad-hoc committee (Gvati, Allon and Dayan) represented a clear change in the dynamics of the government’s decision-making process. Several prominent ministers, among them the Prime Minister, were able to participate in the decision-making process, while most were excluded. The government was undermined by private enterprises (The Eliqa and Gush-Etzion groups), individual ministerial activity (Allon and Dayan), the work of ad-hoc committees (dominated by Eshkol, Allon, Dayan and Gvati, and supported by Galili) and the Settlement Department (operating with or without the consent of ministers). This created a situation in which - while the government did not have a clear long-term policy of its own - Allon and Dayan were implementing decisions according to their own interpretation and long-term plans, i.e. the Allon Plan and the Functional Solution. It did not help that Eshkol was unable to control the activities of his increasingly independent ministers.⁵⁰

It is evident that Eshkol supported the efforts of Allon and Dayan; Allon himself remarked on several occasions that Eshkol supported the Allon Plan. However, because of the unlikelihood of reaching a decision regarding the Allon Plan, or for that matter any long-term plan, within the confines of the National Unity Government, Eshkol approved the ad-hoc committee’s incremental approach. Eshkol, for reasons of political convenience, avoided putting forward clear long-term territorial policies. In other words, any attempt by Eshkol to force a clear decision on the matter of the Occupied Territories would have been politically complicated and against his own inclinations. This last point needs to be emphasised. The lack of a coherent and comprehensive long-term territorial policy suited Eshkol and his main Coalition

⁴⁷ ISA/YAOH/Meeting 3/Page 23.

⁴⁸ ISA/YAOH/Meeting 4/Page 18.

⁴⁹ ISA/YAOH/Meeting 7/Page 4.

⁵⁰ Interview with Amit.

partners. Additionally, (and this will be covered in depth later in the chapter), Mapai was engaged in negotiations regarding the formation of a united Labour Party with Rafi and Ahdut-Ha'avoda. Any clear decision regarding the Occupied Territories would have had the potential to derail these negotiations.

The 30th of October Decision

Following the breakdown of the 19th of June consensus and the ensuing territorial policy vacuum, the government debate was no longer on whether to establish outposts, but rather on where and of which nature. This debate exposed the problematic nature of decision-making within the National Unity Government, with a vote on whether to allow civilian settlements to be established in the Golan Heights ending in a stalemate.⁵¹ This debate was particularly apparent during the debate over Gush-Etzion; ministers appeared confused and unsure as to whether Gush-Etzion would be a Nahal settlement or a civilian one. The confusion arose over the fact that most settlers were over the official army age. Eshkol - side-stepping the issue - commented that 'even Nahal soldiers grow old'.⁵² Eshkol himself expressed confusion over which settlements were Nahal, which should be appropriated as Nahal and what should be the overall standard when establishing settlements. In order to avoid further confusion over this matter, Galili suggested paraphrasing all settlement activity as of transitory nature (Nahal).⁵³

In response to a New York Times article, accusing Israel of establishing settlements in the territories, the Foreign Ministry asked Israeli embassies to explain that these were transitory Nahal outposts, established in accordance with international law and Israel's security needs, and did not change the future status of the territories.⁵⁴ Israel's Ambassador to the US Avraham Herman urged the government to suppress reports of this nature, as they were having a 'catastrophic' effect on Israel's position vis-à-vis the UN and the US.⁵⁵ In its reply, the Foreign Ministry accepted Herman's stance and

⁵¹ YTA/12-3/94/4/Government Decision no.866/1.10.1967.

⁵² Pedatzur, The Triumph of Embarrassment Page 196

⁵³ Pedatzur, Page 202

⁵⁴ ISA/7462/8-a/Cable from the Foreign Ministry/25.9.1967.

⁵⁵ ISA/7462/8-a/Cable from Herman to the Foreign Ministry/25.9.1967.

asked him to stress that the settlements in the Golan Heights and Gush-Etzion were of military and not civilian nature.⁵⁶ The government contacted the US administration to clarify that all these settlements were being established according to security requirements and that Israel had not changed its flexible policy regarding the territories.⁵⁷ The US administration made clear its discontent with such activities, informing Israel that its illegal settling of occupied land harmed US foreign policies.⁵⁸ At the same time, the administration refrained from publicly admonishing Israel or putting any pressure on it to stop; a fact that was acknowledged by Israel.⁵⁹ Arguably, by sending out mixed messages, the US administration complicated the on-going debate within Israel regarding the long-term future of the territories.

On the 30th of October the government decided to review its 19th of June decisions. The government had originally agreed to withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights to the international borders in return for peace treaties. The decision was rephrased, and now referred to Israel's willingness to negotiate with Syria and Egypt on the basis of 'secure and recognised borders', while the government left open the exact definition of 'secure and recognised borders'. In essence, the government had decided to formally retract its 19th of June decisions, but did not relay the new decision to the American administration.⁶⁰ The 30th of October decision should not be understood as the adoption of a new long-term territorial policy, but rather as a deliberate attempt to revise its original commitments by making these vaguer and less binding. In fact, the retraction of the 19th of June decisions on the 30th of October left Israel without a coherent long-term territorial policy. The government, in its 30th of October decision, chose not to deal with the complex issue of the West Bank and left the decision over the long-term status of the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights for future negotiations.

The evolution of Israel's territorial policy was directly related to the passivity of most ministers. While some ministers took an active role in reshaping the territorial policy (e.g. Eshkol, Galili, Allon, Gvati and Dayan), others - despite being excluded from the

⁵⁶ ISA/7462/8-a/Cable from the Foreign Ministry to Herman/26.9.1967.

⁵⁷ Yishai, Land or Peace Page 41.

⁵⁸ ISA/3976/12-a/Record of Meeting between Eban, Raphael and Goldberg/20.9.1967.

⁵⁹ ISA/7462/8-a/Cable from the Israeli Embassy in Washington/27.9.1967.

⁶⁰ Pedatzur, The Triumph of Embarrassment Page 113.

decision-making process - simply supported their actions. One of the explanations for this behaviour was the selective information ministers were being fed. For instance, when referring to their plans, Allon and Dayan focused on the military's needs but, with most ministers not having any military experience, ministers relied on the IDF to explain and brief them on military and security matters. It created a situation in which ministers were dependent on an organisation that only exposed them to one particular view.⁶¹ To complicate matters further, most army generals argued in favour of remaining and maintaining the status-quo in the Occupied Territories.

The army's top brass chose to express their personal views in a closed meeting with Eshkol and Dayan on the 5th of December. Rabin broke down into three the choices that Israel had regarding the West Bank, i.e. annexation, negotiations with Hussein and the creation of a Palestinian entity bound to Israel. Rabin dismissed the first two options while presenting the third as Israel's only valid choice.⁶² General Yariv stressed the need for a long-term strategic plan, although he agreed with Rabin that Hussein was not a viable partner for peace and that the Arab states as a whole were not ready to negotiate with Israel. He concluded that Israel did not need to find an immediate solution to the territories, as time was on its side.⁶³ General Gavish asserted that what Israel gained during the war was exactly what it had wanted, i.e. strategic depth, and was therefore happy with the status quo.⁶⁴ Former Chief-of-Staff Tzvi Tzur stated that Israel needed to find a way of remaining on the current cease-fire lines while solving the demographic problem that arose as a result. He suggested (in line with Rabin) the creation of a Palestinian entity in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.⁶⁵ This line of thought was supported by Haim Bar-Lev (who would later replace Rabin as Chief-of-Staff). Bar-Lev claimed that the status-quo was not a bad solution for the time being: 'I am against a Palestinian state, but we must continue to control the West Bank militarily and remain on the Jordan River.'⁶⁶

⁶¹ Yehuda Ben-Meir, National Security Decision-making Page 25.

⁶² ISA/7921/3-a/Record of Meeting between Eshkol, Dayan and IDF Generals/5.12.1967/Page 11.

⁶³ ISA/7921/3-a/Page 13-14.

⁶⁴ ISA/7921/3-a/Page 17.

⁶⁵ ISA/7921/3-a/Page 21.

⁶⁶ ISA/7921/3-a/Page 25.

Hussein

Despite the reluctance of the army's top brass and most ministers to consider him as a reliable partner, talks with Hussein continued. The new round of UN discussions on the Middle East and the resumption of hostilities in the region persuaded Israel to resume its talks with Hussein. These talks took place in part because of the expressed support given to Hussein by the American administration.⁶⁷ Israel - represented by Hertzog - held its second post-war meeting with Hussein in London on the 19th of November. Hertzog inquired whether Hussein would consider holding direct negotiations with Israel. In reply, Hussein explained that direct negotiations between Jordan and Israel could only proceed if they were part of a wider Israeli-Arab settlement. Hussein wanted to know whether Israel would return the West Bank to him. Hertzog claimed to have come at the behest of the government to listen rather than to talk, which further illustrates the fact that the government did not have, and could not agree on, a clear long-term policy regarding the West Bank. Hertzog proceeded to explain the different views held within the government and the fact that no firm decision had been taken yet regarding the West Bank. The King explained that he was willing to entertain 'harmonising' Israel's security requirements with his own vision, while taking into account Israel's historical association with the West Bank.⁶⁸ Moreover, Hussein was willing to make an offer to Israel, which he claimed had Nasser's support. This offer included an end to all forms of hostility, recognition of Israel's existence, evacuation of Israeli forces from all the Occupied Territories, free passage through the Straits of Tiran and Suez and a just solution to the refugee problem.⁶⁹

Hertzog, with Hussein's consent, summarised their meeting:

1. The King favours a package deal to end the conflict.
2. He understands Israel's demand for direct negotiations and a peace accord.
3. He understands Israel would not make any moves without direct negotiations and a peace accord.

⁶⁷ ISA/3978/3-f/Report by Israel's Embassy in Washington/21.11.1967.

⁶⁸ Michael Bar Zohar, Yaacov Hertzog: A Biography (London, Halban, 2005), Page 317.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

4. He will work to persuade other Arab states to agree to direct negotiations.
5. He asks Israel to clarify its position with regards to the West Bank.
6. Hussein urges Israel 'not to recognise a Palestinian entity'.⁷⁰

Several weeks later a secret paper outlining Israel's position regarding a separate settlement with Hussein was handed to Eshkol. The paper - written by Eshkol's close advisers, with input from Hertzog and Yariv (head of AMAN) - questioned Hussein's ability to hold separate talks with Israel. The paper proposed:

1. Retaining a narrow strip from Ein-Gedi (Dead Sea area) to the Allenby Bridge (connecting Jericho with the East Bank), in which settlements would be established.
2. Retaining a narrow strip from Tirat-Tzvi (near Beit-She'an) to the Damia Bridge (30km north of Jericho), in which settlements would be established.
3. Extending Jerusalem's municipal boundaries, to make the Latrun Pass part of Israel.
4. Israel would require minor border modifications in the Jenin and Jerusalem areas.
5. The remaining West Bank territories would be returned to Jordan.
6. These areas would remain demilitarised and Israel would keep five army bases on the West Bank mountain ranges.
7. The King would be recognised as the protector of the Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem.
8. Israel would allow free transport of Jordanian goods to and from Israeli ports.
9. Finally, Israel would support plans to resolve the refugee problem and cooperate with Jordan on joint development plans.⁷¹

The Israeli proposal, as outlined by the paper, consisted of the Allon Plan with the military elements of the Dayan plan, neither of which were agreed to (or voted on) by the government. The same proposal was discussed and analysed by the Foreign Ministry in its 13th of July report, where it concluded there was no chance Hussein

⁷⁰ Bar Zohar, Page 319

⁷¹ ISA/7921/3-a/Israeli-Jordanian Peace Plan proposed by the Prime Minister's Office/5.12.1967.

would accept it. Needless to say, the government never got to vote on or to discuss this proposal.

Resolution 242

The second meeting between Hertzog and Hussein was held in the midst of a new round of UN discussions on the situation in the Middle East. The new international drive to solve the Middle East problems was prompted, in part, by the resumption of hostilities between Israel and Egypt. On the 21st of October Egyptian forces sunk the Israeli battleship Eilat, with Israel retaliating by bombing Egyptian oil refineries near the city of Suez.⁷²

The new round of discussions in the UN provided further proof that Israel did not have a coherent long-term territorial policy. As a result of the government's inability to agree on the future status of the Occupied Territories, it worked to stifle any international decision on the matter. While publicly arguing in favour of a political compromise based on direct negotiations, the Eshkol government had meanwhile taken steps to create facts on the ground, such as the establishment of settlements in the Jordan Valley, the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights. However, the actions taken by the government did not follow a particular policy or long-term approach.

The US delegation proposed a draft resolution based on the Goldberg-Gromyko version. The American drive to resolve the conflict did not sit well with the Israeli government. Eban complained to Goldberg that 'endorsing the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the territories occupied in recent hostilities would jeopardise the prospect of creating a new security system in the area.'⁷³ The Israeli government claimed that only a resolution that would put the emphasis on direct talks and would not require it to withdraw until agreements were reached would suffice. However, Eshkol admitted this claim was disingenuous, as Israel had decided against returning to the pre-war borders on all fronts, 'I am afraid of the moment they [the Arab states] will say: with

⁷² Goldstein, Rabin Pages 193-194.

⁷³ ISA/3976/12-a/Cable from Eban to Goldberg/1.11.1967.

pleasure' (i.e. agree to direct negotiations).⁷⁴ Eshkol acknowledged that the US was trying to resolve the situation, but admitted his relief at Egypt's refusal to accept Goldberg's compromise.⁷⁵

On the 9th of November the Security Council met to discuss the US draft. The Israeli delegation had reasons to fear this meeting, as a report by Israel's Foreign Ministry suggested the US managed to get the support of Jordan and Egypt for its draft.⁷⁶ Under intense diplomatic pressure from Israel, the Americans agreed not to introduce their draft without Israel's approval. Israel's refusal to accept the American draft resulted in the Security Council having to debate competing drafts, which contained less favourable terms for Israel.⁷⁷ To the US delegate's and Israel's relief, the Security Council did not consider other draft proposals and voted on a British compromise draft instead. This draft resolution, tabled by Lord Caradon (the British Ambassador to the UN), gained the support of the US, the USSR and the Arab bloc, with the exception of Syria and Algeria. This resolution was not accepted by Israel, which resorted to a last-minute attempt by Eshkol to convince the Americans to vote against it.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, this draft resolution, which became known as Resolution 242, was adopted unanimously. The Resolution called for: 'The inadmissibility of acquiring territories by war', 'The withdrawal of Israeli forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict', 'Respect for and acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every state in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognised boundaries', 'Guaranteeing freedom of navigation through international waterways in the area', 'The Secretary-General to designate a special representative ... to establish and maintain contacts with the states concerned in order to promote ... efforts to achieve a peaceful and accepted settlement.'⁷⁹

The Security Council appointed Gunnar Jarring - a veteran Swedish diplomat who had previously served as the Swedish ambassador to the USSR - as its designated representative to the region.

⁷⁴ ISA/8161/7-a/KFDC briefed by Eshkol/17.11.1967/Page 19.

⁷⁵ ISA/8161/7-a/Page 32.

⁷⁶ ISA/3978/3-a/Cable from Israel's Embassy in London to Eban/8.11.1967.

⁷⁷ FRUS/Volume XIX/Johnson Administration/Arab-Israeli Crisis and War 1967/Document 512/Telegram from US UN Mission to the State Department/8.11.1967.

⁷⁸ ISA/8161/7-a/KFDC briefed by Eshkol/17.11.1967/Page 30.

⁷⁹ www.domino.un.org/unispal

The White House

The debates in the Security Council confirmed Israel's growing dependence on the US. Israel was in a problematic situation vis-à-vis the American administration since it could not pursue policies which contradicted the American position, as it was dependent on the US for diplomatic support. To compound the problem Israel was under a French arms embargo, while Egypt and Syria were being rearmed at an increasing pace by the USSR. France had been, up to that point, Israel's biggest supplier of military hardware.⁸⁰ This forced the Israeli government to seek American military support, further demonstrating Israel's growing dependence on the US. Eshkol's visit to Washington at the beginning of January 1968 - the first official visit by a serving Prime Minister to the US - provided the opportunity to cement Israeli-American relations. Israeli politicians and generals were unsure as to which policies should be presented to the US administration and, in particular, whether Israel should inform the US of its rejection of its 19th of June decisions. The problem was urgent due to Israel's immediate need for aeroplanes and military equipment - a fact which significantly reduced Israel's diplomatic manoeuvring ability.⁸¹

In preparation for Eshkol's visit, a memo was sent from Aviad Jaffe (Director of the Prime Minister's office) to Avraham Herman (Israel's ambassador to the US), instructing him to avoid mentioning the territorial issue due to its complicated nature. Jaffe went on to write that the government had not authorised anyone to discuss it, as most of the ministers no longer agreed with the previous 19th of June decisions. Jaffe added that, among ministers, the thought of holding on to a maximum amount of territory acquired a historical and strategic semblance.⁸²

In Washington Eshkol encountered two US approaches towards Israel. On the one hand, Secretary of State Rusk appeared unconvinced by Israel's military needs and was troubled by Israel's inflexible diplomatic stance. Rusk believed Israel should be willing to undertake trust-building measures in the region, and that US supply of military equipment should be conditional upon Israel's diplomatic posturing and the

⁸⁰ FRUS/Volume XX/Johnson Administration/Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1967-1968/Document 39/Memorandum regarding Conversation between Johnson, Rusk and Eshkol/7.1.1968/session 1.

⁸¹ ISA/8161/7-a/KFDC briefed by Eshkol/17.11.1967/Page 30.

⁸² ISA/6692/15-c/304/Memo from Jaffe to Herman/4.12.1967.

situation in the region.⁸³ Rusk was supported by many in the administration who felt that Israel should agree to withdraw from all the territories - in principle - in exchange for military hardware.⁸⁴ Moreover, according to General Earle Wheeler, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Israeli military needs were not as urgent; he predicted continued Israeli air superiority for the next 18 months.⁸⁵ On the other hand, Johnson accepted Israel's immediate need for military wares and promised Eshkol to do something about it (i.e. deliver through a third country). Furthermore, he assured Eshkol that he would not take any steps regarding the territories without discussing it with Israel first.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, Johnson stressed that the US would work with the Soviets to prevent a possible arms race and to promote peace in the region.⁸⁷

At one point during these discussions Rusk and Johnson wanted to know from Eshkol what kind of Israel he envisioned; in other words, to what extent was Israel willing to negotiate and how much was it willing to give up? Eshkol explained his dilemma. He had a 'wall to wall' Coalition of the Right and Left, there were no Arab states with which to negotiate, and Israel was a small country surrounded by enemies. Therefore, Eshkol informed them, Israel had decided - until it had other viable options - 'not to decide'.⁸⁸

Jarring

In December 1967 Israel's Foreign Minister Abba Eban met with King Hussein of Jordan in London. Eban was informed by members of the Jordanian negotiation team that Hussein was willing to make concessions in any part of the West Bank, with the exception of Jerusalem. The maximum he could offer Israel was control over the Wailing Wall, but that was as far as he would go, and that if Israel persisted with its

⁸³ FRUS/Volume XX/Johnson Administration/Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1967-1968/Document

39/Memorandum regarding Conversation between Johnson, Rusk and Eshkol/7.1.1968/session 1.

⁸⁴ William B. Quandt, Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967 (Harrisonburg, University of California Press, 2001), Page 47.

⁸⁵ FRUS/Volume XX/Johnson Administration/Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1967-1968/Document 40/Memorandum regarding Conversation between Johnson, Rusk and Eshkol/ 8.1.1968/session 2.

⁸⁶ Quandt, Peace Process Page 47.

⁸⁷ FRUS/Volume XX/Johnson Administration/Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1967-1968/Document

41/Memorandum regarding Conversation between Johnson, Rusk and Eshkol/8.1.1968/session 3.

⁸⁸ ISA/YAOH/Meeting 3/Page 21.

attitude towards Jerusalem, the talks would not progress.⁸⁹ While it appeared that there was some progress in the talks with Jordan, there were still no equivalent talks with Egypt. Back in December 1967 Dayan suggested withdrawing from the Suez Canal as a gesture of good will. Although the suggestion came from Dayan, it was originally put forward by the Meir Amit;⁹⁰ Dayan, it turns out, was initially against the idea.⁹¹ Once convinced, however, Dayan believed an Israeli withdrawal from the canal would promote better understanding between the two states, eliminate friction and legitimise Israel's demand for a military presence in Sharm El-Sheikh. Galili claimed that this would be a dangerous precedent and that Israel should instead prepare for a lengthy stay in the area. The government eventually decided not to decide and to leave the option open.⁹²

In January 1968 Jarring requested that each state, with the exception of Syria who refused to negotiate with Israel, publicly accept Resolution 242 and declare their willingness to implement it. While Jordan and Egypt made their stance known, Israel's response fell short of accepting the resolution. Israel stated it would comply fully with Jarring but, despite pressure from the US and the UN, it would not publicly accept this resolution.⁹³ One of the main problems was that both Israel and Egypt interpreted the resolution differently. Egyptian officials informed Jarring that their precondition for implementing the resolution was that Israel withdrew from all the territories it occupied, while Israel demanded that peace negotiations proceed before any withdrawal, the exact reversal of Egypt's terms.⁹⁴ Furthermore, Jarring's insistence on the acceptance of Resolution 242 created a problem for Israel which, in commenting on the document, needed to tread carefully. On the one hand, Israel needed to maintain the integrity of its National Unity Government while, on the other hand, it had to be seen as being sensitive to the demands made by the American administration and the international community. It is, therefore, not a surprise to learn that the Eshkol government made a habit of avoiding making controversial decisions

⁸⁹ Segev, *Israel in 1967* Page 601.

⁹⁰ Interview with Hillel.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² ISA/4780/3-f/Report by Gazit detailing Israel's diplomatic options/1.1.1968/Pages 1-6.

⁹³ FRUS/Volume XX/Johnson Administration/Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1967-1968/Document 96/Telegram from the State Department to the US Embassy in Tel Aviv/2.3.1968.

⁹⁴ FRUS/Volume XX/Johnson Administration/Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1967-1968/Document 88/Memorandum from Rostow to Johnson/20.2.1968.

regarding the Occupied Territories in order to maintain the unity of the Coalition and avoid antagonising the US.⁹⁵

While the government stated its desire to hold direct negotiations with Egypt in order to achieve peace, it concluded that this was not feasible.⁹⁶ Dayan proclaimed that ‘what is being offered [by the international community] to us [Israel] is withdrawal from the territories without peace’.⁹⁷ He went on to say that peace between Israel and the Arab states was ‘something that cannot be attained’.⁹⁸ In a joint meeting, the heads of the Foreign Ministry and AMAN’s research department reached a similar conclusion.⁹⁹ Nasser, according to AMAN, was working diplomatically to bring about an Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories without having to make any diplomatic concessions towards Israel. Furthermore, it predicted that Nasser would initiate a limited war across the canal if he did not get his way diplomatically.¹⁰⁰

Israel had several opportunities to negotiate with Nasser; these, however, were never fully explored.¹⁰¹ The Eshkol government reached the conclusion that Nasser was not a reliable peace partner and opted to maintain the status-quo, a situation that was possible because the government was under no pressure from the US;¹⁰² even though there were calls within the US administration to put pressure on Israel.¹⁰³ In other words, the perceived lack of suitable peace partners provided Eshkol with a diplomatic and political ‘fig leaf’. There was no reason for him to pursue a long-term territorial policy which would entail making controversial decisions and risking political instability. Additionally, the adoption of a non-committing approach, i.e. the lack of a clear territorial policy, facilitated one of Mapai’s most important endeavours during this period, the unification of the Labour parties.

⁹⁵ ISA/7921/13-a/Record of Ma’arach’s Political Committee (MPC) Meeting/30.10.1968/Record of Ma’arach’s Political Committee (MPC) Meeting/27.12.1968.

⁹⁶ ISA/4780/3-f/Record of a Conversation between Eshkol, Eban, Hertzog and Refael/3.3.1968.

⁹⁷ LPA/5-1-1967-17/Protocol of Rafi’s Conference/12.12.1967/Page 3

⁹⁸ LPA/5-1-1967-17/Page 8.

⁹⁹ ISA/4780/3-f/Record of Joint Meeting/17.12.1967.

¹⁰⁰ ISA/8161/9-a/KFDC briefed by the deputy head of AMAN David Carmon/6.2.1968/Pages 13-14.

¹⁰¹ Interview with Amit.

¹⁰² ISA/7938/11-a/Record of Meeting between Eshkol, Eban and Rabin/24.5.1968.

¹⁰³ FRUS/Volume XX/Johnson Administration/Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1967-1968/Document 91/Record of NSC discussion regarding the Jarring Mission/21.2.1968.

The Labour Party

One of the most important reasons behind Israel's lack of a coherent and comprehensive long-term territorial policy was the formation of the Labour Party. On the 21st of January 1968, the political parties associated with the Labour movement, with the exception of Mapam, united under the banner of the Israeli Labour Party. This was preceded by protracted negotiations between the constituents: Mapai, Rafi and Ahdut-Ha'avoda. The process of unifying the Labour movement started on the 13th of June 1967 when Rafi's Central Committee decided to adopt a resolution by Shimon Peres, and called for re-unification talks with Mapai. These were held against the wish of party leader Ben-Gurion, who, as a result of Dayan's popularity in the aftermath of the war, became marginalised.¹⁰⁴ Peres had earlier written to Mapai stating Rafi's intention to return 'without any pre-conditions';¹⁰⁵ this signalled the start of a new period in the history of the Labour movement. During the following months, the unification talks and the territorial debate dominated Israel's political scene. During this time, the government needed to avoid controversial decisions in order to maintain consensus and promote unity. Arguably, the unification process was one of the major reasons why the government could not formulate a long-term territorial policy.¹⁰⁶ For Eshkol and many in Mapai the unification of the Labour movement was a long-held dream;¹⁰⁷ it presented an opportunity to 'welcome the unruly sons back to the bosom of the founding party'.¹⁰⁸ In addition, the call for unification resonated well among Mapai's young guard ('*tze'irim*'), and many of the local political branches, as they did not share the historical resentment towards Rafi.¹⁰⁹

According to Mapam Leader Ya'akov Hazan, the unification process represented an opportunity for Rafi to replace Eshkol with Dayan and to take over the Labour party from within.¹¹⁰ Dayan appeared to be the natural successor to Eshkol, as long as he remained the Defence Minister. The choice facing Rafi was clear; either wait for an

¹⁰⁴ Beilin, The Price of Unity Page 41.

¹⁰⁵ Medding, Mapai in Israel Page 292.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Yossi Beilin/5.6.2007.

¹⁰⁷ LPA/2-23-1967-92/Eshkol speaking at Mapai's Central Committee/29.10.1967/Page 48.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Yossi Beilin

¹⁰⁹ Medding, Mapai in Israel Page 294.

¹¹⁰ YYA/Mapam90/68/8/Record of Mapam's Secretariat Meeting/20.7.1967/Page 59.

opportunity to capture the leadership through elections in two years' time (a political long-shot), or capture the leadership from within the unified party.¹¹¹ Arguably, Dayan's position was dependent on the success of the unification process:¹¹² there was a growing fear among Rafi members that the Mapai elites would not allow them to remain in the government for long if they did not agree to the unification process.¹¹³

Rafi's calls for re-unification proved a divisive issue for Ahdut-Ha'avoda. On the one hand, they opposed the move fearing an attempt by Rafi to gain control over Mapai from within. On the other hand, many of the security-minded hawks in Ahdut-Ha'avoda (among them the party's ideological leader Tabenkin) thought it was an opportunity to nullify the dovish elements in Mapai, regarding Rafi as a natural ally on national-security matters. Rafi's manifesto, as far as the territorial debate was concerned, was closer to Tabenkin's ideology than to Mapai's. Rafi - through its manifesto - called for 'the new nature of Israel to be designed by a policy of building settlements and outposts'.¹¹⁴

Ahdut-Ha'avoda considered the unification a political necessity, as this would help preserve and increase its political strength while limiting Rafi's and Dayan's influence.¹¹⁵ Ahdut-Ha'avoda's main concern was of a merger between Rafi and Mapai which would effectively leave it out and eliminate the possibility of assuming power through its young leaders (Allon and Galili.). In other words, the party felt it had no other choice but to agree. Additionally, Ahdut-Ha'avoda called for the inclusion of Mapam, whom they viewed as a more suitable candidate for unification on political and ideological reasons - an idea supported by Mapai's elites. Mapam was seen as a socialist ally against the 'revisionist economic thought' of Rafi.¹¹⁶ Mapam, however, decided not to join the unification talks, preferring to continue its political independence.

¹¹¹ Shapiro, Politicians as a Hegemonic Class Page 111.

¹¹² Medding, Mapai in Israel Page 292.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Beilin, The Price of Unity Pages 42-43.

¹¹⁵ Izhar, Between Vision and Power Page 371.

¹¹⁶ Izhar, Page 417.

The unification process highlighted the demographic changes that were taking place in Israeli society, i.e. a transition from the 'founding generation' to the '1948 generation'.¹¹⁷ Mapai's elites appeared old, weak and out of touch when compared to the young charismatic technocrats and former IDF generals of Rafi and Ahdut-Ha'avoda.¹¹⁸ They were not native Israelis: they had immigrated to Israel during the second, third and fourth aliyas and had not served in the IDF, or the resistance movements during the British mandate. They were mostly in their late sixties and early seventies and had been politicians for most of their lives. The younger generation of leaders, mainly from Rafi and Ahdut-Ha'avoda, were bent on using the process to reshape the Labour movement. They assumed that they - and not the older, more hesitant leadership - represented the views of the new generation.¹¹⁹

The unification was 'formal rather than thoroughgoing'.¹²⁰ The unified party suffered from lack of a well-defined national-security agenda and a territorial policy, as Mapai's elites were unwilling to plunge the party into a renewed ideological debate. The party became increasingly unable to contain the diverse views within it without risking a split.¹²¹ The perverse nature of the unification proved to be one of the main difficulties. The agreement they reached dictated that representation within the unified party's institutions would be according to electoral strength (Mapai 57%, Rafi and Ahdut-Ha'avoda 21% each), with each faction choosing its own list of representatives, thus turning the new party into a 'façade behind which the three parties continued to compete and coexist ... as factions'.¹²² The characteristics of inter-party factionalism allowed small factions to have disproportional leverage on the decision-making process, with the factions proving more adept at averting action than promoting it.¹²³

In its first convention, in January 1968, the Labour Party tried to formulate a territorial policy, but was unable due to the divisions within the party. Instead, a

¹¹⁷ Yonathan Shapiro, Democracy in Israel (Ramat Gan, Massada, 1977), Pages 186-190.

¹¹⁸ Interview with Beilin.

¹¹⁹ Ranta, The Seventh Day Pages 6-7.

¹²⁰ Roberts, Party and Policy in Israel Page 33.

¹²¹ Interview with Beilin.

¹²² Gershon, Party Politics in Israel and the Occupied Territories (Connecticut, Green Wood, 1983), Page 24.

¹²³ Yishai, Land or Peace Page 196.

decision not to decide put forward by Golda Meir was agreed upon. For Meir there was no point in making a decision and risking a renewed split before the party reached the moment where it absolutely had to decide, i.e. when a credible Arab partner with which to negotiate was found. Israel - according to the Labour Party - would continue to hold on to the territories until a long-lasting peace agreement was reached. In order to maintain a common ground among the factions, the party unanimously decided not to decide.¹²⁴

¹²⁴ LPA/2-021-1977-133/Labour Party's Manifesto/21.1.1968.

Chapter Three

The Settlements

The lack of international pressure and suitable peace partners, as well as the political complexity of maintaining the national unity government and preserving the unity of the Labour Party, inhibited any meaningful debate on the long-term future of the Occupied Territories. This policy-making vacuum provided Allon with an opportunity to influence Israel's territorial policy. The government, for a lack of alternative, and without scrutinising the activities of its ad-hoc committees, was incrementally implementing the Allon Plan. Although the plan was never approved or agreed upon, new outposts and settlements were being established according to it. Whether by design or by default, the government's incremental policy of 'another settlement' started to resemble the pre-state Zionist policy of 'another dunam'.¹ This was the result of having to deal with the authorisation of projects, instead of focusing on the fundamental implications inherent in the settlement policy.²

Settlement activity became routine, and by the end of January 1968 there were 24 proposed settlements and outposts, 12 were either fully established or were otherwise in the process.³ Of these, there were seven outposts in the Golan Heights, even though Israeli citizens were prohibited to enter the area without army authorisation.⁴ This is because, by its own admission, the army was involved in all aspects of the settlement endeavour. The need to use the façade of Nahal outposts for the creation of settlements meant that the army was involved even in areas with little or no military purpose.⁵ On the 31st of December 1967, the ad-hoc settlement committee approved the establishment of two additional Nahal outposts in the north of the Jordan Valley.⁶ A few weeks later, Allon proposed the establishment of three additional settlements: one in the vicinity of Jericho (Ma'ale Adumim) that would 'strengthen Israel's grip on Jerusalem'; another in the vicinity of Hebron (Kiryat Arba) and a Nahal outpost in

¹ Yishai, Land or Peace Page 195.

² Interview with Bernstein.

³ ISA/8161/10-a/KFDC briefed by Eshkol/27.2.1968/Page 7.

⁴ ISA/8161/9-a/KFDC briefed by General David Elazar/19.1.1968/Pages 4-5.

⁵ ISA/8161/9-a/KFDC briefed by Chief-of-Staff Haim Bar-Lev/20.2.1968/Page 9.

⁶ ISA/6692/15-c/Record of the ad-hoc settlement committee Meeting/31.12.1967.

Sharm El-Sheikh, citing the Ministerial Defence Committee's recommendation to maintain a military presence in the area.⁷

The claims, made by Admoni, Tzur and others, that Israel's settlement policy was based on the Allon Plan, appear to be inaccurate. According to the Allon Plan, settlements were established in order to enable Israel to control territories it deemed essential for its security. The fact that early settlements were largely based on the Nahal concept helped emphasise their pseudo-military strategic purpose.⁸ However, early settlement activities only loosely followed the Allon Plan and did not necessarily relate to Israel's security needs. This fact was corroborated by none other than Colonel Moshe Netzer (head of the Nahal unit) who claimed that the settlement policy was not directly related to Israel's strategic needs.⁹ Netzer went even further and stated that, in the period immediately after the war (1967-1968), there was no comprehensive long-term settlement policy.¹⁰ The only area in which, according to Netzer, settlement activities were based on Israel's strategic needs was the Jordan Valley.¹¹

One of the main concerns expressed by decision makers was a possible rebuke by the American administration over the settlement activity. Eshkol, in a briefing to MKs, explained the need to be careful in settling East Jerusalem since it involved seizure of land, which would be difficult to justify to the US administration.¹² Furthermore, the government decided on the 28th of January that, having agreed to establish settlements in the Jordan Valley, the existence of these settlements should remain secret.¹³ This did not stop the US from expressing its concern that these settlements were 'taking on aspects of permanent, civilian, kibbutz-like operations and some are, in fact, civilian kibbutzim with Nahal cover'.¹⁴ However, while constraining Israel's ability to expand its settlement activities, the US did not apply any substantial pressure on it to desist.

⁷ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Allon's Proposal/14.1.1968.

⁸ Teveth, The Cursed Blessing Page 270.

⁹ YTA/15Netzer/4/3/Confidential Army Interview with Netzer/9.11.1972/Page 5

¹⁰ YTA/15Netzer/4/3/Page 8

¹¹ YTA/15Netzer/4/3/Page 10

¹² ISA/8161/10-a/KFDC briefed by Eshkol/27.2.1968/Page 7.

¹³ YTA/12-3/94/4/Government Decision no.217/28.1.1968.

¹⁴ Gorenberg, The Accidental Empire Page 143.

For Allon, the progress made in the establishment of settlements was not sufficient. He proposed that the government authorise the creation of additional settlements along the Jordan Valley. He claimed that these settlements could be established in a way that left 'all diplomatic options open'. Allon explained that the fact that the government had not decided over the future of the West Bank should not stop it from creating 'facts on the ground' which would promote Israel's vital national-security needs. According to Allon, the matter of establishing these settlements should be left to the settlement committee (Allon, Gvati, Dayan and Eshkol).¹⁵ Within weeks of Allon's proposal the Settlement Department submitted plans for the settlement and development of the Jordan Valley, based on the establishment of up to 16 outposts with 1800 houses.¹⁶ This was preceded by an Allon proposal to construct a road along the Jordan Valley, which would serve the settlements; this road would be later named the Allon Road.¹⁷

Allon's demand for a decision to be taken on his plan (or at least on parts of it) was echoed by Mapam's leader Ya'akov Hazan, who admonished the government for failing to decide. He argued that the government could not intentionally decide not to decide, while it created facts on the ground. Israel, he added, should settle only in areas it intended to keep, and this required making a decision. Hazan asked why the government did not make a decision over the future of Sinai and why it established outposts in the absence of such a decision.¹⁸ This point of view was shared by the Health Minister Israel Barzilai of Mapam. Barzilai wrote that the government, by not having a clear policy and by establishing settlements, was de-facto annexing parts of the territories and narrowing its diplomatic options.¹⁹

Although the government was unofficially already in the process of implementing his plan, Allon was continuously expanding its scope. This was possible precisely because the parameters of the plan were never agreed upon. On the 14th of April, he proposed to transform all the Nahal outposts in the Golan Heights into civilian ones,²⁰

¹⁵ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Allon's Proposals/27.2.68.

¹⁶ ISA/6423/1-c/Settlement Department's 'Jordan Valley Development Proposal'/19.3.68.

¹⁷ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Allon's Proposal/18.2.1968.

¹⁸ ISA/8162/1-a/KFDC Meeting/25.6.1968/Pages 13-14.

¹⁹ YYA/Barzilai 15-95/7/6/Barzilai Personal Notes/1968.

²⁰ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Allon Proposal/24.4.1968.

which eventually led to an explicit request to annex the Golan Heights.²¹ Allon argued that there were already nine established outposts, as well as several more in different stages of development, and that the local Druze community had accepted Israel's presence (Allon had previously submitted a request to have Israeli law applied to them).²² For Allon, Israel made a de-facto decision to remain in the Golan Heights and all that was left was for the process to be formalised, i.e. annexation. However, the government decided against annexing the Golan. According to Eban, annexing the Golan would not only invite a UN counter-resolution and affect Israel's relations with the US, but it would also generate more attacks from El-Fatah and encourage Syria and the USSR to take a more active approach in the diplomatic arena.²³ However, despite agreeing not to annex the Golan Heights, the government was actively integrating it. This occurred despite the concerns raised by Theodor Meron (the Foreign Office Attorney General) who called on the government to halt the social and economic integration of the Golan Heights.²⁴ In fact, on the 21st of January 1968, Israel removed all economic and political restrictions regarding the Golan Heights, this applied to both the Druze population and Israeli citizens,²⁵ this action was taken without a government decision over the future status of the Golan Heights.

The Gaza Strip

In its 19th of June decisions the government articulated a clear long-term vision with regards to the territories, with the exception of the West Bank. While the government's position regarding the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula had changed (the decision of the 30th of October 1967), it had remained steadfast in its resolve to annex the Gaza Strip and relocate its population (or at least a substantial part of it).²⁶ The idea had broad political support, to the extent that it was included in Mapam's peace plan.²⁷ Furthermore, most of the plans and proposals drafted at the

²¹ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Allon's Proposal regarding the Golan Heights/29.8.1968.

²² YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Allon's Proposal regarding the Druze population/10.10.1967.

²³ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Memo from Eban to Eshkol/5.9.68.

²⁴ ISA/3191/8-f/Memo from Meron to the Foreign Ministry's Director-General/(no date)/relates to a previous Memo dated 14.3.1968.

²⁵ ISA/8162/1-a/KFDC briefed by David Elazar/19.1.1968/Page 4.

²⁶ Interview with Hillel.

²⁷ Interview with Shem-Tov.

behest of the government reached similar conclusions. However, despite enjoying broad consensus on the subject, the government was unable to implement its policy. It was unable to clarify how, in the age of decolonisation, it would transfer around a quarter of a million people without drawing the international community's ire. In addition, the government was unable to find a suitable area to which it could transfer the population. In his frustration Eshkol made it clear he was 'in favour that they all go, even if to the moon'.²⁸

The government employed four mechanisms to facilitate the transfer of population out of the Gaza Strip: financial incentives, investment in education, employment opportunities and a tough security stance. A special task force was formed, whose aim was to encourage Palestinians to emigrate by providing generous financial support.²⁹ The military administration, with the support of various governmental departments, invested in technical schools and further education in the belief that educated and skilled Palestinians would have a better chance to emigrate successfully.³⁰ The military administration also created wide-scale infrastructure projects in the West Bank in order to entice unemployed Palestinians from the Gaza Strip to move to the West Bank.³¹ In addition, the military in the Gaza Strip encouraged emigration by using a tougher security stance (than that employed in the West Bank).³²

The question of where to transfer the population was never truly answered. A team of professors assembled by Eshkol advocated the use of the West Bank and were supported by Weitz and several ministers.³³ But not all ministers were in favour; Allon was against transferring them to the West Bank as it did not fit well with his plan. Attempts to solicit the help of the West Bank mayors to accept Gaza's refugees by promising to invest in local projects and industries failed, with these mayors flatly rejecting the idea.³⁴ Allon suggested El-Arish (northern Sinai) as an alternative,³⁵ however, this proved costly and impractical.³⁶ A year after the war, the number of

²⁸ Segev, *Israel in 1967* Page 559.

²⁹ Segev, Pages 557-559

³⁰ ISA/8161/9-a/KFDC briefed by the Commander of the Gaza Strip Mordehai Gur/19.1.1968/Page 21.

³¹ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Memo from the Deputy Defence Minister to Sapir/8.1.68.

³² ISA/8161/9-a/KFDC briefed by Gur/19.1.1968/Page 10.

³³ Interview with Aloni.

³⁴ Moshe Sasson, *Talking Peace* Page 100

³⁵ ISA/YAOH/Meeting 4/Page 3.

³⁶ ISA/8161/9-a/KFDC briefed by Gur/19.1.1968/Page 11.

people who had left the Strip was estimated at 50,000, with most being young men looking for jobs and families with relatives in Jordan.³⁷ Arguably, most of those who left would have done so even without Israel's intervention. The government's failure to implement its policies was due to several factors. First, Eshkol was unwilling to make available the substantial sums of money requested by the special task force.³⁸ Second, the operation was undertaken half-heartedly and without real conviction.³⁹ Third, there was no detailed plan of how to implement this policy. Dayan remarked that if the government provided a detailed plan of how this could be done he would have supported it.⁴⁰ Fourth, Arab states and the local population were aware of Israel's desire to annex the Gaza Strip and transfer its population, and would not actively support such an effort.⁴¹ Finally, the resumption of hostilities across the Jordan River led to the tightening of Jordanian border controls and subsequently to a reduction in the numbers of Palestinians emigrating to Jordan.

Israel's Gaza Strip policy was not practical. The government had made it clear it would not annex the territory before relocating a substantial part of its population. Its inability to implement this policy was evident from the start.⁴² Israel's reluctance to annex a populated Gaza Strip and its unwillingness to return it to Egypt left the area in a political limbo.⁴³ Israel did not have a viable policy with regards to the Gaza Strip and at no time did it seriously contemplate the long-term implications of holding Gaza, an area to which it referred before the war as 'a hornets nest'. In a sense, Israel's dealings with the Gaza Strip were a classic example of 'muddling through'. The government's actions clearly support this thesis' assertion that, as far as the Gaza Strip is concerned, the government did not have a coherent and comprehensive long-term policy.

³⁷ ISA/8161/10-a/KFDC briefed by Eshkol/27.2.1968/Page 6.

³⁸ Segev, *Israel in 1967* Pages 559-560

³⁹ ISA/YAOH/Meeting 6/Page 16.

⁴⁰ ISA/7921/5-a/Record of the Ministerial Committee for the Territories' Meeting/3.7.1968/Page 13.

⁴¹ ISA/8161/9-a/KFDC briefed by Moshe Sasson/9.2.1968/Page 19.

⁴² ISA/8161/10-a/KFDC briefed by Eshkol/27.2.1968/Page 3.

⁴³ ISA/4781/7-f/Foreign Ministry Assessments/4.7.1968/Appendix 4.

Hebron

One of the greatest contributing factors to Israel's lack of a clear territorial policy was the revival of Religious Zionism, or New Zionism, and its emphasis on a Normative standpoint in relation to the Occupied Territories. New Zionism's influence on the government's long-term territorial policy (or rather the lack of one) can be demonstrated using the case study of Hebron, although it is important to note that its impact on the policy-making process was by and large indirect. Interest groups associated with New Zionism challenged the government's territorial policy and offered an alternative to the Labour Party's Instrumental standpoint. The National Unity Government proved unable to meet these challenges precisely because certain factions and individuals within it were supportive of the motives and goals of these interest groups.

The conquest of the territories and the subsequent occupation revealed a 'growing dissonance' between the Labour Party's official position and the public's perception of the Occupied Territories, i.e. 'the breakdown of the Green Line as a Hegemonic Conception'.⁴⁴ The Labour Party elites were no longer seen to be representing the public, which was overwhelmingly in favour of retaining most of the territories.⁴⁵ In addition, the conquest of the West Bank, in particular East Jerusalem and Hebron with its religious symbolism 'challenged the consensus that had been arrived at through the first nineteen years of the Jewish state's existence'.⁴⁶ It rekindled the ideological debate regarding some of Zionism's main tenets: the state's boundaries, the nature of the state, the right to settle and the state's demographic composition - questions to which the government did not have answers. The government's lack of a clear long-term policy left a vacuum in which interest groups with a strong ideological agenda (i.e. New Zionism) could operate.⁴⁷

Israel had hitherto established settlements in the West Bank, the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights; this was done (unofficially) according to the Allon Plan. The

⁴⁴ Ian Lustick, Unsettled States: Disputed Lands (New York, Cornell University Press, 1993), Pages 387-390.

⁴⁵ Sella and Yishai, Israel: The Peaceful Belligerent Page 167.

⁴⁶ Kimmerling, Zionism and Territory Pages 148-149.

⁴⁷ Harris, Taking Root Pages 135-138.

addition of the Golan Heights, parts of the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip to the Allon Plan was done in part in order to placate fellow Ahdut-Ha'avoda members who had doubts regarding the plan. Allon's broad concept was based on what he perceived to be Israel's national-security needs. The first departure from this method occurred when a group of young religious students, led by Rabbi Moshe Levinger, asked the military governor of Hebron for permission to hold a Passover feast in the city. Hebron differed from the previous areas settled by Israel in that it was not included in the Allon Plan and was of no military or security importance. Furthermore, establishing a settlement within the heavily populated city stood in contrast to the government's professed position.

The first to raise the issue of settling in Hebron was none other than Ben-Gurion. During the war he told Rafi members that Jews must resettle East Jerusalem and Hebron.⁴⁸ In the following months Hebron was mentioned several times by ministers and Knesset members.⁴⁹ The first indication of outsiders expressing their wish to resettle Hebron came from KM Shmuel Tamir (Gahal), who appealed to Eshkol on behalf of the Hebron Yeshiva.⁵⁰ The Yeshiva was originally situated in Hebron but was relocated to Jerusalem after the 1929 massacre. In March, Allon proposed the creation of a Jewish settlement in Hebron; in his proposal Allon listed several groups, among them the Levinger one, which he claimed were willing to settle in the city.⁵¹

It is important to note that Levinger did not act alone as, not only did his actions receive public support, but they also appeared to be in accordance with the 'legitimate norms and values'.⁵² In addition, he was supported by The Land of Israel movement, emboldened by the success of the Gush-Etzion initiative, which provided financial assistance and extensive political connections;⁵³ members of the movement petitioned Eshkol for the resettlement of Hebron.⁵⁴ This movement was founded by disillusioned members of the Labour Party and included members of every political orientation

⁴⁸ Eldar and Zertal, Lords of the Land Page 30.

⁴⁹ ISA/8161/10/-a/KFDC Meeting/20.2.1968/Page 9.

⁵⁰ Zorach Warhaftig, Fifty Years, from Year to Year (Jerusalem, Yad Shapira, 1998), Page 299

⁵¹ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Allon's Hebron Proposal/13.3.1968.

⁵² Baruch Kimmerling, Zionism and Territory: The Socio-Territorial Dimensions of Zionist Politics (Institute of International Studies, University of California Berkeley, 1983), Page 157.

⁵³ Isaac, Israel Divided: Ideological Pages 56-57.

⁵⁴ ISA/7920/7-a/Record of Eshkol's Meeting with 'The Land of Israel movement'/12.11.1976/Page 24.

committed to the idea of establishing ‘the land of Israel as a unified national entity’.⁵⁵ The land of Israel was defined as the territories ‘now in the hands of the Jewish people’, i.e. Israel and the occupied territories.⁵⁶ The movement brought about a gradual re-alignment of Israeli politics around a Normative viewpoint of the territories and New Zionist ideology.

Levinger’s group, which included many of the would-be founders of the Gush-Emunim movement, was driven not only by a belief that their actions would have a direct contribution to Israel’s security, but also by a religious zeal. The conquest of the West Bank was described by some religious scholars as the ‘advent of redemption’ i.e. the period before the coming of the messiah.⁵⁷ The renewal of the Jewish presence in Hebron was a divine mission; the city was the second holiest after Jerusalem and held the Tomb of the Patriarchs. Moreover, the group sought to ‘return to a place perceived as belonging to the collectivity in terms of both the recent past and Jewish mythology’;⁵⁸ the disappearance of Jewish presence in the city (1929) was a traumatic event in the recent history of both Judaism and Zionism.

On the 12th of April 1968 the Levinger group rented several rooms in the Park Hotel in Hebron, allegedly for the sole purpose of conducting the Passover feast. They had earlier received the army’s permission to stay overnight, with the permission being granted despite advertisements in the national press calling for the renewal of the Jewish settlement in the city.⁵⁹ Levinger claimed the army and the government were aware of his plans, indeed, Allon would later attest to have known of the move to resettle Hebron. Allon revealed that he expressed his willingness to help them, but on the condition that if the government decided not to establish a settlement in Hebron they would accept its decision.⁶⁰ The following morning, the settlers - true to their cause - refused to leave. Despite acting illegally and against the government’s position of not settling in and around heavily populated areas, the government proved

⁵⁵ Sella and Yishai, Israel: The Peaceful Belligerent Page 153.

⁵⁶ Jean, Israel Divided Page 53.

⁵⁷ Menachem Friedman, “The State of Israel as a Theological Dilemma” in Baruch Kimmerling (ed), The Israeli State and Society, Boundaries and Frontiers (New York, State University of New York Press, 1989), Pages 203-204.

⁵⁸ Kimmerling, Zionism and Territory Page 157.

⁵⁹ Eldar and Zertal, Lords of the Land Page 31.

⁶⁰ ISA/YAOH/Meeting 6/Page 17.

reluctant to order their forcible removal. In several rounds of discussions the ministers were unable to reach a decision regarding the settlers, with Gahal and the NRP ministers supporting the settlers. Additionally, and because of the unique place Hebron inhabited in the Jewish psyche, most leading Labour ministers, (but not Eban and Sapir, who opposed the resettlement of Hebron), appeared unable to make up their minds; this was particularly true for Eshkol and Dayan.⁶¹ The settlers' refusal to leave the city did not dissuade Allon from coming to show his support, promising to help them find jobs in the area. This was followed by visits from both Begin and Warhaftig and a resolution congratulating the endeavour by Hakibbutz Hameuhad. Eshkol claimed ministers were making a mockery of the government, being eager to show their support in spite of the government's position.⁶²

Dayan suggested moving the settlers to the army base in Hebron until a decision was reached; the government approved. Levinger accepted the move, in the knowledge that the government's 'non-decision' was a de-facto authorisation. The government's non-decision was taken despite a plea from Hebron's mayor Ali Al-Ja'abri not to create a Jewish settlement in the city.⁶³ Several months later, the government decided to authorise the establishment of a Jewish neighbourhood in Hebron and another in the outskirts of the city (Kiryat Arba). Admoni admits that this decision deviated from the 'Allon Plan'.⁶⁴ Furthermore, this decision was taken despite concerns raised by a preparatory committee, which was tasked with finding suitable alternative solutions for the Hebron settlement. The committee raised concerns regarding the large number of private lands that would need to be appropriated in the case of Kiryat Arba and the logistical problems, such as the limited availability of suitable housing, associated with the establishment of a Jewish settlement in Hebron.⁶⁵ It appears as though the government's decision was based solely on Normative reasons and did not relate to Israel's security needs.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Teveth, The Cursed Blessing Page 276.

⁶² ISA/7921/4-a/Record of the informal ministerial Meeting/21.5.1968/Page 1.

⁶³ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Letter from Ja'abri to Eshkol/21.4.1968.

⁶⁴ Admoni, Decade of Discretion Pages 58-59.

⁶⁵ ISA/7920/7-a/Report on 'Possible Settlement Opportunities in the Hebron Area'/25.9.1968.

⁶⁶ Demant, Ploughshares into Swords Page 158.

Meetings with Palestinians

In the aftermath of the 'Six Day War', the Israeli government decided not to decide on the long-term future of the West Bank. Nevertheless, the government made it clear that it was against any solution that would leave Israel in control of the heavily populated areas; this was exemplified by the government's rejection of the Dayan Plan. Israel's long-term policy options towards the West Bank were therefore narrowed down to either a Palestinian or a Jordanian-based approach. The following three sections will provide a detailed account of the government's attempts to ascertain its preferred approach, including an extensive narrative of Israel's negotiations with Jordan and the Palestinians. Through this account, the thesis will highlight the factors that circumscribed Israel's ability to formulate a clear long-term policy towards the West Bank.

The idea of using a Palestinian Approach was first raised by the AMAN research department and was subsequently adopted by both Allon and Dayan. At the heart of this approach was the idea of establishing a demilitarised Palestinian entity (either independent or autonomous) in the West Bank (there were some suggestions for including the Gaza Strip), bound by security arrangements to Israel. Eshkol decided to pursue both approaches simultaneously; he nominated Moshe Sasson as his official representative in the territories and asked him to examine the possibility of establishing a Palestinian entity in the West Bank while, at the same time, he sent Hertzog and Eban to negotiate with Hussein. Sasson was to conduct talks with Palestinian notables and liaise with a special steering committee which included Eshkol, Dayan, Eban, Hertzog and Gazit.⁶⁷ It is interesting to note that Eshkol authorised Sasson to suggest several different options to the Palestinian notables, including an autonomous region and even a Functional Solution.⁶⁸

In his first report, Sasson informed the committee that the Palestinians were waiting to hear what Israel had to offer; Palestinian notables told Sasson that Israel - being the occupying power - should set the tone for these talks and declare its intentions. Sasson explained that most Palestinians were apprehensive of the motives of the Arab states

⁶⁷ ISA/7291/3-a/Letter of appointment/12.11.1967.

⁶⁸ ISA/7052/12-a/Summary of Sasson's Meeting with Eshkol/9.6.1968.

and were frustrated by the efforts of these states to rescue them from the Israeli occupation. Nevertheless, while they were willing to talk to Israel, they were at the same time suspicious of its motives.⁶⁹ Nonetheless, Sasson concluded that there was a willingness among some Palestinians to pursue a separate deal with Israel,⁷⁰ but made it clear that there were several major obstacles in the way of an Israeli-Palestinian agreement. In his personal opinion, most of the Palestinians were unwilling to accept Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem and were adamant that any deal would have to include the Gaza Strip and a solution to the refugee problem.⁷¹

At the same time - and with the approval of Eshkol - Dayan conducted his own talks with Palestinian notables. The most productive of these were with Hamdi Cana'an (Mayor of Nablus), and 'Aziz Shahada (a Ramallah-based lawyer and former minister in the Jordanian government). Both complained to Dayan that Israel was not forthcoming in its negotiations, claiming to have received no constructive proposals from Israel.⁷² Dayan informed the duo that he was not authorised to negotiate on the government's behalf. He was, however, willing to define the main guidelines that they would be expected to accept, before any meaningful negotiations could take place:

1. The solution would have to be agreeable to the American administration.
2. There could be no change to the status of Jerusalem (which would stay under Israeli control).
3. There could be no return to the pre-war situation.
4. The solution would be based on the signing of peace agreements.⁷³

Dayan did not mention the issue of border modifications but that was apparently clear to them. Cana'an and Shahada were unhappy with Israel's position on Jerusalem and its unwillingness to discuss the future of the Gaza Strip. They also made it clear that any understanding that may be reached between the sides must be part of a wider settlement with the Arab world and not a separate one.⁷⁴ Cana'an and Shahada expressed their willingness to reach a separate deal with Israel, even if other Arab

⁶⁹ ISA/7291/4-a/Sasson's Assessments/22.1.1968.

⁷⁰ ISA/7921/4-a/Briefing Paper by Sasson/28.1.1968.

⁷¹ ISA/8161/9-a/KFDC briefed by Sasson/9.2.1968/Pages 18-19.

⁷² Pedatzur, *The Triumph of Embarrassment* Page 88.

⁷³ ISA/7052/12-a/Summary of Dayan's Conversation with Cana'an and Shahada/(no date).

⁷⁴ Ibid.

states would not. Nonetheless, they demanded that at least an agreement on joint sovereignty over Jerusalem be reached (agreeing not to divide the city again) and that any border modifications will only be carried out on the basis of reciprocity.⁷⁵ Dayan informed Eshkol that he thought these talks should continue at a higher level, sensing that there was a possible chance for success. Eshkol, however, was lukewarm to the idea and decided not to pursue the matter.⁷⁶

In May, Sasson informed the committee that most Palestinian notables had publicly expressed their loyalty to King Hussein and had made it clear they now favoured a Jordanian solution. They had publicly denounced the idea of a Palestinian state and had described themselves as Jordanian nationals.⁷⁷ Sasson claimed that the change of heart came as a result of a Palestinian belief that Israel was about to conclude a deal with Jordan behind their backs, and had therefore used the talks with them to put pressure on Hussein. Sasson expressed his belief that Israel should continue these talks and could still change the minds of most Palestinians, but only if the government was fully committed to the Palestinian approach.⁷⁸ Dayan supported the continuation of talks with the Palestinians regardless, claiming to have always favoured the Palestinian Approach. He acknowledged that there were some problems, such as the Fatah's terrorist attacks and the Hebron settlement, and that he did not foresee a final peace settlement anytime soon. Nonetheless, he stressed his belief in finding a long-lasting solution based on a functional compromise, either with the Palestinians (which he favoured) or with Jordan.⁷⁹

Eshkol believed Israel had nothing to lose from pursuing both the Jordanian and Palestinian options simultaneously, 'We need to hold the iron in two ovens, even if nothing comes out of either.'⁸⁰ He therefore supported the continuation of the talks, even though he had come to the conclusion that the talks were leading nowhere; in the preceding months, Eshkol, in conjunction with Sasson and Dayan, held numerous talks with the Palestinians. While Eshkol tried to convince them of the merits of a Palestinian demilitarised autonomy, he felt they were not committed to signing a

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Gazit, *Trapped* Pages 178-180.

⁷⁷ ISA/7921/4-a/Record of Special Steering Committee (SSC) Meeting/21.5.1968/Page 1

⁷⁸ ISA/7921/4-a/Page 2.

⁷⁹ ISA/7921/4-a/Page 5.

⁸⁰ ISA/7921/4-a/Page 8.

separate deal with Israel. Eshkol found the Palestinians to be divided amongst themselves, with some claiming Israel was not making sincere offers, while others argued that Israel should be talking instead to Hussein.⁸¹

Al-Ja'abri

In July, Sasson raised the possibility of appointing Hebron Mayor Ali Al-Ja'abri as the governor of the West Bank and granting Palestinians the option of self-rule under him; the idea of appointing the Hebron mayor as governor of the West Bank came from Al-Ja'abri himself.⁸² The idea of a Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank was a feature of the Dayan's Functional Solution, and it included limited Palestinian autonomy in municipal and social areas, while Israel would continue to have military presence and control over the area. Sasson described the reaction of many Palestinians towards the idea of self-rule as positive, although many insisted that East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip should be included in the deal. Eshkol notified Sasson that appointing Al-Ja'abri as the governor of the West Bank was unacceptable and wanted to know if there were alternative avenues through which to pursue Palestinian self-rule.⁸³ Dayan remarked that 'it was absurd to think' that cities such as Bethlehem and Nablus would agree to be governed by Al-Ja'abri.⁸⁴

A few days later, Sasson presented the special steering committee with four alternative options for pursuing a Palestinian self-rule:

1. Appointing Al-Ja'abri as the governor of the West Bank.
2. Adopting a counter-proposal (from the city of Bethlehem) for granting self-rule to the regions of Bethlehem, Ramallah and Jericho, as these cities enjoyed a Christian majority and did not want to be governed by Al-Ja'abri.
3. Granting self-rule to all of the West Bank regions, starting from Hebron and Bethlehem.

⁸¹ ISA/8162/1-a/KFDC briefed by Eshkol/25.6.1968/Pages 8-9.

⁸² ISA/7921/4-a/Record of the SSC Meeting/3.7.1968/Page 2

⁸³ ISA/7921/4-a/Page 5.

⁸⁴ ISA/7921/4-a/Page 12.

4. Granting self-rule only to Hebron and appointing Al-Ja'abri governor of the region.⁸⁵

After some deliberations the committee decided to pursue the fourth option.⁸⁶ Al-Ja'abri accepted the decision and proceeded to put in writing a formal request to be appointed as governor of the Hebron region. In his letter he asked for the creation of an Arab civil administration with the same responsibilities as the current military administration. He wanted this done in such a way as not to compromise the current political status of the West Bank, i.e. Al-Ja'abri appointment was not to be understood as recognition of Israel's occupation.⁸⁷ Sasson urged the government to act immediately; he was worried that Jordan and some Palestinian elements (PLO and El-Fatah) would try to derail the agreement.⁸⁸ The day before the government convened to discuss the matter, Al-Ja'abri professed to have had a change of heart, and was now demanding to be appointed governor of the West Bank or not to be appointed at all. This was followed by a radio announcement in Jordan that the Israeli plans which, they claimed, contravened international law, would not find local backing among the 'Jordanians' of the West Bank. The real reasons behind Al-Ja'abri decision never became known; Jordan had most likely made him an offer he could not refuse.⁸⁹

It is important to note that Al-Ja'abri continued to negotiate with Israel over the possibility of becoming the governor of the West Bank.⁹⁰ Nonetheless, nothing constructive came out of these talks. The following month, a PLO affiliate Walid Al-Shaha proposed to organise a Palestinian delegation for negotiations with Israel. This was rejected by the PLO, who refused to engage diplomatically with Israel. It became clear that Jordan and the exiled Palestinian leadership (PLO and Fatah) were working behind the scenes to nullify Israeli attempts to create a Palestinian entity in the West Bank.⁹¹

⁸⁵ ISA/7052/12-a/Summary of the SSC meeting/3.7.1968.

⁸⁶ ISA/7052/12-a/Summary of the SSC meeting/12.7.1968.

⁸⁷ ISA/7921/5-a/Record of the SSC meeting/23.7.1968/Page 3.

⁸⁸ ISA/7052/12-a/Summary of the SSC meeting/17.7.1968.

⁸⁹ ISA/7052/12-a/Sasson's Interim Report/1.8.1968

⁹⁰ ISA/7921/5-a/Sasson's Revised Interim Report/13.8.1968/Page 3.

⁹¹ Sasson, Talking Peace Page 109.

The failure of Israel's Palestinian Approach to generate a satisfactory long-term solution was due to several factors. First, Israel did not view the Palestinians as suitable peace partners, which might explain why Israel did not appear to pursue the Palestinian approach seriously. The Palestinians did not have a united leadership and were represented by a myriad of groups and individuals who had different aims and objectives. In addition, the Palestinians were locked in an internal political battle between pro-Jordanian, pro-PLO, and independent parties. For this reason it is highly likely that the Al-Ja'abri initiative would have failed in the long run, even if it had been implemented. Second, Israel, despite professing at times to follow a Palestinian Approach, was reluctant to put forward any serious offers. The government's reluctance to pursue this approach more vigorously was partly due to the lack of ministerial consensus regarding the West Bank. Third, Israel's refusal to include the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem in the negotiations would have made it unlikely for any Palestinian leader or group to agree to a separate deal with Israel. Finally, the establishment of a Palestinian entity was not high on the agenda for any state, bar Israel; the idea lacked international support and was fiercely opposed to by Jordan.

Jordan

After proposing to pursue both, the failure of the Palestinian Approach convinced Eshkol that the Jordanian Approach was more feasible. He explained to Allon that he preferred the Jordanian Approach because it meant that the million-or-so Arabs would become the King's citizens and not Israel's, and this was more palatable to the US.⁹² It is important to note that Israel had kept its diplomatic channels with Jordan open and had held several meetings with Hussein since December 1967. In order to continue to have all the options available, Dayan proposed a five-point plan (based on a Functional Solution) that would apply to either Jordan or to the Palestinians.

1. The IDF would remain present on the mountain ranges.
2. The Green Line (with some minor border modifications) would become Israel's administrative border, while the Jordan River would be declared

⁹² ISA/7921/4-a/Record of the informal ministerial Meeting/21.5.1968/Page 9.

Israel's security border. Palestinians in the West Bank would be either part of an autonomous Palestinian entity or retain their Jordanian citizenship.

3. Israeli citizens would be allowed to reside in the West Bank and Israel's historic attachment to the area would be recognised.
4. The Palestinian refugee problem would be resolved. They would be absorbed either by Jordan or by the Palestinian entity.
5. Jerusalem was, and would remain, Israel's undivided capital. Israel would accord special status to the Christian and Muslim holy sites.⁹³

Dayan explained that he would be willing to sign a peace agreement with either side based on this plan. Nevertheless, he did not consider a Palestinian solution to be viable, despite confessing a few weeks earlier to have 'always' supported the Palestinian Approach. Eshkol agreed to bring the matter of the Jordanian negotiations before the Ma'arach Political Committee for a decision.⁹⁴

Eshkol informed Labour's Political Committee of his decision to concentrate on the Jordanian Approach. He described how the Americans had asked him to negotiate more vigorously with Jarring and to start making 'concrete offers'.⁹⁵ As a result, he had decided to elevate the talks with Hussein to a higher level and to push for a final agreement, which he believed was possible.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, Eshkol called for a discussion on what should be offered to Hussein and on the next course of action in case these talks proved fruitless. Eshkol did not hold a specific position and mentioned several different options that could be discussed with Hussein. He did, however, mention that negotiations with Hussein were the only available option for Israel, as he did not see any possibility of advancing negotiations with Egypt as long as Nasser was in power.⁹⁷ It is important to note that this was also the general sentiment in the Foreign Ministry.⁹⁸

⁹³ ISA/7921/4-a/Pages 11-12.

⁹⁴ ISA/7921/4-a/Page 23.

⁹⁵ ISA/7921/13-a/Record of Ma'arach's Political Committee (MPC) Meeting/3.6.68/Pages 1-2

⁹⁶ ISA/7921/13-a/Page 4.

⁹⁷ ISA/7921/13-a/Page 5.

⁹⁸ ISA/4780/3-f/Report from Israel's Embassy in Washington to the Foreign Ministry/18.3.1968/Pages 1-3.

Aran asked cynically, ‘How is tonight different from all other nights?’ (referring to one of the questions asked during the Passover feast). Aran did not see why they should hold further discussions if nothing meaningful ever came out of them, stating that that day’s discussions would be no different. He challenged the committee to agree on something and to put it to a vote.⁹⁹ Aran’s comments alluded to the fact that the Labour Party, in an attempt to preserve unity and ensure political stability, avoided making controversial decisions.

Eban proposed several points that would serve as Israel’s starting position for negotiations; Aran was quick to point out that these points were basically a different version of the Allon Plan. Eban conceded, but added that the plan had been slightly modified and it now included some input from Dayan.¹⁰⁰ Golda Meir admitted she had little faith in these negotiations altogether, since Israel would not agree to divide Jerusalem while Hussein would not agree to sign a treaty without it and, therefore, there was little chance for peace.¹⁰¹ Meir added that the Allon Plan was not a suitable solution as it conceded too much, to which Eliyahu Sasson replied, ‘What are we conceding, 800,000 Arabs?’¹⁰²

Sapir remarked that he did not normally deal with ‘these issues’ but he understood the need to make decisions, telling ministers that adding more Arabs to Israel was a recipe for a disaster and that Israel should negotiate with Hussein over the West Bank. Additionally, he claimed that Israel did not need military bases on the mountain ranges (these would prove to be an economic liability and would increase military expenditure) nor did it need an economic integration with the West Bank; both remarks were intended for Dayan.¹⁰³

Allon explained that, because Hussein would not act without Nasser’s blessing, the negotiations might go on for years. Therefore, he suggested creating facts on the ground in those areas Israel intended to keep: ‘These would be established as Nahal outposts in order not to upset the Americans’, in order to strengthen Israel’s

⁹⁹ ISA/7921/13-a/Record of MPC Meeting/3.6.68/Page 7.

¹⁰⁰ ISA/7921/13-a/Page 17.

¹⁰¹ ISA/7921/13-a/Page 19.

¹⁰² ISA/7921/13-a/Page 30.

¹⁰³ ISA/7921/13-a/Pages 33-34.

negotiating position and apply pressure on Hussein.¹⁰⁴ In conclusion, Eshkol expressed his gratitude for the candid discussion and the meeting ended, like most meetings did, without any decisions being taken.¹⁰⁵

In a follow-up meeting Eshkol agreed to send Eban to meet up with Hussein, but confessed to be still unsure as to whether the Allon Plan should serve as the basis for these talks, claiming that the plan left Hussein with only two thirds of the West Bank. Eshkol admitted that he had recently seen the map of the Allon Plan in the press and was shocked. He questioned whether settlements in the Jordan Valley provided any security and whether they were necessary at all. Allon replied that most of the land that would eventually be taken according to his plan would be desert and had no real value. In reply, Eshkol made it clear that Israel could afford to make some alterations to the plan and wondered whether it would be beneficial to show Dayan's plan to Hussein.¹⁰⁶

The wrangling among ministers over whether or not to offer Hussein the Allon Plan continued for several months. On the 20th of September, Eshkol briefed the committee on Eban's forthcoming meeting with Hussein and explained that the King wanted to sit face-to-face with Israel and that he proposed to offer Hussein the Allon Plan.¹⁰⁷ Dayan was quick to speak out against this idea; he claimed that the plan did not represent Israel's territorial policy, it was never adopted by the government, and that Hussein had already informed Israel that he would reject it.¹⁰⁸ Dayan's remarks caught Eshkol off guard. Eshkol retorted that Dayan was being fickle: 'You [Dayan] said you were against the Allon Plan and in favour of your own, but that if the Allon Plan was accepted you would accept it too.'¹⁰⁹ Shapira remarked that Israel did not need to decide over the Allon Plan, but merely to use it as a basis for negotiations with Hussein.¹¹⁰ Eshkol summarised the debate and informed the committee that

¹⁰⁴ ISA/7921/13-a/Pages 56-59.

¹⁰⁵ ISA/7921/13-a/Page 66.

¹⁰⁶ ISA/7921/4-a/Record of the SSC meeting/3.7.1968/Pages 28-29.

¹⁰⁷ ISA7921/13-a/Record of the MPC Meeting/20.9.68/Page 14.

¹⁰⁸ ISA7921/13-a/Pages 17-18.

¹⁰⁹ ISA7921/13-a/Page 18.

¹¹⁰ ISA7921/13-a/Page 27.

Eban and Allon would meet up with Hussein and offer him the Allon and/or the Dayan Plan.¹¹¹

On the 27th of September Allon and Eban met with Hussein. Allon pulled out a map and presented his plan to the King. Eban explained to Hussein that ‘we have no interest in major frontier changes in the western part of the West Bank’ and that the changes proposed in the Jordan Valley were based solely on Israel’s security needs.¹¹² Hussein rejected the plan categorically, as well as the idea of absorbing Palestinian refugees from the Gaza Strip.¹¹³ The most he would have been willing to accept was some minor border modifications, as long as these were based on reciprocity. With regard to Jerusalem Hussein offered to discuss a ‘new status for the city which will guarantee free access and movement to all in the city’ as well as recognise Israel’s rights to the Jewish holy places. Hussein refused to accept a plan that took no notice of Jordan’s security needs and left the West Bank demilitarised but with Israeli army bases and settlements.¹¹⁴

Several months later, in a briefing to the government, Eban said that although the King found the Allon Plan ‘insulting’, he was still willing to continue discussions with Israel. Eban raised the possibility of finding a compromise with Hussein, suggesting the inclusion of the Gaza Strip in the deal. Hussein had earlier expressed an interest in accommodating Palestinian refugees only if he was given the Gaza Strip.¹¹⁵ Eshkol, who had earlier been against any deal that would include Gaza, appeared content with Eban’s suggestion. He remarked to Allon that if he (Allon) could sell the Gaza Strip for the Jordan Valley he would be ‘blessed’.¹¹⁶ According to Allon, Hussein appeared to favour the idea of receiving the Gaza Strip, but not in exchange for parts of the West Bank.¹¹⁷

Although they did promote better relations the talks with Hussein failed to produce any results. In contrast to the Palestinian Approach, there was a sense that these talks

¹¹¹ ISA7921/13-a/Pages 30-31.

¹¹² ISA/7043/15-a/Summary of Eban’s Meeting with Hussein/(no date)/Page 2.

¹¹³ ISA/YAOH/Meeting 6/Page 3.

¹¹⁴ ISA/7043/15-a/Summary of Eban’s Meeting with Hussein/(no date)/Pages 5-6.

¹¹⁵ ISA/7821/13-a/Record of MPC Meeting/27.12.1968/Pages 13-14.

¹¹⁶ ISA/YAOH/Meeting 8/Page 3.

¹¹⁷ ISA/YAOH/Meeting 8/Pages 5-6.

could actually prove fruitful,¹¹⁸ as Hussein had made his views clear by expressing his willingness to sign a separate peace treaty with Israel, while enjoying widespread international support (allegedly even from Nasser). The negotiations failed because the views of both sides were too far apart to allow for a compromise. Israeli ministers found it hard to accept that Israel would have to compromise, as they believed that the Allon Plan was a generous offer. Furthermore, Hussein was viewed with suspicion, not least by Hertzog, who is alleged to have used his influence to hamper the talks.¹¹⁹

One of the most remarkable aspects of Israel's negotiations with Jordan was that it had taken the government over a year before it was ready to make an offer to Hussein. This offer was based on the Allon Plan, but at no time was it considered as Israel's official policy, or even its final position on the matter. Indeed, Eshkol found some elements of the plan unacceptable, and would later request to make changes to it. In fact, Sapir commented, in December 1968, that the government needed to decide what it was offering and he professed to be ignorant of its official policies.¹²⁰ Arguably, Israel's actions were clouded by vague security considerations and misconceptions. In the end, the government and the Labour Party placed greater importance on preserving the status-quo in the West Bank and maintaining unity and political stability, than on finding a viable long-term solution to the West Bank.

Economic Integration

One of the clearest indications for Israel's lack of a coherent and comprehensive long-term policy was its economic relationship with the Occupied Territories. In the period after the war, Israel's economy grew rapidly, resulting in severe labour shortages.¹²¹ The annexation of East Jerusalem and the ending of restrictions on Palestinian movement within the West Bank meant there was nothing stopping Palestinians from finding employment in Israel. The wages were higher and the skills sought by Israeli employers (e.g. construction, agriculture, textile industry, etc.) were readily available in the West Bank. Attempts by the government, and in particular Sapir, to limit the

¹¹⁸ Interview with Amit.

¹¹⁹ Bar Zohar, *Yaacov Hertzog* Pages 327-328

¹²⁰ ISA/7821/13-a/Record of MPC Meeting/27.12.1968/Page 27.

¹²¹ Nisan, *Israel and the Territories* Page 36.

numbers of Palestinian labourers in Israel, did not have any effect. Israeli firms, unable to attract labour, started to subcontract firms in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.¹²² The economy of the territories grew rapidly in the first years under the Israeli administration. For Dayan this was a positive development, and he sought to promote further the Palestinian economy by deepening the economic integration and encouraging investment. In cooperation with Trade Minister Zeev Sherf, he gave incentives to Israeli firms to set up enterprises in the territories, which were rapidly becoming a second market for Israeli goods.¹²³ Dayan's actions were taken despite a clear warning, given to the government by a committee of Economy experts, against lifting the restrictions on investment and the free movement of labour in order to protect Israel's economy. The committee stated that the economic justifications for such an act were secondary to the political implications of an economic integration.¹²⁴

Hussein's refusal to accept the Allon Plan prompted Dayan to offer an alternative based on a Functional Solution. According to Dayan, Israel would be required to control the West Bank indefinitely, which would be achieved by utilising three methods: economic integration, Palestinian self-rule and military presence.¹²⁵ On the 6th of November, Dayan gave a speech in the city of Beersheba, and used the opportunity to call for an economic integration between Israel and the territories. When asked to clarify his position in the Knesset, Dayan reiterated his call for economic integration and added that this was in accordance with the decisions taken by the relevant government committees.¹²⁶ His words sent shockwaves across the political system. The following day Eshkol sent a strongly worded memo to Dayan, demanding to know his intentions. Eshkol appeared to be baffled by Dayan's accusation that the government was somehow advocating economic integration; Eshkol claimed that this was not the case.¹²⁷ Following Dayan's speech, Sapir gave several interviews to the press in which he spelled out that neither he nor the

¹²² Teveth, *The Cursed Blessing* Page 337.

¹²³ Nisan, *Israel and the Territories* Pages 34-35.

¹²⁴ ISA/7552/10-a/Conclusions of the 'Committee for the Development of the Held Territories'/(no date)/probably late 1967/Pages 12-13

¹²⁵ YTA/15Galili/85/7/The Dayan Plan/10.10.68.

¹²⁶ Teveth, *The Cursed Blessing* Page 343.

¹²⁷ YTA/15Galili/91/8/1/Memo from Eshkol to Dayan/19.11.68

government agreed with Dayan's ideas, 'I don't believe in this policy; I don't want it. I am against the integration.'¹²⁸

The idea of economic integration was central to Dayan's plan, with the government's lack of an economic policy with regards to the territories playing into his hands. The government, despite being against the idea, was not playing an active part in defining its economic policies towards the territories.¹²⁹ The government had early-on left the running of the territories to Dayan and chose not to deal with the economic problems of the territories, not least because Sapir was reluctant to get involved.¹³⁰ Arguably, the main tenets of Israel's de-facto economic policy in the territories (Open Bridges, economic integration and limited internal autonomy) were a by-product of the 'inexorable economic forces on both sides'.¹³¹ Israel's economic needs dictated to a large extent its involvement and the level of integration. But it was Dayan who used the economic inertia and internal political debate to promote and deepen the integration.¹³² In fact, Dayan confirmed that, because of the economic reality, it was not possible to stop the process other than by legislating against the free movement of labour as well as against the development and investment in the territories.¹³³

The economic policies towards the territories became a battleground between Sapir and Dayan. The government, encouraged by Sapir's approach, decided to try and restrict the flow of labourers. Sapir's fears of producing a nation of water carriers and woodcutters were being realised, as economic needs dictated the opening of Palestinian vocational centres intended to address Israel's labour shortages; Israel was now producing a nation of metal-workers and carpenters.¹³⁴ The fight against 'Arab Labour' was taken on by many ministers, chief among them Allon.¹³⁵ In addition, Sapir decided - against the wishes of Dayan - to place restrictions on the flow of Palestinian goods into Israel in order to protect Israel's economy. Dayan had asked for

¹²⁸ Kieval, Party Politics in Israel Page 27.

¹²⁹ LPA/2-932-1969-462/Summary of 'Israel's Economic Policy in the Territories'/(no date)/Page 5.

¹³⁰ Interview with Halperin.

¹³¹ Shmuel Sandler and Hillel Frisch, "The Political Economy of the Administrated Territories", in Daniel J. Elazar (ed), Judea, Samaria and Gaza: Views on the Present and Future (Washington, American Enterprise Institute For Public Policy Research, 1982), Page 141.

¹³² Interview with Halperin.

¹³³ ISA/8162/3-a/KFDC briefed by Dayan 24.12.1968/Page 12.

¹³⁴ Nisan, Israel and the Territories Page 93.

¹³⁵ ISA/15Allon/11/6/2/Letters from Allon to Dayan and Gazit/29.9.1967/23.10.1967.

additional resources to be invested in the territories' infrastructure, but Sapir's interests lay solely with the Israeli economy. Nevertheless, Sapir's refusal to invest in infrastructure and public services could not stop the economic tide. Within months, and despite the resistance of Israeli politicians and Palestinian mayors, the territories were connected to Israel's electricity grid.¹³⁶ Furthermore, while government ministers were bickering and appearing to be in disagreement, Dayan, through the Defence Ministry, continued to promote the employment of Arab labour, increased Israeli investment in the territories, cooperation on tourism and ongoing support for Palestinian entrepreneurs.¹³⁷

The fight over the economic integration came to a head during the first week of December. The government convened to discuss the Dayan Plan, i.e. the Functional Solution, with a rejection by ministers of both a foregone conclusion. Sapir started by criticising Dayan's plan, arguing that it would prove impossible in the long-run to administer the territories without granting their populations full civic rights. Eban claimed that the plan would lead to annexation, something the government was against because of the demographic problem. Shapira said that if the government wanted to keep the West Bank, then Dayan's plan was a good idea, but the government did not want to keep the West Bank. He therefore confirmed that the only real option Israel had was the Allon Plan, for the simple reason that it left most of the West Bank either with Hussein or with the Palestinians. In addition, both Eshkol and Sapir were in favour of putting a stop to the integration between the two economies.¹³⁸ The government decided to limit the Israeli economy's exposure to the territories and to restrict Israeli investments in the territories.¹³⁹ However, this had little effect due to the economic needs of the Israeli market. It is important to note that the government, in formulating its economic policies was not preoccupied by the long-term effect its policies would have on the territories.¹⁴⁰ In conclusion, the government did not formulate a coherent and comprehensive long-term economic

¹³⁶ Sasson Levi, "Local Government in the Administered Territories" in Elazar (Ed), Judea, Samaria and Gaza Page 111.

¹³⁷ ISA/3191/8-f/'Economic Activity in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip'/Plans for Discussion (Defence Ministry/21.5.1968.

¹³⁸ Pedatzur, The Triumph of Embarrassment Page 155.

¹³⁹ Teveth, The Cursed Blessing Page 338.

¹⁴⁰ Brian Van Arkadie, Benefits and Burdens: A Report on the West Bank and Gaza Strip Economies since 1967 (New York, Carnegie Endowment For International Peace, 1977), Pages 39-40.

policy; instead, it followed a de-facto policy, which was not only shaped by the economic forces of both sides and Dayan actions, but one which also stood against the it's official position.

On the 26 of February 1969 Levi Eshkol died of a heart attack. The last important decision the government had taken was to accept an operational plan based on the 'Allon Plan'.¹⁴¹ In a meeting on the 26th of January 1969, Gvati introduced a settlement plan that had been put together by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Settlement Department. The plan proposed the creation of settlements in the Jordan Valley, the Golan Heights and the Rafah Plains.¹⁴² The government, while not officially approving it, laid the foundation for the Allon Plan to become Israel's de-facto territorial and settlement policy while, at the same time, it provided Dayan with the opportunity to enact his Functional Solution. In short, the government adopted segments of both plans without officially approving either of them.

Summary

The National Unity Government under the leadership of Prime Minister Levi Eshkol was unable to put forward a coherent and comprehensive long-term policy with regards to the Occupied Territories, and at no time did it implement, approve, or formulate such a policy. In a sense, decision makers appeared incapable of reaching a decision on the future of the territories and instead settled on a 'muddling-through' approach.¹⁴³ In the aftermath of the Six Day War Israel had the problem of what to do with the Occupied Territories. The government had stipulated right from the start that at no time would it be willing to absorb an influx of one and a half million Arabs (the Gaza Strip and the West Bank). The solution it sought was based on an Instrumental view, meaning that Israel required some minor modifications to the 1948 ceasefire lines in order to fulfil its long-term national-security needs. Israel had taken a historic decision during the first weeks following the war to annex East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. Furthermore, it had agreed, in principle, to withdraw from the Sinai

¹⁴¹ ISA/YAOH/Meeting 8/Page 18.

¹⁴² YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Allon's Summary of the Settlement Proposal/29.1.1969.

¹⁴³ Interview with Amit.

Peninsula and the Golan Heights to the ‘internationally recognised borders’ in return for peace agreements. This decision was annulled on the 30th of October 1967, when the government decided to rephrase the wording of its earlier decision. The new decision referred to an Israeli withdrawal to ‘secure and recognised borders’, without stipulating what this meant. Additionally, Israel’s preferred borders were constantly modified; by the time of Eshkol’s death they included parts of the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, a third of the West Bank (the Allon Plan) and the whole of the Golan Heights.

Throughout the period this government was unable to ascertain its preferred approach to the West Bank and instead, it dithered over the Palestinian and Jordanian approaches. Such was the indecisiveness that most of the submitted plans included separate Palestinian and Jordanian options. Initially, the government pursued a Palestinian Approach which was based on either an autonomous area or an independent state, with Israel annexing the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank according to its security needs. With time the government drifted towards a Jordanian Approach that tied the future of the West Bank and the majority of its population with Jordan’s. However, at no time was a formal decision taken on the preferred approach.¹⁴⁴ Israel’s failure to ascertain its preferred approach can be related to a certain extent to the perceived lack of suitable negotiation partners; this was also true in the case of Egypt and Syria.

On the issue of the settlements, it would appear that the government had a clear policy, loosely fashioned on the Allon Plan. Nevertheless, the first time a settlement plan based on the Allon Plan was put to a government vote was on the 26th of January 1969. Up to that point, settlements were established on an ad-hoc basis by ad-hoc committees, without clear government overview.¹⁴⁵ Most of these decisions were taken by a small group of ministers, without consulting the government. These decisions, in particular with regards to Sinai and the Golan, were taken without considering their long-term implications and in a non-transparent manner. Moreover, Eshkol’s reluctance to hold to account ministers that acted independently - in

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Hillel.

¹⁴⁵ Elisha Efrat, Geography of Occupation Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip (Jerusalem, Carmel, 2002) (Hebrew), Pages 20 and 29-30.

particularly Dayan and Allon - meant, not only that the government's authority was undermined, but that it was also no longer responsible for the majority of decisions. Furthermore, despite the fact that neither the Allon nor the Dayan plans were approved, elements of both were used in planning and establishing settlements, resulting in an incoherent policy.

Israel's muddled approach was brought to light in the case of Hebron. The establishment of a settlement in the city, which was not included in any of the settlement plans, was against the government's prescribed position of avoiding the heavily populated areas. This case exposed the national-unity government's paralysis in terms of its decision-making process, and demonstrated how a small and determined group, associated with New Zionism, was able to exploit the system. Moreover, the resettlement of Hebron had opened 'Pandora's Box' and introduced religious and ideological imagery, i.e. a Normative view, which did not formally exist within the secular Zionist movement.¹⁴⁶

Arguably, one of the most important factors that influenced Israel's territorial policy was the position of the American administration. The 19th of June decisions cannot be understood without taking into account Israel's desire to placate the US. In addition, Johnson's position of 'no return to pre-war situation' was instrumental in legitimising both the Allon Plan and Israel's diplomatic stance. The lack of US pressure on the issues of Jerusalem and the establishment of settlements, while at the same time diplomatically supporting Israel and providing it with much needed military hardware, allowed the Israeli government to act with impunity. It had, in effect, given Israel a 'green light' to continue holding certain territories, those that Israel would retain in any future settlement.¹⁴⁷ At the same time, Israel's territorial policy was also circumscribed by the American administration; this was reflected in Israel's decisions in regards to the Palestinian Approach and the Golan Heights.

In addition to the position of the American administration, the need to reach a consensus within the wall-to-wall Coalition and within the faction-based Labour Party proved to be another factor that limited Israel's ability to formulate a clear long-term

¹⁴⁶ Roberts, Party and Policy in Israel Page 39.

¹⁴⁷ Ranta, The Seventh Day Page 60.

policy towards the Occupied Territories. The inclusion of his fiercest critics, i.e. Begin and Dayan, in the National Unity Government severely diminished Eshkol's, and the Mapai elites', capacity to dominate the decision-making process. Eshkol's position was further weakened by the need to maintain political stability and unity within the Labour Party and the Coalition. The resulting paralysis and policy vacuum provided individual ministers and interest groups with personal agendas with an opportunity to operate on their own accord and influence Israel's territorial policy.

In short, the government's approach towards the territories could be described as incoherent, muddled or even disjointed. The lack of sustained foreign pressure, especially from the US, coupled with the resumption of hostilities and increased domestic pressure, created a vacuum in which decisions were either postponed or decided upon on an ad-hoc basis. This was exemplified by the government's non-policy towards the West Bank, its inability to find a suitable solution to the Gaza Strip, its unclear economic and settlement policies, its insistence on 'secure borders' without defining what they meant and its reluctance to consider the long-term economic and social consequences of the occupation. Israel had two basic policies towards the territories, i.e. one that it had approved, but did not implement (19th of June decisions) and another which it partially implemented (the Allon Plan) but which was not approved. In other words, the Eshkol government had decided not to decide.

The Meir Period

Introduction

Better Sharm El-Sheikh without peace than peace without Sharm El-Sheikh.¹

On the 26th of October 1968, Egypt initiated a massive eight-hour artillery barrage across the Suez Canal; the attack was preceded by several smaller artillery engagements in the previous months. Egyptian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Riad warned visiting American diplomats that more was to come.² According to Israeli estimates, Egyptian President Gamal 'Abd El-Nasser was gearing up for war, using diplomacy as a pretext for gaining time.³ On the 31st of October, in response to the increasingly volatile situation along the canal, and in order to provide a solution to Israel's long-term security needs in the Sinai Peninsula, the Eshkol government decided that there would be no peace with Egypt unless Israel enjoyed territorial contiguity with Sharm El-Sheikh. The area was within the parameters of the government's defined 'secure and recognised borders' alongside the Gaza Strip.⁴ Israel's decision was conveyed to the UN special envoy Gunner Jarring, and, in order to please the Americans, Israel expressed its willingness to negotiate with Egypt without any preconditions.⁵

Against the backdrop of increased volatility along the Suez Canal and the impasse reached in the diplomatic arena, changes of leadership occurred in Israel and in the US. In January 1969 Richard Nixon, who was perceived by many Israeli politicians to be more 'pro-Israel' than his predecessor, took office in the White House. Nixon, together with his Secretary of State William Rogers and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, introduced a new era of American involvement in the region.⁶ In the following chapters, an emphasis will be placed, on the role played by the new American administration and its impact on Israel's territorial policies.

¹ Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked, From June to October: the Middle East between 1967 and 1973 (New Brunswick, Transaction Books, 1978), Page 41.

² Korn, Stalemate Pages 93-94.

³ ISA/4221/4-a/Foreign Ministry Intelligence Report/7.5.1968.

⁴ ISA/7336/7-a/Government's Decision/31.10.1968.

⁵ Goldstein, Eshkol Page 598.

⁶ Quandt, Peace Process Page 63.

Just as importantly, the death of Prime Minister Levi Eshkol changed the dynamics of Israel's political scene, thrusting previously retired party chairman Golda Meir into the limelight. Her nomination was presumed to be temporary; it would turn out to be one of the most defining moments in Israeli history. Meir dominated the political scene and the decision-making process. Her stranglehold on the decision-making process ensured that no serious discussion on Israel's territorial policy took place. The following chapters will demonstrate that, unlike her predecessor, Meir was in no rush to find a comprehensive long-term solution to the Occupied Territories; she 'repressed dissent and criticism as creating unnecessary conflict, and insisted decisions could be made later'.⁷ Meir propagated the myth that time was on Israel's side and that the Arab states would eventually accept Israel's new concept of 'secure' borders.

The Meir period will be divided into three chapters. The first chapter will provide a detailed account of Israel's international and domestic environments and examine the impact the Labour Party's faction-based politics and the American diplomatic position had on Israel's territorial policy. Additionally, using the case studies of the Oral Law and the Rogers Plan, the chapter will examine the evolution of Israel's territorial policy and the continuing intransigence of the government, its shift to the Right and its desire to hold on to areas deemed strategically important. The chapter will demonstrate that the Meir government placed greater importance on maintaining unity by avoiding taking controversial decisions than on having a clear long-term territorial policy.

The second chapter will discuss the changes that occurred in Israel's domestic and international environments as a result of the break-up of the National-Unity Coalition and the coming to power of Sadat. The chapter will demonstrate that, unlike during the Eshkol period, neither Israel's perceived lack of peace partners nor the composition of its ruling Coalition were major factors behind its lack of policy. Additionally, this chapter will examine Israel's policies towards the Sinai Peninsula, the Rafah Plains, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

⁷ Gorenberg, The Accidental Empire Page 271.

The final chapter will re-examine the impact the Labour Party's faction-based politics had on Israel's territorial policy through the examples of the party's Grand Debate and the discussions that took place over the Galili and the Fourteen-point Documents. The chapter will detail the breakdown of national consensus regarding the Occupied Territories, as a result of the Yom Kippur War, and the renewed search for clear long-term territorial policies. Additionally, the chapter will discuss the impact the increased American involvement and the new political situation (i.e. the rise of the NRP and the Right) had on Israel's territorial policies. In short, the following chapters will show that the government under the leadership of Meir postponed controversial decisions, avoided putting forward a coherent and comprehensive territorial policy, and engaged in creating a new and irreversible political and demographic reality in the Occupied Territories.

Chapter One

The 'War of Attrition'

On the 1st of February 1969 President Nixon was presented with a NSC (National Security Council) briefing-paper outlining America's Middle East options:

1. 'Leave the search for a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict to the parties and Ambassador Jarring.'
2. 'Pursue a more active US policy, involving US-USSR talks.'
3. 'Assume that no settlement is possible and concentrate efforts on objectives short of a settlement.'⁸

In its brief, the NSC proposed pursuing the second option and presented Nixon with a new policy blueprint:

1. The administration's long-term objective is to reach a binding agreement - not necessarily a peace treaty.
2. Israel should withdraw to the international border with minor adjustments, while special arrangements should be made for the Gaza Strip.
3. Critical areas should be demilitarised.
4. Jerusalem should remain unified but, Jordan should be allowed to assume religious and municipal roles within it.
5. The parties 'must' participate in the negotiations at some point.
6. A final solution must be reached with Israel's consent and participation.
7. Any agreement must include a final and comprehensive solution to the refugee problem.⁹

On the 8th of March 1969, after several 'calm' months, Egyptian artillery resumed its bombardment of Israeli forces along the Suez Canal. The Egyptian attack was part of a new long-term four-stage campaign by Nasser to regain control over the Sinai Peninsula. Nasser planned for an initial period comprising massive artillery

⁸ Quandt, Peace Process Page 63.

⁹ Ibid Pages 63-64.

bombardment of Israel's positions along the eastern bank of the Suez Canal, followed by limited cross-border raids by commando units. The third and fourth stages comprised of canal crossings by multiple forces culminating in a full-scale attack with the intent of seizing the eastern bank of the canal.¹⁰ Egyptian war-planners believed Israel would face severe difficulties sustaining a long-term war of attrition; they therefore planned for a 'long battle to exhaust the enemy'.¹¹ The ensuing war - referred to as the 'War of Attrition' - never progressed further than the first two stages and was characterised by artillery bombardments and limited cross-canal excursions.

The increased instability in the region, as a result of the War of Attrition, provided the context for the unveiling of the US's new initiative, which was based on the NSC paper.¹² During the months of March and April 1969, Nixon and Rogers held a series of meetings with the leaders of the Arab world, through which they became convinced that the only way out of the diplomatic deadlock was to bring Nasser to the negotiation table. Although they were sympathetic towards Jordan, they came to the conclusion that King Hussein would be unable to reach a separate peace agreement with Israel without the support of Nasser.¹³ The new American diplomatic initiative was therefore based on the belief that there could be no solution to the conflict without Nasser's participation and that this could only be achieved by employing direct Soviet political pressure on him. Rogers' working assumption was that any solution would have to be negotiated with the assistance of the USSR and resemble Israel's 19th of June decisions. In fact, in a meeting several months later, Joseph Sisco (Assistant Secretary of State for Near-Eastern and South-Asian Affairs) informed Yitzhak Rabin (Israel's ambassador to the US) that the US was working towards a settlement based on the 19th of June decisions.¹⁴ However, while Rogers accepted Israel's demands that the final borders should be in line with Israel's security requirements, he stated that the final agreement would not be based on the Allon Plan or on major modifications to the 1967 borders.¹⁵ Nevertheless, neither Rogers nor the US administration spelt out what were the future borders they envisioned while doing

¹⁰ Jonathan Shimshoni, Israel and Conventional Deterrence: Border Warfare from 1953 to 1970 (London, Cornell University Press, 1988), Page 143.

¹¹ Korn, Stalemate Page 109.

¹² ISA/4780/2-f/Rabin's Assessments of the American diplomatic position/14.3.1969.

¹³ This assessment was also shared by Israel.

¹⁴ Goldstein, Rabin Page 216.

¹⁵ ISA/4780/2-f/Summary of Eban's Meeting with Rogers/13.3.1969/Pages 4-5.

little to force Israel to define its territorial policy, thus contributing to the continuation of Israel's vague approach.

Golda Meir

Newly-appointed Prime Minister Golda Meir clarified the government's position with regards to the US initiative. She expressed her reservations about Nixon's decision to find a solution to the conflict through talks with the USSR.¹⁶ According to Meir, the US initiative called for an Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories to the international borders (allowing for some minor border modifications) and for special arrangements to be made for East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. She informed the Americans that their initiative did not represent Israel's position and that Israel did not see eye-to-eye with them on this matter. Furthermore, while reiterating the importance of its relationship with the US, Meir added that Israel would have no reservations in rejecting a US-USSR plan if it was not in line with its own policies.¹⁷ Meir's position was backed by the government, which agreed not to participate in the American initiative.¹⁸

After the death of Eshkol, Meir had been unexpectedly nominated for the Prime Minister's position. Finance Minister and acting Labour Party Chairman Pinhas Sapir proposed nominating Meir in order to avoid a succession battle between the two leading candidates: Moshe Dayan and Yigal Allon.¹⁹ Sapir might have been able to promote his own candidacy but claimed not to be interested in the job.²⁰ Sapir explained the decision to nominate Meir as an attempt to secure Mapai's dominant position within the Labour Party, so that a suitable candidate from Mapai could emerge; it was reported that Meir was sick and rumours were circulating that she would not last the year.²¹ Moreover, it was well known that Sapir held a historic animosity towards Dayan relating to Ben-Gurion's favouritism of Dayan and Shimon

¹⁶ ISA/4780/2-f/Summary of Meir's Meeting with Walworth Barbour/19.3.1969.

¹⁷ ISA/8162/4-a/KFDC briefed by Meir/31.3.1969/Pages 3-4.

¹⁸ ISA/4780/2-f/Telegram from Meir to Eban/18.3.1969.

¹⁹ ISA/YAOH/Meeting 10/Page 4.

²⁰ Interview with Halperin.

²¹ Beilin, The Price of Unity Page 52

Peres.²² Meir's nomination was surprisingly supported by Dayan and Allon, who agreed to her candidacy, both ensuring in the process that the other would not be nominated. In addition, Meir's political views were in line with both Rafi's and Ahdut-Ha'avoda's; Yitzhak Tabenkin commented that Meir would save Israel from the threat of giving back the territories.²³ Indeed, during her premiership, Meir's preferred decision-making unit, infamously called 'Golda's Kitchenette', comprised mainly Rafi and Ahdut-Ha'avoda ministers: Dayan, Information Minister Galili and to a lesser degree Allon.

According to Meir there would be no return to the pre-war borders and Israel would retain control over Sharm El-Sheikh, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights. However, Meir did rule out annexing parts of the West Bank, citing the demographic problem.²⁴ Meir claimed that, in view of the fact that the Arabs refused to make peace, the ceasefire lines were Israel's best security guarantee. For Meir, the need to maintain the integrity of the national-unity government and that of the Labour Party superseded the need for a clear territorial policy. Therefore, she advocated a policy of 'non-decision' on Israel's territorial policy, arguing that any decision taken would risk alienating parts of the Coalition and the Labour Party; Meir's stance enabled the various elements within the Coalition - from Mapam to Gahal - to coexist.

The Electoral Platform

The period following the outbreak of the War of Attrition and leading to the general elections (October 1969) saw an intense debate within the Labour Party on the future of Israel's territorial policy. In contrast, the territorial question was not an important pre-election issue amongst the electorate and there was scant public debate on the subject.²⁵ The government called for the continuation of the flexible and vague understanding reached by the Eshkol administration, i.e. calling for direct negotiations between the parties on the basis of 'secure and recognised borders' while continuing

²² Interview with Halperin.

²³ Spyer, The Decline of Statism Page 138.

²⁴ Gorenberg, The Accidental Empire 190.

²⁵ Efraim Torgovnik, "Party Factions and Election issues" in Asher Arian (Ed), The Elections in Israel 1969 (Jerusalem, Jerusalem Academic Press, 1972), Page 21.

de-facto implementation of the Allon Plan. The government, like its predecessor, left the exact definition of those boundaries open for interpretation, opting instead for an ambiguous alternative that did not challenge the unity of the Labour Party or the National-Unity Coalition.

This practice of leaving the main issues undecided was not acceptable to all ministers. Indeed, several ministers, most notably Dayan and Allon, rejected this approach and called for the adoption of clear policies. The debate between the two approaches came to a head during the Labour Party's electoral-platform negotiations. It pitted Rafi and Ahdut-Ha'avoda on one side and Mapai and Mapam (as part of the Alignment) on the other. It is important to note that because of the Labour Party's dominance within the Coalition the outcome of the debate had a direct impact on Israel's future policies. Dayan used his popularity - a movement for the instalment of Dayan as prime minister had collected more than 100,000 signatures - and the threat he would leave the Labour Party to call for the acceptance of his ideas, i.e. to push for the adoption of clear and transparent policies towards the territories based on his Functional Solution.²⁶ On the 27th of May, during debates on Labour's electoral platform, Dayan proposed several points he believed should serve as the basis for the party's future policy (and as a result that of the next government):²⁷

1. Israel should abandon the ceasefire agreements and the ceasefire lines. Any changes to the current situation would occur only as part of peace agreements.
2. Any future peace agreement must provide Israel with 'strategically-secured borders'.
3. Within the defined 'strategically-secured borders' Israel should use the time it had to create facts on the ground. It should not leave the exact borders open for negotiations, and should define their parameters instead. This would be done through the creation of settlements and the establishment of security arrangements in the Golan Heights, the Sinai Peninsula and the West Bank.

²⁶ Kieval, *Party Politics in Israel* Page 29.

²⁷ LPA/2-007-1969-244/Record of Labour Party's Electoral Committee Meeting 27.5.1969/Page 1.

4. Israel's policies with regards to the occupied population should be guided by the would-be-final-status arrangements. The inhabitants of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip should not be allowed to become Israeli citizens. In the case of the West Bank, they should be allowed to maintain their Jordanian citizenship and the Open Bridges policy should be continued.
5. Israel, being the sole government and jurisdiction in the territories, should strive to raise the living standards of the population. In addition, the population should be allowed to exercise 'self-rule' - as opposed to self-determination - under the auspices of the Israeli military administration and the overall control of the government of Israel. The main issues on which Israel should focus in the territories were 'progress and development'.²⁸

Dayan's ideas stood against the perceived position of the Labour Party. These ideas had been discussed during a series of meetings in December 1968 and subsequently rejected by the Eshkol government, with ministers advocating the adoption of the Allon Plan instead. At the time, the Eshkol government chose to leave the decision over the final status of the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula unresolved. By adopting Dayan's ideas the party risked jeopardising its flexible approach and alienating its 'dovish' members (most notably Mapam). In addition, ministers expressed reservations with regards to Dayan's ideas of economic integration and 'self-rule' (i.e. the Functional Solution). It was feared that these ideas would lead to a demographic problem and would prove to be an economic burden. Consequently, both Mapam and Mapai rejected Dayan's plans.

Dayan did, however, find a receptive audience among Ahdut-Ha'avoda members.²⁹ Both factions agreed on most settlement and security matters and believed that Israel should define its future relationship with the territories by creating facts on the ground. Although the factions clashed on several issues, most notably the role of Mapam in the Alignment and the nomination of Allon as Deputy Prime Minister, they shared a common vision in regard to Israel's territorial and security policies which allowed them to collaborate. In fact, the factions chose to present a united front on diplomatic and security issues during the electoral-platform negotiations. On the issue

²⁸ LPA/2-007-1969-244/Page 1-3.

²⁹ Beilin, *The Price of Unity* Pages 54-56.

of the settlements, the factions presented a joint position - the Tsur-Ya'akobi Amendment - which called for the adoption of an encompassing settlement plan to expand and strengthen the existing settlements in the Golan Heights, the West Bank, the Sinai Peninsula and the Jordan Valley.³⁰ In contrast, Mapai called for the fast-tracking of Israel's settlement initiatives in order to create facts on the ground as a response to future needs.³¹ Rafi and Ahdut-Ha'avoda were pushing for immediate action and clear policies while Mapai and Mapam were opting for vague definitions that would leave room for political manoeuvring.

The collaboration between Rafi and Ahdut-Ha'avoda was more intricate and complex than merely a mutual desire to bring about changes to the party's electoral-platform. On the one hand the factions were rivals - fighting for power and influence within the Labour Party - while on the other hand, they were natural allies in that both were opposing Mapai's and Mapam's 'dovish' positions. While Ahdut-Ha'avoda members were weary of Dayan's threats to leave the party at any given moment and join Gahal,³² they also viewed him and Rafi as natural political allies with 'hawkish' credentials.³³ Evidently, Israel's territorial policy (or the absence of one), during the Meir period, cannot be fully understood without taking into account the actions of Rafi and Ahdut-Ha'avoda.

Dayan and Allon

The cooperation between Rafi and Ahdut-Ha'avoda was not limited to inter-factional or party matters. The extensive cooperation by the two factions on the territorial issue arose from their near-agreement on the long-term policies Israel should adopt and implement: the retention of the Golan Heights and the expansion of settlement activity there, the creation of a Jewish presence in the Gaza Strip, the expansion of the settlement activity in and around East Jerusalem and Gush-Etzion, strengthening and expanding the Jewish presence in and around Hebron (Kiryat Arba) and the

³⁰ LPA/2-007-1969-244/Record of the Labour Party's Electoral Committee Meeting/(no date)/Pages 2-3.

³¹ LPA/2-007-1969-244/Page 2.

³² Izhar, Between Vision and Power Page 443.

³³ Izhar, Pages 442-444.

continuation of the settlement activity along the Jordan Valley - all in accordance with the Allon Plan. The apparent near agreement on the territorial issue, in particular on the importance of creating facts on the ground, demonstrated good understanding and visible cooperation between the leaders of both factions. Despite being bitter political rivals, Dayan and Allon collaborated extensively on the territorial issue. This stems from the fact that, while both were pursuing different long-term solutions, their short-term objectives were similar.

Dayan and Allon were amongst the only ministers to be involved in all aspects of Israel's territorial policy. While it is true that other ministers were involved in the approval of decisions relating to territorial policies, only Dayan, Allon, Trade Minister Zeev Sherf and Agriculture Minister Haim Gvati took part in the formulation and the implementation of those decisions. As a result, Dayan and Allon were able to manipulate the decision-making process and dictate their agenda; with the exception of Golda Meir, Galili, Sherf and Gvati, ministers were kept in the dark until voting time. In fact, at times ministers were not even required to approve policies, as the relevant ministerial committee's decisions sufficed.³⁴ This state of affairs clearly indicates that, while Allon and Dayan were implementing (with Meir's acquiescence) their own policies in the Occupied Territories, the government did not have a clear long-term territorial policy.

It is important to note that Allon was more proactive on the matter of creating settlements. In some cases he collaborated with others e.g. with Gvati and Weitz (the head of the Settlement Department) when proposing the settlement of the Rafah Plains,³⁵ while in other cases e.g. the expansion of Jerusalem's municipal boundaries,³⁶ strengthening the Jewish presence in and around Gush-Etzion³⁷ and Hebron,³⁸ he appeared to be the driving force. Nevertheless, the vast majority of these cases were discussed and decided-upon in committees of which Dayan, Gvati and/or Sherf were members.

³⁴ ISA/YAOH/Meeting 7/Page 4.

³⁵ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Allon's Proposal (in which he acknowledges the contribution of Gvati and Weitz)/15.7.1969.

³⁶ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Allon's Proposal regarding Jerusalem's municipal boundaries/18.5.1969.

³⁷ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Allon's Proposal to the Ministerial Committee for Gush-Etzion and Hebron (MCGH)/15.4.1969.

³⁸ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Allon's Proposal to the MCGH/10.6.1969.

During their time in office, Dayan and Allon dictated and influenced Israel's territorial policies through their ministries as well as the various ministerial committees of which they were members.³⁹ In some cases the relevant ministerial committees were exempt from reporting back to the government and were authorised to approve and implement policies independently. Moreover, on many occasions Allon would request that matters be referred to committees of which both were members, or to some newly-established ad-hoc committees (usually comprising himself, Dayan, Sherf and/or Gvati). Additionally, both provided ministerial support (and in Dayan's case military support) for each other's proposals, such as in the case of the creation of four outposts in the Petza'el region of the Jordan Valley (which was done in accordance with the Allon Plan),⁴⁰ and the appropriation of lands in the Gush-Etzion area for the creation of new settlements.⁴¹ Additional evidence for their method of collaboration, and the fact that they were not acting in accordance with any particular territorial policy, can be seen in their early attempts to establish settlements in the Gaza Strip.

On the 9th of June 1969, Allon proposed the establishment of civilian settlements between the cities of Rafah and Gaza. The proposal was submitted to the Ministerial Committee for the Held Territories (MCHT). In his proposal, Allon emphasised the importance of creating a Jewish presence in the Gaza Strip and explained the added value these settlements would have to the future of the area in that they would split the strip south of the city of Gaza.⁴² The following week, General Shlomo Gazit, (the IDF's coordinator of activities in the territories), in a memo to Dayan and Gvati, explained that Mordehai Gur (the IDF commander of the Gaza Strip) suggested looking into the creation of several settlements in the centre of the strip. Gazit went on to say that an order had been given on the 13th of April for the relevant army departments to examine this suggestion and to contact the Settlement Department and

³⁹ The ad-hoc ministerial committees headed by them, the MCGH [which included Gvati and Sherf], the MCHT [which included Gvati, Sapir and Sherf] and the Ministerial Defence Committee.

⁴⁰ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Letter from Dayan concerning the proposed outposts/2.7.1969.

⁴¹ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/The MCGH Decision/7.5.1969.

⁴² YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Allon's Proposal to the MCHT/9.6.1969.

the Ministry of Agriculture, and clarified that the IDF had yet to make a formal approach to the Ministry of Agriculture on the subject.⁴³

On the 17th of June, Allon wrote to Weitz to inform him that a proposal for the creation of two settlements in the Gaza Strip - one north of the city of Rafah and another south of Gaza City - had been submitted to the government. Allon requests a comprehensive settlement analysis of the area from Weitz and attached a detailed map to his letter.⁴⁴ The following month, during a meeting dedicated to the settlements, Allon informed the government that the decision regarding the creation of settlements in the Gaza Strip should await the expert opinion of Gvati.⁴⁵ On the 11th of August, Gazit wrote to Allon and Gvati explaining that Dayan would put-forward a proposal for the creation of two Nahal outposts in the Gaza Strip - one south of Gaza City (Abu-Midan area) and another north of Khan Yunis (Samiri area) - to the MCHT. He explained that the decision taken by the Agriculture Ministry, not to propose civilian settlements in the area, had prompted the army and the Defence Ministry (which viewed the settlements as being vital to Israel's security) to come up with their own proposal. In addition, Gazit stated that the army will have no problem in providing appropriate Nahal personnel.⁴⁶ On the 24th of November, Allon proposed to the government, (presumably after a decision was taken by the MCHT), to create two Nahal outposts in the Gaza Strip: one south of Gaza City (Abu-Midan area) and another north of Khan Yunis (Samiri area) - these would later be known as Netzarim and Morag. To his proposal Allon attached a detailed survey carried out by the Settlement Department.⁴⁷

In early 1970, Allon's free reign as Israel's settlement Tsar came to an end with the appointment of Galili - Meir's close confidant and political advisor -⁴⁸ as the head of the Ministerial Settlement Committee (replacing Allon). Under Galili, the process of creating facts on the ground was performed in a more 'organised and transparent manner' and corresponded to the Allon Plan and the Oral Law. This included the

⁴³ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Memo from Gazit to Gvati and Dayan/16.6.1969.

⁴⁴ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Memo from Allon to Weitz/17.6.1969.

⁴⁵ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Allon's Proposal/15.7.1969.

⁴⁶ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Memo from Gazit to Allon/11.8.1969.

⁴⁷ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Allon's Proposal/24.11.1969.

⁴⁸ Golda Meir, *My Life* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975), Page 346.

expansion of Jerusalem's municipal area, and, for the first time, the establishment of settlements in the Gaza Strip and the Rafah Plains.

There was, however, one significant exception to Israel's settlement activities, during the Meir period, one that did not correspond with the Allon Plan. The case of Kiryat Arba exposed the fact that the government did not have a clear settlement policy, or definitive settlement map, and did not act in accordance with the Allon Plan. The lack of clear settlement policies enabled Allon to incorporate Kiryat Arba into his plan while claiming that it left all diplomatic options open and served Israel's security needs.⁴⁹ Meir admitted that Kiryat Arba was established because of the problematic nature of settling Jews in Hebron. However, she acknowledged that there were some causes for concern regarding the technical and geographical aspects of the project,⁵⁰ and regarding the legal and diplomatic issues that might arise from the need for land appropriation.⁵¹ The settlement was built on the strategic hills overlooking the city of Hebron, on lands appropriated by the IDF for 'army purposes'. The inclusion of Kiryat Arba into the Allon Plan contradicted Allon's principal objective of avoiding the heavily populated areas. Additionally, it is important to mention that, despite the fact that its establishment was not in accordance with the government's professed settlement plans, Kiryat Arba was one of the few settlements to be established in a transparent manner; it was approved by the government and then, on the 25th of March 1970, by the Knesset. The government initially planned for 900 residential units, but later included infrastructure for a commercial and an industrial site.⁵²

The Oral Law

One of the main reasons behind Israel's inability to formulate a clear long-term territorial policy was the state of paralysis of the government's decision-making process, caused by the Labour Party's faction-based politics. At the beginning of August 1969 the Labour Party convened to discuss its electoral platform, while a political storm was brewing behind the scenes. The conference came after several

⁴⁹ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Allon's Proposals/29.1.1969 and the 30.4.1969.

⁵⁰ ISA/8162/5-a/KFDC briefed by Meir/27.5.1969/Page 1.

⁵¹ ISA/6501/24-c/Memo from Meir to Galili/7.7.1970.

⁵² ISA/6646/2-c/Report by Gazit on Kiryat Arba/4.1.72.

months of negotiations on the platform chapters by a special steering committee. Dayan, despite being a member of this committee, was unhappy with the phrasing of the electoral platform and chose the occasion to assert his will on the party's decision-making process or, in other words, Mapai's dominance of the process.⁵³ In his diary, Allon provides a breakdown of the main points of disagreement between Dayan and Mapai (in particular with Sapir) in the days leading to the conference. Sapir rejected Dayan's idea of economic integration and his proposals for encouraging Arab labour in Israel, Palestinian 'self-rule' and increased investment in the territories. These, he feared, would lead to the installation of Israeli law in the territories and subsequently to their annexation.⁵⁴ In fact, Sapir's fears were not without merit: several weeks earlier the MCHT decided to regulate the employment of Palestinians in Israel,⁵⁵ and the idea of establishing Israeli law in the territories was discussed in the Interior Ministry.⁵⁶

The Labour Party was more receptive to Dayan's ideas, arguably because of the fact that, over time, and under the hawkish leadership of Meir - who sided with Dayan on matters of national security, it had shifted to the right and had become more dogmatic and less flexible on the territorial issue. A clear indication of this change can be seen in the views and remarks made by the 'dovish' ministers. In a meeting on the 20th of August 1967, Police Minister Eliyahu Sasson urged the government to withdraw from the West Bank, with the exception of East Jerusalem, in exchange for a peace agreement with Jordan.⁵⁷ During the conference, Sasson argued that there should not be a return to the 1948 ceasefire lines and that any peace treaty must provide Israel with 'secure and recognised borders' -⁵⁸ Dayan's terminology had become common jargon.

Eban - speaking for the Mapai elite - was adamant that the party should not split over the territorial issue, arguing that the party was big enough to accommodate different points of view. In the negotiation period, Eban tried to persuade Dayan to use the

⁵³ Kieval, *Party Politics in Israel* Page 31.

⁵⁴ YTA/15Allon/Allon's 1969 Diary/27.7.1969.

⁵⁵ YTA/15Galili/64/2/MCHT Decision No.28/9.7.1969.

⁵⁶ YTA/15Galili/64/2/Memo from the head of the IDF's Gaza and Sinai administration to the Interior Ministry/20.7.1969.

⁵⁷ ISA/7921/2-a/Letter from Sasson to Eshkol/24.8.1967.

⁵⁸ LPA/2-021-1969-95/Record of Labour Party's Conference/4.8.1969/Page 68

more flexible term 'economic coordination' as opposed to 'economic integration' or 'merging', to describe Israel's economic relations with the territories.⁵⁹ Eban added that no firm decision had been taken on the future of the territories and that the current situation should be preserved until a suitable peace partner emerged; in other words, Eban preferred propagating the 'decision not to decide'. Eban, repeating the government's mantra, explained that Israel would insist on direct negotiations, which would lead to an agreement based on 'secure and recognised borders'.⁶⁰

In response, Dayan argued that Israel needed to dictate the diplomatic proceedings, which would ensure that its preferred diplomatic outcome would be achieved, refuting the premise that creating facts on the ground was detrimental to peace. For Dayan there were only two possible future scenarios for the West Bank - either as part of Jordan or as an Israeli controlled area. According to Dayan, one could not divide Bethlehem from Jerusalem or Jerusalem from Ramallah, as those areas had historic and socio-economic ties; he compared this to the ties between Holon, Tel-Aviv and Ramat-Gan.⁶¹ Furthermore, he stated that Israel should not impose its nationalism and identity on the local population. According to Dayan, Israel needed to encourage investment and economic development in the territories, while allowing the population to retain their ties with the Arab world, in order to promote coexistence.⁶²

Dayan rejected the vague terminology offered by Eban and insisted that he did not accept the 'decision not to decide'.⁶³ Instead Dayan demanded a clear position on the territorial issue while advocating increased economic integration with the territories and the eventual establishment of Palestinian 'self-rule'. Dayan was not alone in demanding unequivocal decisions, in this respect he enjoyed the support of Ahdut-Ha'avoda; Allon claimed that 'the decision not to decide on Israel's future map was a mistake'.⁶⁴ Allon argued that the fact that the government had acted, 'conceptually', in an incremental way, along the lines of his plan, was not sufficient. He called on the party and the government to act in a clear and transparent manner and legislate on the

⁵⁹ YTA/15Galili/64/2/Eban's corrections of Dayan's text/13.8.1969.

⁶⁰ LPA/2-021-1969-95/Record of Labour Party's Conference/4.8.1969/Page 27.

⁶¹ LPA/2-021-1969-95/Page 57.

⁶² LPA/2-021-1969-95/Pages 57-58.

⁶³ LPA/2-021-1969-95/Page 58.

⁶⁴ LPA/2-021-1969-95/Record of Labour Party's Conference/third session/4.8.1969/Page 37.

matter.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, with regards to Israel's economic objectives, Ahdut-Ha'avoda was adamantly against Dayan's idea of economic integration.⁶⁶

Dayan's popularity eclipsed that of any other Israeli politician and the threat he made to leave the party had an effect on the Mapai elites. A Rafi split appeared an imminent reality, as neither Mapai nor Dayan would back down. Yet the need to maintain unity and find a compromise was not lost on either side.⁶⁷ Dayan needed to remain Defence Minister to have a realistic chance to become the next Prime Minister, while Meir feared being outflanked by the 'doves' in Mapai.⁶⁸ Additionally, there was a genuine fear, among Mapai members, that Rafi would split from the party and collaborate with Gahal, in a move that would pose a direct threat to Mapai's hegemonic status. In the end, the Mapai elites were afraid to 'call Dayan's bluff' and settled on a compromise.⁶⁹ Sapir was deeply unhappy by the capitulation to Dayan, having previously threatened to resign if Rafi's and Ahdut-Ha'avoda's amendments were accepted.⁷⁰ But, as always, Sapir accepted Meir's decision regardless of his own position on the matter. Sapir was rumoured to have had three prerogatives in life: 'not to fight with Golda, to serve the party and to serve the state, and that what was good for the party was good for the state.'⁷¹

The agreed compromise became known as the Oral Law, i.e. a non-binding 'optional-unwritten understanding' that would serve as a guideline for future negotiations.⁷² This created a situation where the party had two distinct policies: one policy it had agreed upon and which was presented as its formal policy, and another 'informal' policy which included agreements on specific issues and which would accompany the party's electoral-platform.⁷³ As if to affirm the importance of Meir's Kitchenette, the Oral Law was written by Galili and Dayan, with some input by Meir.⁷⁴ The main reasoning behind the Oral Law, other than to satisfy Dayan's demands, was to provide

⁶⁵ LPA/2-021-1969-95/Pages 40-41.

⁶⁶ LPA/2-021-1969-95/Page 41.

⁶⁷ Ernest Stock, "Foreign Policy Issues" in Asher, The Elections In Israel 1969 Page 44.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Interview with Beilin.

⁷⁰ YTA/15Allon/Allon's 1969 Diary/27.7.1969.

⁷¹ Interview with Halperin.

⁷² Kieval, Party Politics in Israel Pages 32-33.

⁷³ Torgovnik, "Party Factions and Election issues" in Asher, The Elections In Israel 1969 Page 25.

⁷⁴ LPA/2-232-1969-374/hand-written note from Galili to Reuven Barkatt/(No Date).

answers to several important questions, regarding the Occupied Territories, which the government and the party had been avoiding for years: what was Israel's long-term vision, what were its strategic imperatives and what were its settlement policies?⁷⁵

The Oral Law was as follows:

The government's decisions regarding the issue of secure borders include: Israel views the Jordan River as its eastern border, a secure border fit for the purpose of providing protection from possible invasions. The Golan Heights and the Gaza Strip will remain under Israeli control, while maritime movement through the Gulf of Eilat will remain free and secure by Israeli forces controlling the straits. The latter area will be an Israeli territory, allowing for continuity that would suit its security requirements.⁷⁶

The Oral law and Dayan's interpretation of it were similar to the Allon Plan,⁷⁷ in fact, there is nothing in the Oral Law that contradicts the Allon Plan, or for that matter previous government or party decisions.⁷⁸ With the exception of the demand for territorial continuity from Sharm El-Sheikh to Eilat, both the Oral Law and the Allon Plan share the same geographical parameters - a fact acknowledged by Allon.⁷⁹ Allon, however, stated that, while the Oral Law became part of the party's electoral platform, in reality it was the Allon Plan that was implemented.⁸⁰ In order not to alienate Mapam, and under pressure from elements within Mapai, an additional statement was added to the Oral Law reiterating that if a suitable peace partner emerged Israel would be willing to enter into negotiations without any pre-conditions.⁸¹

Labour Party Convention

On the 11th of September 1969, the Labour Party's Central Committee members convened to vote on the party's electoral platform. According to the platform, Israel was ready to hold direct negotiations without preconditions, aimed at achieving peace agreements. These would be based on 'strategically-secure borders' as to ensure

⁷⁵ LPA/2-021-1969-95/Record of Labour Party's Conference/5.8.1969/Page 23.

⁷⁶ LPA/2-23-1969-98/The Oral Law.

⁷⁷ Stock, "Foreign Policy Issues" in Asher, The Elections in Israel 1969 Page 45.

⁷⁸ LPA/2-932-1969-462/Letter from Galili to Meir/7.8.1969.

⁷⁹ ISA/YAOH/Meeting 9/Pages 8-11.

⁸⁰ ISA/YAOH/Meeting 9/Page 12.

⁸¹ Beilin, The Price of Unity Page 57.

Israel's national interests and until such agreements were reached, the current status quo would be maintained.⁸² According to Torgovnik, the electoral manifesto needed to be presented to party members or to potential voters as 'broad, general and even grey ... to represent collective views'.⁸³ On the 'Held Territories' chapter, the party preferred not to define Israel's relationship with the territories. The party chose not to specify the exact nature of Israel's economic relationship with the territories and left the matter in the hands of the government which,⁸⁴ in turn, left the matter in the hands of Dayan. This last point needs to be emphasised. By default, because of the Labour Party's political dominance (the party held an outright majority in the Knesset) the decision not to define Israel's economic and political relationship with the Occupied Territories effectively represented the government's territorial policy. Despite the party's disagreement with Dayan's de-facto implementation of the economic integration programme, it chose not to challenge him. The platform recognised the government as the highest authority in the territories and, as such, the sole provider of services to the population. Additionally, it called for the retention of the Open Bridges policy (against the wishes of Sapir) and for the raising of the populations' living standards.⁸⁵

For the first time, the party made clear its support for the continuation and expansion of the settlement programme. This, in effect, stood against the party's earlier promise to engage in negotiations without preconditions. The party's agreed position was a step towards the acceptance of the Allon Plan and it reinforced the idea that Israel must define its own borders and security arrangements by creating facts on the ground. The agreed position read:

Since the cease-fire agreement came into effect, new settlements and outposts have arisen on the Golan Heights, in the Jordan valley and in Sinai, while the settlement movement saw a renewal of its activity in Gush-Etzion, Kalia and Hebron. Two years after the Six Day War, security outposts and civilian settlements should be established with more urgency and vigour. Whenever debating over the issue of the settlements, be it urban or rural, the government will take into account the country's security needs and the current state of affairs. Special consideration will be given to the areas essential to Israel's national security. The Labour Party will call upon the nation, in

⁸² LPA/2-23-1969-98/Record of Labour Party's Conference/11.9.1969/Pages 6-7.

⁸³ Torgovnik, "Party Factions and Election issues" in Asher, The Elections In Israel 1969 Page 29.

⁸⁴ LPA/2-23-1969-98/Record of Labour Party's Conference/11.9.1969/Page 9.

⁸⁵ LPA/2-23-1969-98/Page 10.

particular the young generation, to help turn the vision of settlement activity into reality, as part of the national cause.⁸⁶

After reading the first chapters concerning the settlements and the issue of security, Reuven Barkatt (chairman of the special steering committee responsible for drafting the platform) informed party members that another additional chapter ‘that is not part of the platform but is related to it’ would also be put to a vote. Barkatt explained that, due to ‘the lack of time’, he had no copies to circulate among the members and would therefore read it out loud.⁸⁷ The additional chapter Barkatt was referring to was the Oral Law. Dayan - angered by reports in the media about the ‘dovish’ attitudes among Mapai’s elite - demanded the inclusion of the Oral Law as part of the party’s electoral-platform. The move was in stark contrast to the understanding reached with Mapai that it would serve only as a non-binding guideline. Dayan made it clear that the platform’s vague phrasing was unacceptable to him and threatened - yet again - to leave the party.⁸⁸ Despite being against the move, Sapir agreed to put the matter to a vote. The Oral Law was put to a vote even though most members were previously unaware of its contents, or even of its existence. Nevertheless, it was approved unanimously,⁸⁹ with the exception of Mapam members, who abstained from the vote. What was supposed to be a secret guideline, became the corner-stone of the party’s position on the territories; a move which was arguably promoted and supported by Dayan.⁹⁰

The inclusion of the Oral Law alongside the chapters on security and settlements clearly signalled a change from the previous position of the Labour Party; the ‘decision not to decide’ had clearly been eroded. This can also be viewed as the first attempt by the party to define the political future of the occupied population and its relationship with Israel. With regards to Israel’s borders, the vague phrasing of ‘secure and recognised borders’ had been replaced by a clear indication of the territories Israel intended to hold i.e. the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip, the Jordan Valley and a strip of land stretching from Sharm El-Sheikh to Eilat. Nevertheless, the agreed position did not define the status of those territories. With regards to the

⁸⁶ Ibid

⁸⁷ LPA/2-23-1969-98/Pages 6-7.

⁸⁸ Beilin, *The Price of Unity* Page 56.

⁸⁹ LPA/2-23-1969-98/Record of Labour Party’s Conference/11.9.1969/Page 44.

⁹⁰ Beilin, *The Price of Unity* Page 56.

population, the party de-facto adopted Dayan's vision of economic integration and 'self-rule' and, as a result, ruled out returning the West Bank to Jordan. This is despite the fact that, with the exception of Rafi, the party was against a Functional Solution.

In short, the Labour Party, in order to maintain unity and appease Dayan, adopted several conflicting ideas for the Occupied Territories. The party had effectively agreed on a policy that blended elements from the Allon Plan and Dayan's Functional Solution while vowing to leave open all the diplomatic options. In fact, Meir claimed that, despite the adoption of the Oral Law and the settlement chapter, Israel was still committed to negotiations without preconditions, adding that the government was doing all it could to promote peace.⁹¹ However, by seemingly adopting multiple positions, and preferring unity over clear policies, the party leadership created a situation where no meaningful decision could take place regarding the Occupied Territories.⁹² In other words, while there was a clear shift to the Right on the territorial issue, the Labour Party (and, by default, the government) adopted an incoherent policy that blended several conflicting plans, while leaving the long-term future of the Occupied Territories unresolved.

The adoption of the Oral Law and the electoral platform helped defuse an ideological struggle within the Labour Party, but at the same time it also alienated elements within the party, most notably the members of Mapam, who chose to abstain from the vote on the Oral Law. Mapam enjoyed a unique situation in the alignment in that its members were allowed to have their own opinions and not accept the majority decision as members of other factions did.⁹³ Moreover, the Mapam secretariat expressed concern with the party's settlement chapter and emphasised the faction's support for negotiations without preconditions.⁹⁴

Despite the ongoing war, and the intense political wrangling within the Labour Party, the period leading up to the elections was devoid of any substantial debate amongst the political parties regarding Israel's foreign or territorial policy.⁹⁵ Gahal leader

⁹¹ LPA/2-23-1969-98/Record of Labour Party's Conference/11.9.1969/Page 42.

⁹² Interview with Beilin.

⁹³ ISA/7042/4-a/Labour Party's Political Committee Meeting/11.9.1969/Page 50.

⁹⁴ YYA/Mapam/90/68/9/Meeting of Mapam Secretariat/11.9.1969/Page 16.

⁹⁵ Stock Ernest Foreign Policy Issues 1972 Page 41

Menahem Begin had made it clear that he continued to support the National-Unity Government, and promised not to challenge the leadership of Meir and Dayan. Instead, Begin concentrated on brandishing his newly acquired statesman credentials, by publicly demonstrating his support for the government. Begin vowed to support the government against what he referred to as the ‘dovish’ elements within the Labour Party.⁹⁶ These, according to Begin, would rather withdraw from the territories than achieve secure borders for Israel and therefore could not be trusted with Israel’s security.⁹⁷ The results of the elections were never in doubt, with the only question left to be answered being whether the Labour Party would manage to win an outright majority; in the end, the party lost several seats (from 63 to 56), but kept its position as the dominant party. There were no major changes to the political scene and it was expected that the National-Unity Coalition would continue to govern. This situation was favoured by Meir, who feared being outflanked by the ‘doves’ in Mapai and Mapam, despite the unease with which Ahdut-Ha’avoda viewed Gahal, and the reluctance of Mapam.⁹⁸ However, even after offering Gahal four ministerial positions, Begin - citing differences over employment rights - refused to join the Coalition. Begin’s refusal, however, was about to change with the unveiling of the new American peace initiative.

The Rogers Plan

On the 25th of September, Meir met with President Nixon in Washington. Meir requested that the US put a stop to the ongoing Sisco-Dobrynin talks.⁹⁹ Meir was concerned about the direction in which the US-USSR talks were heading, in particular the solutions proposed by Rogers. The Israeli government believed that Rogers was suggesting an Israeli withdrawal from all the territories. However, Meir was unsuccessful as Nixon refused to concede the Soviet channel and appeared reluctant to distance himself from Rogers’ ideas. The only concession Meir had managed to elicit was a tacit US acknowledgement of Israel’s right to develop nuclear weapons -

⁹⁶ ZA/28/2/2e/summary of Gahal’s Political Committee’s Meetings/18.7.1969 and the 30.7.1969.

⁹⁷ Torgovnik, “Party Factions and Election issues” in Asher, The Elections in Israel 1969 Page 31.

⁹⁸ YYA/Mapam/90/68/9/Meeting of Mapam Secretariat/8.12.69/Page 48.

⁹⁹ Goldstein, Rabin Page 219.

in itself a major diplomatic achievement.¹⁰⁰ In addition, Meir's request for additional military hardware was met with a US counter-proposal to exchange 'hardware for software', i.e. tying the supply of American military hardware to Israel's diplomatic concessions regarding the territories.¹⁰¹ The assurances the Johnson administration had previously provided, regarding the supply of military hardware, were increasingly dangled as carrots in front of the Israeli government.

On the 28th of October, and without Israel's knowledge, the US handed the USSR a proposed joint paper, based on the understandings reached by Sisco and Dobrynin, which contained an implicit agreement for an Israeli withdrawal from all the territories.¹⁰² This joint paper was presented to Egypt several days later. Nasser found 'some positive elements' in the document but agreed to accept it only as part of an 'integrated formula' for a comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. In other words, Nasser was not willing to consider a separate Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty. The apparent Egyptian reluctance prompted Rogers to make public the joint paper, in the form of a comprehensive peace plan.

On the 9th of December 1969, Rogers unveiled America's new Middle-East initiative - referred to as the Rogers Plan or Rogers A. Rogers announced that the US had decided to 'play a direct role' in promoting a solution to the Middle-East conflict, based on Resolution 242 and the Jarring Mission. The ideas put forward by Rogers were based on the understandings that had been reached with the USSR, and referred specifically to Israel's negotiations with Jordan and Egypt.¹⁰³ In his speech, Rogers called for an Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula and the West Bank, with only minor border modifications, insisting that the US did not believe in 'expansionism'. However, Rogers made it clear that special provisions would have to be made with regards to Sharm El-Sheikh and the Gaza Strip. Elements that were missing from previous initiatives were introduced for the first time, i.e. the future status of Jerusalem and the issue of the Palestinian refugees.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Quandt, Peace Process Page 66.

¹⁰² Quandt, Page 67.

¹⁰³ ISA/7038/14-a/Israel's Assessments of the joint US-USSR paper/Dec 1969.

¹⁰⁴ www.mfa.gov.il

Rogers' speech had an immediate impact on Israeli politics. Within hours of the speech, Begin devised a ploy for settling the main disagreements, between the government and Gahal, and joined the Coalition. For Gahal, the perceived threat, inherent in the speech, was enough to galvanise the party into action; it made no secret that its decision to join the government was so that it could work against any initiative that would require Israel to withdraw from the territories.¹⁰⁵ On the 15th of December the new National-Unity Government came out with a foreign policy dossier, which stated its main principles:

Israel will continue to be willing to negotiate - without prior conditions on either side - with any of the neighbouring States for the conclusion of a peace treaty. Without a peace treaty, Israel will continue to maintain in full the situation as established by the cease-fire and will consolidate its position in accordance with the vital requirements of its security and development.¹⁰⁶

The government's immediate response to the Roger's speech - that is after the inclusion of Gahal - was to dispatch Eban to Washington to express Israel's disappointment in it, and to make sure it did not reflect the US' official policy.¹⁰⁷ Eban demanded to know what the US's next steps were and whether it planned to turn the speech into its official policy, but he did not receive a clear answer. On the 18th of December, while Eban was awaiting an answer, Rogers circulated a document in the UN (known as the Yost Document), which was a new American plan for settling the Israeli-Jordanian conflict.¹⁰⁸ The move was a clear departure by the US from the diplomatic understanding Rogers had reached with Eban, i.e. consulting it before launching new initiatives.¹⁰⁹

The Yost Document (named after Charles Yost, the US ambassador to the UN) called for an Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank to the international border, with some minor modifications - the document described the extent of Israel's withdrawal as 'substantially all of the West Bank'. Furthermore, according to the document, the West Bank would be demilitarised and the final status of the Gaza Strip would be negotiated between Israel, Jordan and Egypt. The final status of East

¹⁰⁵ Dan Margalit, *Dispatch from the White House* (Tel Aviv, Otpaz, 1971) (Hebrew), Page 15.

¹⁰⁶ www.mfa.gov.il

¹⁰⁷ Margalit, *Dispatch from the White House* Page 25.

¹⁰⁸ Michael Brecher, *Decisions in Israel's Foreign Policy* Page 484.

¹⁰⁹ ISA/4780/2-f/Summary of Eban's Meeting with Rogers/14.3.1969/Page 1.

Jerusalem was left to be determined by the parties at a later stage; the American idea was not to divide the city but to allow for some form of Jordanian religious and municipal jurisdiction.¹¹⁰

The Yost Document surprised and alarmed many in Israel. For the first time the US administration had raised the prospects of Israeli concessions, in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Despite the professed shock, at the prospect of having to make concessions in East Jerusalem, and unbeknown to the US administration, the Israeli government had previously examined possible solutions concerning the city, through a special committee headed by Mordechai Gazit (Director-General of the Foreign Ministry). This special committee made several recommendations, among them a joint Arab-Israeli municipal-administration in Jerusalem.¹¹¹ An additional report was presented to the Meir government in April 1974, analysing various options regarding the future status of Jerusalem and the holy sites in the Occupied Territories.¹¹² The fact that the government was willing to examine different scenarios concerning Jerusalem, in the context of final peace agreements, does not indicate whether any of those would have been approved. It does, however, demonstrate that the sensitive nature of Jerusalem's future status was well known to the government and that, despite publicly refusing to compromise on the matter, it actually examined different possibilities at a ministerial level.

On the 22nd of December, the Israeli government officially rejected both the Rogers Plan and the Yost Document. The government issued a statement that it 'would not be sacrificed by any power-policy and will reject any attempt to impose a forced solution on it'.¹¹³ The Israeli government was astonished by the perceived pro-Arab stance taken by the US administration;¹¹⁴ the plan was seen as an attempt to appease the Arabs at Israel's expense.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, Israel did not agree with the main tenets of the plan, i.e. the fate of Jerusalem, the West Bank, its borders and the refugees.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ ISA/7038/14-a/The Yost Document/18.12.69.

¹¹¹ ISA/4781/7-f/special committee's Report/13.2.69.

¹¹² ISA/7026/18-a/Report of the 'Committee for the Holy Places in Jerusalem and the West Bank'/April 1974.

¹¹³ www.mfa.gov.il

¹¹⁴ Brecher, *Decisions in Israel's Foreign Policy* Page 456.

¹¹⁵ Quandt, *Peace Process* Page 68.

¹¹⁶ Safran, *Israel: The Embattled Ally* Page 434.

Meir described the plan as a ‘disaster for Israel’ and the possible adoption of it by the US as ‘an act of betrayal’; she claimed Israel was fortunate that Egypt had rejected the plan.¹¹⁷

In order to understand Israel’s position, regarding the Rogers Plan, it is important to bear in mind the balance of power within the government. Meir used her political capital to avoid and deter any meaningful discussions and adoption of decisions regarding the territories. On most territorial issues, Meir sided with the hawks, i.e. Dayan, Galili and Gahal,¹¹⁸ believing that Israel would have to retain control over the territories until suitable partners emerged. Ministers not towing the official line, i.e. Meir’s line, were labelled internally as ‘defeatists’ or ‘soft weak doves’ and were excluded from the territorial decision-making process.¹¹⁹ Under the pretext of Nasser’s actions and statements, the government gradually abandoned the notion of the territories as bargaining chips, in favour of viewing them as strategically important to Israel. Additionally, the Meir government would have been placed in a precarious position of having to choose between appeasing the Americans and maintaining political stability, had Egypt accepted the Rogers Plan. In this respect, the rejection of the plan by Egypt, and the lack of US pressure, convinced Meir, who saw no point in risking the unity of the Government and the Labour Party, that Israel did not have viable negotiation partners. According to Israeli assessments Jordan would not be able to sign an agreement with Israel without Nasser’s approval, and Nasser would not approve any plan unless it included a solution to the refugee problem and a full return to the pre-war borders.¹²⁰

Yitzhak Rabin (Israel’s ambassador to the US), in a meeting with Sisco and Rogers, accused the US of changing its stance.¹²¹ In response, Sisco informed Rabin that the US had not changed its stance and that in fact it was Israel that had changed its stance ‘since November 1967’. Arguably, Sisco was referring to Israel’s decision from the 30th of October 1967, which was never officially conveyed to the US. Even so, Sisco added that the US shared Israel’s assessment that the Arab states were ‘not interested

¹¹⁷ Goldstein, Rabin Page 219.

¹¹⁸ YYA/Victor Shem-Tov/87-95/1/2/Personal Diary Notes/1970-1974.

¹¹⁹ ISA/7038/14-a/Note written (probably) by Galili relating to a conversation with Sapir regarding the territorial issue/(no date)/(relating to the 1969-1972 period).

¹²⁰ ISA/7052/12-a/Letter from Sasson to Eban regarding Nasser and Hussein/23.1.1970.

¹²¹ ISA/7438/5-a/Record of Rabin’s Meeting with Rogers and Sisco/24.12.1969/Page 4.

in peace' and implored Israel not to obstruct the international diplomatic efforts, as doing so would put a strain on American relations with the Soviets and the moderate Arab states.¹²²

In the end, the Rogers Plan was rejected by both Israel and Egypt. Egypt's insistence on a comprehensive solution, coupled with the reluctance of the USSR (which initially backed the American initiative) to put pressure on Nasser, doomed the plan. The inability, or unwillingness, of the Soviets to force the Egyptians to make 'specific obligations to peace' meant that the US was not able to do its bit, i.e. force Israel to make territorial concessions.¹²³ Nasser's stance allowed the Israeli government to push forward with its strategic objectives in the Sinai Peninsula, i.e. the creation of settlements in the Gaza Strip, the Rafah plains and Sharm El-Sheikh, while claiming all along there was no partner on the other side with which to negotiate. Whether the US would have put substantial pressure on Israel, had Nasser accepted the Rogers Plan, is debatable.

The American administration was speaking in two voices and sending out mixed messages which contributed directly to Israel's lack of clear policy. On the one hand, Rogers asserted that the US was ready to use financial aid and the supply of military hardware as leverage if necessary.¹²⁴ On the other hand, Nixon and Henry Kissinger (the President's National Security Advisor) agreed to accommodate some of Israel's military and financial requests, in spite of Rogers' threats.¹²⁵ It is, therefore, not a surprise that Israel did not acquiesce to the US demand regarding the Rogers Plan, as it knew the administration was not fully behind it. The lack of either an imposed American solution or direct US pressure on Israel allowed the Israeli government to avoid taking controversial decisions and continue its non-policy regarding the Occupied Territories.

There are many reasons why the Rogers Plan was never accepted by Israel, e.g. the desire to avoid taking controversial decisions and the need to maintain the National-

¹²² ISA/7438/5-a/Page 5.

¹²³ FRUS/Volume XII/Nixon-Ford Administration/Soviet Union, January 1969-October 1970/Document 67/Telegram from Sisco to Nixon/14.7.1969.

¹²⁴ Goldstein, Rabin Page 220.

¹²⁵ Margalit, Dispatch from the White House Pages 49-50.

Unity Coalition, the lack of sustained US pressure, the rejection of the plan by Nasser, the rejection of an imposed solution, the lack of direct negotiations and the ongoing War of Attrition. But perhaps the most important was Israel's unwillingness to accept Rogers's solution for the West Bank and Jerusalem.¹²⁶ It is clear that any decision by the government regarding the West Bank, including the formal adoption of the Allon Plan, would have brought down the government. It is important to note that Gahal had joined the National-Unity Government precisely to ensure that the Rogers Plan was not accepted. It was, therefore, imperative for the government to avoid having any discussion on the future status of the West Bank. Additionally, Israel was creating facts on the ground in the Jerusalem area that would have irreversibly altered its status.¹²⁷ Israel made it clear that it would not accept any solution that would change Jerusalem's status. Israel's territorial policy had clearly changed since the 19th of June 1967. Arguably, the Eshkol government would have accepted the Rogers Plan and the Yost Document as they both provided Israel with more than it initially bargained for. Israel's rejection of the plans was, more than anything else, an indicator of the change that occurred within the ruling Coalition since the Six Day War. The Meir government did not place any emphasis on finding a long-term solution for the Occupied Territories. Its diplomatic stance reflected a growing perception among policy-makers that Israel did not have adequate partners for peace and that any clear decision would bring down the National-Unity Government.

The Rogers B

At the basis of the Meir government's territorial position was a perverse dichotomy. On the one hand, the government refused to put forward any comprehensive long-term policies regarding the Occupied Territories. On the other hand, it was creating facts on the ground that corresponded mainly with the Allon Plan and Dayan's Functional Solution. However, while the government was, unofficially, implementing the Allon Plan, it was also constructing army bases in accordance with Dayan's plan and building settlements that matched neither of these plans, such as the settlement of Kiryat Arba. Furthermore, despite agreeing to keep all the diplomatic options open

¹²⁶ ISA/7034/15-a/Summary of Meir's Meetings with Hussein/Page 4.

¹²⁷ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Allon's Proposal regarding Jerusalem's municipal boundaries/18.5.1969.

and negotiate without preconditions, the government was implementing several conflicting plans and ad-hoc decisions. The government publicly justified its territorial position by linking it to Nasser's bellicose rhetoric and the continuing hostilities. Nevertheless, Israel's territorial stance was also directly linked to the Labour Party's internal political situation and the lack of direct American pressure.

The government's inability to bring an end to the war with Egypt raised questions regarding its foreign policy approach and tested the patience of the electorate. The general sense of frustration was deepened by the resumption of low-scale clashes with Syrian forces in the Golan Heights and the increasing number of attacks perpetrated against Israeli targets around the world by Palestinian groups.¹²⁸ In order to regain the initiative and end the war, Israel decided to adopt a tactic of deep-penetration bombing raids against Egypt's main military bases. While the initial raids proved to be highly successful, they failed to achieve the desired effect. Instead of backing down, Nasser, unable to match Israel's fire power, requested additional Soviet military aid.¹²⁹ The ensuing military aid was without precedent in Soviet history. Not only were massive amounts of military hardware shipped to Egypt, but Soviet advisors, military instructors and even pilots were also provided. By April 1970, Israeli pilots were reporting enemy aircraft being flown by Russian pilots as well as on being attacked by Russian-operated surface-to-air missile batteries.¹³⁰

The deepening Soviet involvement and the fear of a possible new American initiative, prompted Meir to announce on the 26th of May, in a speech to the Knesset, that there was no change in Israel's territorial policies. Meir reaffirmed Israel's acceptance of Resolution 242 and its desire for peace, refuting claims that the creation of facts on the ground had irrevocably damaged the chances for peace.¹³¹ When the Knesset voted on Meir's statement, Gahal, which had been against the adoption of 242, chose to engage in political brinkmanship by voicing its criticism and abstaining.¹³² In a speech to the Labour Party members, Meir asked what had changed since they had agreed on the party's manifesto and why was it necessary for the government to make

¹²⁸ Beilin, The Price of Unity Pages 85-86.

¹²⁹ Shimshoni, Israel and Conventional Deterrence Pages 161-162.

¹³⁰ Yaacobi, On the Razor's Edge Page 19.

¹³¹ www.mfa.gov.il

¹³² Mordechai Gazit, The Peace Process (1969-1973) (Tel Aviv, Yad Tabenkin, 1984) (Hebrew), Page 57.

far-reaching decisions when there was no credible partner. Meir was aware that any decision taken risked splitting up the party and the government and was against any change to the status quo.¹³³ Following Meir's speech, the Labour Party's secretariat came out with a statement supporting the government's current policies in the territories.¹³⁴ In short, the lack of a coherent and comprehensive long-term territorial policy was a reflection of Meir's political approach, which was based on maintaining the political stability of the Labour Party and Israel's wall-to-wall Coalition.

On the 19th of June 1969, Rogers publicly called on Israel and Egypt to accept a short-term three-month ceasefire. This was followed by the unveiling of a new US initiative i.e. a scaled-down version of the Rogers Plan, referred to as Rogers B. The initiative called upon the parties (Jordan, Egypt and Israel) to publicly restate their acceptance of Resolution 242 and their willingness to work towards its implementation. Furthermore, it invited the parties to resume negotiations under the auspices of Jarring, with the hope that they could reach a peace agreement which would be based on an Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in the 1967 war, and recognition by all parties of each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence.¹³⁵ In addition, Israel was informed by the US that future supplies of military hardware were conditional to its diplomatic stance on the matter.¹³⁶

The Israeli government immediately rejected Rogers B, but Rabin, who objected to the 'tone of the message' on his own initiative decided not to relay the government's response to Nixon. Instead, Rabin advised the government to wait and see how Egypt would respond, before issuing further statements.¹³⁷ In order to alleviate Israel's concerns, Nixon assured Israel that any withdrawal would only be to 'secure borders'- this was the first time the Americans had used the Israeli term. Moreover, Kissinger stated publicly that it was necessary to maintain Israel's military superiority in face of the growing Soviet intervention. Israeli security concerns prompted the US administration to put its full weight behind Rogers B. The US decided to speed-up the delivery of military hardware to Israel, and issued a statement reassuring Israel that

¹³³ LPA/2-24-1970-98/Record of Labour Party's Secretariat Meeting/28.5.1970.

¹³⁴ Ibid Secretariat Statement.

¹³⁵ Gazit, The Peace Process Page 59.

¹³⁶ Gazit, Page 58.

¹³⁷ Brecher, Decisions in Israel's Foreign Policy Page 491.

the final boundaries would not be imposed on it, but would be left for the parties to negotiate.¹³⁸

On the 22nd of July, and after pressure from the Soviets, Egypt announced its unconditional acceptance of Rogers B;¹³⁹ Jordan followed suit. The Egyptian response put the onus of the success of the American initiative solely on Israel.¹⁴⁰ In order to persuade Israel to make the right decision, and in response to Israeli inquiries,¹⁴¹ Nixon sent an additional letter to Meir. In it he promised Meir that the final borders would have to be acceptable to Israel and that it would not be forced to withdraw from the Occupied Territories before acceptable peace agreements were signed. In addition, Nixon assured Meir that the US would not press Israel to accept a solution to the Palestinian refugee problem that would change the demographic nature of the Jewish state.¹⁴²

Nixon's letter was a turning point; it altered the mood within the Government and brought about a week of intense political wrangling amongst the Coalition members.¹⁴³ On the 25th of July, Meir convened her Kitchenette to discuss Israel's viable options i.e. the acceptance of Rogers B (and the dissolution of the National-Unity Government), or the rejection of the plan with the knowledge it would affect Israel's relationship with the US. All members of the Kitchenette - with the exception of Dayan who did not express an opinion - agreed to go ahead with Rogers B.¹⁴⁴ The decision to accept Rogers B proved to be the final act of the National-Unity Government, as Gahal members voted in favour of leaving the Coalition. Meir tried to convince Begin to stay, arguing that accepting Rogers B did not mean the acceptance of the territorial demands made in Rogers A, but these claims were not sufficient to convince Begin, and the most he was willing to accept was a US call for a limited ceasefire.¹⁴⁵ Arguably, Meir feared the resignation of Gahal would strengthen the dovish elements in the government and thus weaken her position.

¹³⁸ Gazit, The Peace Process Pages 62-63.

¹³⁹ Quandt, Peace Process Page 74.

¹⁴⁰ Margalit, Dispatch from the White House Page 157.

¹⁴¹ ISA/7021/3-a/Telegram from Rabin to the Foreign Ministry/27.7.1970.

¹⁴² ISA/7021/3-a/Letter detailing Nixon's assurances to Israel/27.7.1970.

¹⁴³ Brecher, Decisions in Israel's Foreign Policy Page 494.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid* Page 494.

¹⁴⁵ ZA/12/2/2e/Summary of Gahal's MKs Meetings/30.7.1970 and the 4.8.1970.

On the 31st of July the Israeli government informed the US that it was willing to accept Rogers B, based on the assurances given to it by Nixon.¹⁴⁶ When asked, in a meeting with Rabin, whether the US was willing to forgo Rogers A, in return for an Israeli acceptance of Rogers B, Sisco responded that the US could not promise that.¹⁴⁷ In its reply to the US, the government confirmed that it was ready to enter negotiations based on Resolution 242 under the auspices of Jarring without any preconditions, in order to reach an ‘agreed and binding contractual peace agreement between the parties’. It added that Israel’s forces would withdraw from the territories held only after secure, recognised and agreed borders were defined by peace treaties.¹⁴⁸ The following week, in a speech to the Knesset, Meir explained that the acceptance of Rogers B did not indicate a change in the government’s territorial policies which, according to her, had been the same since 1967. Moreover, she reiterated the government’s willingness to negotiate on the basis of an Israeli withdrawal from the territories to secure and recognised borders.

The acceptance of Rogers B by Israel demonstrated the American administration’s capability to put pressure on Israel, even though, in this instance, it chose to apply it more ‘with a carrot than with a stick’.¹⁴⁹ In the first instance of sustained and direct pressure from the Americans, who threatened to withdraw financial and military support, Israel was willing to forgo its principles and straighten the line with the US. Israel’s decision to accept Rogers B was in fact a testament to its commitment to Resolution 242 and to withdrawing from most of the territories, in exchange for peace and American security and financial assurances. Israel refused to be bullied into making concessions regarding the territories, but it is clear that once the Arab states (Egypt and Jordan) accepted the US proposals, Israel was left with no room for diplomatic manoeuvring. Arguably, had Egypt accepted Rogers A, Israel would have been left with no other option but to comply.

In short, the government engaged in a diplomatic process which was based on Resolution 242 and the concept of land for peace. However, at no time during this

¹⁴⁶ ISA7336/7-a/Government’s Decision no.812/31.7.1970.

¹⁴⁷ ISA/7021/3-a/Record of Rabin’s Meeting with Sisco/July 1970.

¹⁴⁸ ISA/7021/4-a/Israel’s Response to the US/4.8.1970.

¹⁴⁹ Brecher, Decisions in Israel’s Foreign Policy Page 493.

process did the government put forward clear territorial demands or policies. Furthermore, internally, within the Coalition and the Labour Party, no clear decisions were taken regarding the future status of the territories. The Israeli insistence on direct negotiations without any preconditions, on the basis of secure and recognised borders, was clearly a statement directed at domestic audiences, with the hope that it would contribute to political stability. The government had already stipulated that it would not withdraw from several territories it deemed essential for its national security, but it nevertheless refused to decide on their status. On the one hand, the government claimed that the issue of the Occupied Territories would be dealt with through direct negotiations while, on the other hand, it engaged in creating facts on the ground intended to undermine the diplomatic efforts. The Meir government proposed and advocated territorial policies it knew others would not accept, while relying on the ‘good will’ of the US to turn these into reality. According to Brecher, one of this government’s short-comings had been the lack of long-term (‘or any’) planning with regard to foreign policy, and with its main method of operation being ‘improvisation’.¹⁵⁰ It is evident that, because of her perceived lack of suitable negotiation partners, her personal inclinations and her determination to maintain political stability, Meir chose not to pursue a clear long-term territorial policy.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid Page 511.

Chapter Two

Israel's Secret Peace Plan

On the 7th of September 1970, and in response to American diplomatic pressure, Israel decided to renew its participation in the Jarring talks.¹ Israel's decision to participate in the Jarring talks and its acceptance of Rogers B signalled a change in the government's diplomatic stance regarding the Occupied Territories.² Begin, in a speech to the Knesset, interpreted this decision as a de-facto acceptance of Resolution 242, which would ultimately mean the withdrawal of Israel from the majority of the territories.³ As if to affirm Begin's assessment, Meir and Allon had prepared a secret peace plan, as an alternative to Rogers A, that advocated an Israeli withdrawal from most of the territories. This plan, which could be seen as Meir's first attempt at formulating a long-term territorial policy, defined the territories according to their perceived strategic importance, in accordance with the Oral Law and the Allon Plan. The plan - highlighting Israel's diplomatic and territorial 'redlines'⁴ - was to be presented to Nixon, during Meir's visit to Washington. The government was not privy to the details of the peace plan as Meir decided not to confer with the ministers.⁵ Arguably, Meir based her decision to keep the plan secret on the assumption that, now that Gahal had resigned, she would have had little difficulty convincing the government to accept the plan, if it was approved by the US. In the introduction to the plan, Allon wrote that it would be an accomplishment if the US were to accept the plan, although he doubted that that would happen; Allon's honest assessment illustrated how important the position of the American administration was for Israel's territorial policy. According to the plan:

1. Israel would withdraw from the majority of the West Bank, according to the outlines proposed in the Allon Plan, with some additional minor border

¹ ISA/7336/7-a/Government's Decision no.925/7.9.1971.

² Beilin, *The Price of Unity* Page 91.

³ Yaacobi, *On the Razor's Edge* Page 37.

⁴ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Allon's Comments regarding the peace plan/15.9.1970/Pages 1-3.

⁵ Arie Shalev, *Israel and Syria: Peace and Security on the Golan* (Westview Press, Tel Aviv, 1994) (Hebrew), Page 55-57.

modifications (in the Jerusalem region): Gush-Etzion, Latrun and Beit-Huron Passage.

2. Jerusalem would remain undivided and under Israeli control.
3. Israel would withdraw from the Gaza Strip but would retain the Rafah Plains.
4. The Gaza Strip would become a demilitarised area, to be used as a free-port by an Arab state (presumably this referred to Jordan).
5. Israel would retain a strip of land stretching from Sharm El-Sheikh to Eilat.
6. The rest of the Sinai Peninsula would be returned to Egypt on the condition that it would remain demilitarised.
7. Israel would withdraw from up to a third of the Golan Heights in exchange for a peace agreement. The rest of the Golan Heights would be retained by Israel in order to protect its water sources and the Upper Galilee area.⁶

The inclusion of the Golan Heights in the plan, despite Israel's insistence that it would not withdraw from the area, can be understood as an attempt to pre-empt a possible Syrian acceptance of Resolution 242. It might also be connected to Israeli Intelligence reports that indicated a US willingness to discuss the future of the Golan Heights on the condition that Syria changed its diplomatic stance.⁷ According to Allon, the proposed withdrawal would not include the strategically important topographic areas in the Golan Heights and would not, therefore, endanger Israel's long-term security.⁸ Moreover, it is important to note that the areas from which Israel was proposing to withdraw did not contain any settlements.

The plan, however, was neither brought to the attention of the American administration nor was it presented to Nixon. Because of unfolding events in the region such as the outbreak of clashes between the Jordanian army and Palestinian groups, and repeated violations of the cease-fire agreement by Egypt, discussions on the resumption of negotiations between Israel and its neighbours were postponed.⁹ Nevertheless, the fact that Meir prepared the plan attests to the importance Israeli

⁶ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Israel's Peace Plan/15.9.1970.

⁷ ISA/7021/3-a/Memo from Mordehai Gazit to Rabin/(relating to 1970)/31.10.1971.

⁸ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Allon's Comments regarding the peace plan/15.9.1970/Page3.

⁹ Shalev, Israel and Syria Pages 57-58.

leaders put in gaining American acceptance to their policies and the fear they had of an American imposed solution to the Occupied Territories.

Black September

On the 16th of September 1970, as a result of a failed attempt to assassinate him, as well as a humiliating episode of multiple plane hijackings which directly challenged his authority,¹⁰ King Hussein decided to confront the Palestinian armed groups in Jordan (an event later referred to as ‘Black September’). Hussein’s decision was welcomed by Israel, which viewed the activity of the Palestinians groups, in Jordan, as a security concern. Incidentally, in the months before his decision, Hussein reached an agreement with Israel that in the event that he decided to act against the Palestinian armed groups, Israel would not take advantage of the situation.¹¹ In the ensuing episode, the Palestinian groups were no match for Hussein’s professional army. However, in an attempt to assist the Palestinian groups, Syrian forces crossed into Jordan; an action that put the whole region on alert. Acting Israeli Prime Minister Allon (Meir was in Washington at the time) informed Hussein that Israel would come to his aid, if needed, and would not take advantage of his situation.¹² In consultation with the US, the Israeli government ordered a redeployment of its forces on the Syrian front, sending a clear message to Syria that Israel was willing to intervene militarily if necessary. Arguably, Israel’s show of support thwarted the Syrian attack and paved the road for Hussein’s victory.¹³

After the event, Hussein and Allon met, in what was described as a meeting between friends; Hussein thanked Allon for the support shown by Israel.¹⁴ Allon chose the opportunity to present Hussein with an idea of establishing a Jordanian civil administration, or a Palestinian civil administration linked to Jordan,¹⁵ in parts of the West Bank (based on the Allon Plan) as an interim agreement. This would include an

¹⁰ Shlaim, Lion of Jordan Page 323.

¹¹ Lukacs, Israel, Jordan and the Peace Process Page 107.

¹² ISA/YAOH/Meeting 5/Pages 14-16.

¹³ Yossi Melman and Dan Raviv, Behind the Uprising: Israelis, Jordanians, and Palestinians (Westport, Greenwood Press, 1989), Page 114.

¹⁴ Shlaim, Lion of Jordan Page 335.

¹⁵ ISA/7026/9-a/Allon’s Self-Rule Proposal/23.9.1970/Pages 1-4.

Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in order for the area to be used as a deep-water port by Jordan. It is unclear whether the status of Jerusalem was discussed, although Israel had previously agreed to some form of limited religious and municipal roles for Jordan in the city, which included special status for Islam's holy places.¹⁶ Hussein, reportedly, reacted positively to Allon's idea but was unwilling to commit to it; Hussein wanted to 'hear more about it'. It is important to note that Hussein was willing to consider the idea only as part of an interim agreement.¹⁷ Possibly, Hussein was unwilling to commit because it was Allon's private idea and had not yet been approved by the Israeli government.¹⁸

On his return to Israel, Allon raised the idea with Meir, who convened an informal ministerial meeting to discuss it; according to Allon those present included Meir, Dayan, Galili, Ya'akov Shapira and Shlomo Hillel (Police Minister).¹⁹ Despite Hussein's positive reaction to the plan, the ministers present unanimously rejected it; a move considered by Allon to be a mistake.²⁰ According to Allon, 'everyone was against the idea'; the only reasonable objection came from Dayan, who confessed that he did not 'believe in it'.²¹ In a somewhat ironic turn of events, after the Yom Kippur War, Meir and Dayan offered Hussein the exact same plan.²²

For the first time ministers were presented with an opportunity to vote for the Allon Plan, albeit as an interim agreement. The government had previously voted for the creation of settlements and for the establishment of security arrangements based on the Allon Plan; despite never officially endorsing the Allon Plan, Meir supported the creation of settlements within its parameters.²³ With the departure of Gahal from the government, one would have expected ministers to vote in favour of Allon's idea; instead, they rejected it. Arguably, Meir feared that the adoption of the plan would alienate Dayan and the hawkish members of the Labour Party (i.e. Rafi and Tabenkin's followers in Ahdut-Ha'avoda). It is unclear why the idea was discussed in

¹⁶ ISA/YAOH/Meeting 5/Pages 17-18.

¹⁷ ISA/YAOH/Page 20.

¹⁸ Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan* Page 337.

¹⁹ ISA/YAOH/Meeting 5/Page 18.

²⁰ Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan* Page 337.

²¹ ISA/YAOH/Meeting 5/Page 19.

²² ISA/7043/26-a/Record of Meir's Meeting with Hussein/26.1.1974.

²³ Interview with Shem-Tov.

an informal ministerial meeting and was not brought to the attention of the government. The idea was consistent with both the Allon Plan and the Oral Law and as such, it would have presented the government with an opportunity to vote on these issues. According to Shem-Tov, the majority of ministers were not privy to the ongoing secret negotiations with Hussein; a situation that prevailed throughout the Meir period,²⁴ when important foreign policy decisions relating to Israel's territorial policies were being taken by a limited number of ministers associated with the Kitchenette.²⁵ This episode clearly indicates that Israel did not have a territorial policy based on the Allon Plan. Furthermore, it demonstrates that, even after the break-up of the National-Unity Coalition, the government still did not have a coherent and comprehensive long-term policy.

Sadat

One of the main reasons stated by Meir for not pursuing a comprehensive territorial policy was the lack of suitable peace partners. Time and again, Meir explained that, if faced with suitable peace partners, the Labour Party and the Government would formulate a long-term territorial policy. However, this statement is incorrect: it will be demonstrated that, even when faced with suitable peace partners, the Meir government chose not to formulate clear policies towards the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the Rafah Plains and the West Bank.

On the 29th of September 1970, Nasser passed away and was replaced by Vice President Anwar El-Sadat. Sadat's first important diplomatic decision came in November when he extended the cease-fire agreement with Israel by three months. Sadat claimed that a further extension would be conditional on a precise Israeli timetable for withdrawal,²⁶ adding that Egypt would not consider itself bound by the cease-fire if this was not produced. On the 5th of January 1971, Sadat proclaimed his willingness to sign a peace agreement on the basis of a complete Israeli withdrawal from the territories; Sadat threatened that if Israel did not withdraw he would be left

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Yaacobi, On the Razor's Edge Page 61.

with no alternative but to go to war.²⁷ Despite these warlike threats, Sadat's proclamation should be seen as a breakthrough in Israeli-Arab relations; this was the first time an Arab state had publicly agreed not only to recognise Israel but to sign a peace agreement with it.

On the 15th of January 1971, Sadat informed the US of his willingness to consider an interim agreement with Israel, borrowing the concept from Dayan.²⁸ The idea of pursuing an interim agreement was raised by Dayan on several occasions the last of which was with Rogers on the 11th of December 1970.²⁹ Dayan called for the redeployment of forces on both sides to allow for the reopening of the Suez Canal - which had remained closed since the Six Day War. Dayan believed that an interim agreement would promote better understanding between the sides and help avoid future conflicts. However, the idea was rejected by the government, with Meir particularly, not supportive of it.

The interim agreement proposed by Sadat was slightly different from the one advocated by Dayan. Sadat called for an Israeli withdrawal to the Mitle and Gidi passes (40 km from the canal) and for the 'thinning' of Egyptian forces, up to 40 km from the canal on its western bank. This would create a semi-demilitarised area to allow for construction work to reopen the canal. After a period of six months the canal would reopen for shipping, and this, according to Sadat, would include free passage for Israeli vessels. Sadat saw the interim agreement as part of a comprehensive agreement, which would be based on the full implementation of Resolution 242.³⁰ Sadat claimed that his suggestion was not a tactical ploy but a sincere attempt to reduce tensions between the sides and avoid a future war.³¹

On the 8th of February, Jarring presented Egypt and Israel with a step-by-step approach - the Jarring Document - for resolving the conflict. Working outside the narrow remit of his mandate, and with the consent of the US, Jarring proposed a framework for a comprehensive settlement 'in accordance with the provisions and

²⁷ Ibid Pages 66-67

²⁸ Rafael, Destination Peace Page 258.

²⁹ ISA/4783/7-f/Summary of the Interim Agreement Proposals/6.7.1971/Page 1.

³⁰ Rafael, Destination Peace Page 261.

³¹ Yaacobi, On the Razor's Edge Page 81.

principles of Resolution 242'. Jarring called for an Israeli withdrawal from occupied Egyptian territories to the international border. He proposed practical security arrangements for the Sharm El-Sheikh area and for the imposition of satisfactory demilitarised zones. In return, Egypt was required to sign a peace agreement with Israel based on: the termination of all claims of belligerency; maritime freedom and mutual respect for each side's sovereignty; territorial integrity; and political independence.³²

In Israel, the Jarring Document caused a great deal of confusion. In a meeting with Jarring, Gazit and Simha Dinitz (Director-General of the Prime Minister's office) claimed Jarring's approach was not constructive and would only create more obstacles. They pointed out that Israel had agreed to enter into negotiations without preconditions, in order to reach a peace agreement based on secure and recognised borders. These, they insisted, should not have been dictated by him but left for the parties to negotiate.³³ In its official response to Jarring, the Israeli government rejected his document, reminding him that Israel 'will not return to the cease-fire lines'.³⁴ In contrast, Egypt, by and large, accepted the Jarring Document. Nevertheless, Egypt refused to accept the presence of any forces, other than those of the UN, in Sharm El-Sheikh and demanded that Israel withdraw from the Gaza Strip.³⁵

Dayan, while welcoming the Egyptian response, argued that Israel should emphasise the differences between the sides' positions, in particular its refusal to withdraw to the international border. He argued that Israel should not make any unnecessary territorial concessions unless forced to do so by the Americans and Russians.³⁶ Dayan accepted neither the security arrangements nor the demilitarisation mechanism proposed by Egypt. According to Dayan, the presence of the IDF in Sharm El-Sheikh was the only security arrangement he would be willing to accept. Dayan argued that, until an acceptable agreement was reached, the IDF would consolidate its position there: 'At

³² ISA/7021/4-a/The Jarring Memorandum/8.2.1971.

³³ ISA/7021/4-a/Summary of Jarring's Meeting with Dinitz and Gazit/Feb 1971.

³⁴ ISA/7021/4-a/Israel's Reply to Jarring/15.2.1971.

³⁵ ISA/7021/4-a/Egypt's Response to Jarring/17.2.1971.

³⁶ ISA/7021/4-a/Record of the Labour Party's Ministerial Meeting/21.2.1971/Page 1.

the moment we are sitting there and building'.³⁷ Dayan questioned the government's acceptance of Resolution 242, stating that Israel must define its own secure borders, which, he argued, should include the Jordan River and the Golan Heights.³⁸ It is important to understand what was meant by Dayan's comment 'we are sitting there and building'. While Israel appeared to be viewing the Sinai Peninsula as a bargaining chip and publicly stating its desire to negotiate with Egypt without preconditions, it was continuing to consolidate its presence there. This was done through increased investment in the extraction of oil and other natural resources,³⁹ as well as through the establishment of Nahal outposts and civilian settlement.

Israel's policies towards the Sinai Peninsula seemed to be in accordance with its security needs as well as with the Allon Plan and the Oral Law, i.e. Israel, in order to secure maritime freedom and ensure strategic depth, intended to remain in the Rafah Plains and along the Sharm El-Sheikh-Eilat line. In practice, and with the exception of the Rafah Plains (which will be discussed later in the chapter), Israel's actions in the Sinai Peninsula followed a different route. The first Israeli settlements in the Sinai Peninsula (Nahal Yam and Nahal Sinai) clearly did not correspond to Israel's long-term security needs or the parameters of the Oral Law. General Netzer (the head of the Nahal) acknowledged the problematic location of these settlements and the fact that they were not part of any particular long-term plan.⁴⁰ It is true that the majority of settlements were established by the Inter-Ministerial Committee for the Development of the Shlomo Region (Sharm El-Sheikh)⁴¹ in accordance with the Oral Law. However, despite Israel's stated desire to remain in Sharm El-Sheikh, the development of the region did not match the diplomatic rhetoric; in 1972 there were only 300 settlers in the Sharm El-Sheikh-Eilat region.⁴² Moreover, Israel continued to invest in the establishment and development of settlements outside the remits of the Oral Law. In fact, in his diary, Weitz (the head of the Settlement Department) listed several concerns regarding Israel's long-term policy in the Sinai Peninsula, such as the future status of El-Arish, water resources and the need for comprehensive long-

³⁷ ISA/7021/4-a/Page 4.

³⁸ ISA/7021/4-a/Page 5.

³⁹ ISA/3191/9-f/Report on Israel's oil-related activities in Sinai/13.2.1969.

⁴⁰ YTA/15Netzer/4/3/Confidential Army Interview with Netzer/9.11.1972/Pages 11-12.

⁴¹ ISA/3191/9-f/'The Inter-Ministerial Committee for the Development of the Shlomo Region'/7.9.1969.

⁴² ISA/5208/1-f/Summary of the MSC Meeting/24.10.1972.

term planning.⁴³ It is important to note that one of the main problems facing Israel in the establishment of settlements in the Sinai Peninsula was the lack of adequate water resources.⁴⁴

The main reason behind Israel's lack of a clear long-term policy towards the Sinai Peninsula was that Israel was following two separate and contradictory plans. On the one hand, Galili and the Settlement Department were adamant about the need to invest in projects and establish settlements in the Rafah Plains and along the Sharm El-Sheikh-Eilat region, i.e. the Government's stated parameters. On the other hand, Dayan and the IDF were pushing for the establishment of Nahal and civilian settlements in northern (near El-Arish) and south-western Sinai (At-Tur and Santa Katarina). According to Dayan, Israel's strategic line in the Sinai Peninsula needed to be drawn from El-Arish to Sharm El-Sheikh, and not, as envisioned by the Government, from the Rafah Plains. Additionally, Dayan believed that the establishment of Nahal outposts in south-western Sinai strengthened Israel's grip on Sharm El-Sheikh. Despite attempts by Galili to restrict the establishment of settlements outside the Government's stated parameters,⁴⁵ Israel - not surprisingly - proceeded to establish settlements according to both Galili's and Dayan's maps. Thus, in 1973, Israel transformed the Nahal Sinai outpost into a civilian settlement and established a second settlement near the city of El-Arish - the only heavily populated area in Sinai (population of around 30,000). This came despite concerns raised by Tourism Minister Kol that this decision went against the 'current policy'.⁴⁶ Additionally, Israel established a Nahal outpost in At-Tur, which Netzer admitted was controversial and not in accordance with Israel's long-term plans.⁴⁷ In conclusion, Israel's settlement and development activities in the Sinai Peninsula were neither directly related to the government's stated objectives nor to Sadat's diplomatic stance. In fact, even those officials entrusted with the implementation of Israel's settlement policy (Galili, Netzer and Weitz) were unable to articulate the reasons behind some of the decisions.

⁴³ YTA/15Weitz/4/28/Weitz's Personal Diary/1969/Pages 173-174.

⁴⁴ ISA/5208/1-f/Summary of the MSC Meeting/24.10.1972.

⁴⁵ ISA/5208/1-f/Summary of the MSC Meeting/31.12.1972.

⁴⁶ ISA/5208/1-f/Summary of the MSC Meeting/31.1.1972.

⁴⁷ YTA/15Netzer/4/3/Confidential Army Interview with Netzer/9.11.1972/Pages 22-23.

Arguably, because of Israel's lack of clear long-term policy towards the Sinai Peninsula, the Foreign Ministry, in particular Eban, proposed that Israel use a 'non-committal formulation' in its reply to Jarring and Egypt. This, they argued, would include welcoming Egypt's response and agreeing to withdraw to secure, recognised and agreed borders, which would be determined during the negotiations. The government agreed to use the Foreign Ministry's formula, but under pressure from Dayan, Galili and Rabin, it added a 'decisive qualification'. It stated that, in accordance with the Knesset's decision, Israel would not withdraw to the international border.⁴⁸ In addition to its reply to Jarring, Israel sent a message to the US stressing that it would not accept minor border changes, and reiterating that it rejected the territorial component of the Rogers Plan.⁴⁹ The foreign ministry advised its embassy in Washington to emphasise Israel's need for a suitable security arrangement in Sharm El-Sheikh.⁵⁰

Israel's reply to Jarring put it at a difficult position vis-à-vis the American administration. Sisco informed Rabin that the American administration was disappointed with Israel's actions; he went as far as to state that the US might re-examine its relationship with Israel. According to Sisco, the US had always accepted the idea of a territorial compromise, by which Israel would be required to withdraw from most of the territories. He called on Israel not to miss this opportunity and to offer to withdraw from the canal, as part of an interim agreement.⁵¹ In a later meeting with Kissinger, Rabin was asked whether Israel would 'stick by her position' if the US 'were to exert pressure upon you by cutting off military aid'.⁵²

On the 16th of March 1971, possibly in response to US queries, Meir, in a speech to the Knesset, outlined Israel's territorial position. According to her, the final borders between Israel and its neighbours would be determined by peace negotiations and that Israel will not return to the cease-fire lines. Meir claimed that the government had not adopted any particular plan regarding the territories and was considering several different options, among them the Allon Plan. She reiterated that the Gaza Strip

⁴⁸ ISA/7021/4-a/Israel's Letter to Jarring/21.2.1971.

⁴⁹ ISA/7021/4-a/Government Decision no.368/22.2.1971.

⁵⁰ ISA/7021/4-a/Telegram from the Foreign Ministry to the Washington Embassy/Feb 1971.

⁵¹ ISA/7021/4-a/Summary of Rabin's Conversation with Sisco/24.2.1971.

⁵² Yitzhak Rabin, The Rabin Memoirs (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979), Page 153.

would not be returned to Egypt, that the Sinai Peninsula must be demilitarised and that Sharm El-Sheikh would remain under Israeli control, enabling territorial contiguity with Eilat.⁵³ As noted by Raphael, the 'map' presented by Meir during her speech 'neither appealed to Sadat nor comforted the state department'.⁵⁴ Additionally, Israel's settlement activities in the Sinai Peninsula did not correspond to Meir's 'map'.

The gap between Meir's stated and actual positions regarding the Sinai Peninsula was amply demonstrated by her response to Dayan's new initiative. Her response made it clear that she was reluctant to consider any withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula. Dayan, in a meeting with Sisco, suggested that Israel withdraw to the Sinai passes, while destroying the Bar-Lev line fortifications, which would demonstrate Israel's peaceful intentions and show Egypt that it did not intend to return to the canal. Additionally, Israel would allow a symbolic presence of Egyptian police forces on the eastern bank. In return, Egypt would end its state of belligerence and agree to leave the final borders to be determined in negotiations between the sides.⁵⁵ Meir was furious when she found out that Dayan had presented the US with a different position to that of the government, and rejected his ideas. According to Aloni, Dayan sent General Yariv, one of Meir's favourite generals, to convince her. Yariv brought along maps and spent several hours trying to convince Meir; but to no avail. Meir claimed that 'nothing would come out of this initiative and the public would not understand the need for an Israeli withdrawal from Sinai'.⁵⁶ Eban suggested, to Dayan that he would bring his proposal to the government for a vote, claiming that there might be enough votes to approve it. Dayan replied that if 'Golda does not support my position, than I do not support my position'!⁵⁷

⁵³ ISA/7336/7-a/Meir's Speech, on the 16th Of March, to the Knesset/23.11.1971.

⁵⁴ Rafael, Destination Peace Page 264.

⁵⁵ YTA/15Galili/personal notes/Galili summarising a Conversation with Carmel/18.6.1971.

⁵⁶ Interview with Aloni.

⁵⁷ Yaacobi, On the Razor's Edge Pages 127-128.

The Kitchenette

Israel's territorial approach and its short-term policies appeared contradictory. On the one hand, Israel was engaged in the creation of settlements in the Rafah Plains, the Gaza Strip and Sharm El-Sheikh, stating that these areas would remain under Israel's control; Israel's approach regarding these areas was based on its fear of international security arrangements and its desire to unilaterally define its own secure borders. On the other hand, Israel refused to either define the future status of these areas or put forward long-term plans for them and continued to state its willingness to engage in direct negotiations without preconditions. The majority of Israel's decisions regarding the Occupied Territories were dictated, to a large extent, by the Kitchenette. Therefore, in order to understand Israel's approach towards the territories, during the Meir period, it is important to understand the way in which the main members of the Kitchenette, i.e. Meir, Galili and Dayan, viewed the long-term future of the Occupied Territories and the settlement issue.

In the midst of the Jarring Mission, and the interim agreement negotiations, the Labour Party held its annual convention. During the convention Meir, Galili and Dayan put forward their views on the territories and Israel's diplomatic approach. Meir described the Arab states as consisting of one united front which opposed Israel and that still harboured some desire to destroy Israel.⁵⁸ She accused the Jarring mission of attempting to return Israel to the pre-Six Day War situation and questioned the need to risk Israeli lives by accepting this idea.⁵⁹ Meir made it clear that Israel would not accept an imposed solution or be dictated to about the parameters of its future borders. Furthermore, she explained that Israel would never agree to rely on others to provide for its security needs, claiming that only secure borders would provide that.⁶⁰ Meir claimed that Sadat did not enter into negotiations with Israel in a sincere attempt to reach peace. Because of her distrust of Sadat, she refused to consider a withdrawal from the Suez Canal, viewing it as a prelude to an Israeli

⁵⁸ LPA/2-021-1971-106/Record of Meir's Speech to the Labour Party/1971/Pages 3 and 6.

⁵⁹ LPA/2-021-1971-106/Page 7.

⁶⁰ LPA/2-021-1971-106/Pages 9-10.

withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip. According to Meir, Israel should not be made to pay merely because Sadat wanted to reopen the Suez Canal.⁶¹

Dayan criticised Ben-Gurion's claim that Israel should withdraw from all the territories, with the exception of East Jerusalem and the Golan heights. According to Dayan, Israel could not afford to withdraw from the West Bank. Dayan challenged the view that Jordan was a credible peace partner, stating that Hussein had not changed and that dealing with Jordan also meant dealing with the likes of Yasser Arafat (the leader of the PLO) and George Habash (the leader of the Popular Liberation Front of Palestine, PFLP). Dayan questioned the logic behind giving Jordan areas, such as Qalqilya, Ramallah, Hebron and Gush-Etzion. He raised the question of who would control the Gaza Strip and the West Bank once Israel has left, 'Egypt, Jordan or the PFLP'.⁶² For Dayan, only the continued presence of the IDF along Israel's strategic lines would ensure long-term security and force the Arab world to accept Israel's presence and the new borders.⁶³

Regarding the Palestinians, and true to his Functional Solution, Dayan explained that they understood that Israel was aiming for a 'mutual and beneficial lives together'. He argued that the Palestinians were more willing to find ways to accommodate Israel, than they were to 'settle with the terrorist organisations'.⁶⁴ Dayan concluded his remarks by stating that, 'despite Resolution 242, the Rogers Plan, the Allon Plan and other plans', the strongest guarantees for Israel's long-term security, and the most important aspects of this conflict, were 'the return of the nation of Israel to its homeland and the presence of the IDF along the Jordan River'.⁶⁵

Galili claimed that the Labour Party was not entrusted with the right to relinquish the historic right of the 'Jewish people to the land of Israel': 'Our party was established in order to realise our historical aspirations and rights'. Galili remarked that during the party's first convention it had agreed to establish settlements 'not in Uganda or some

⁶¹ LPA/2-021-1971-106/Pages 14-16.

⁶² LPA/2-021-1971-106/Record of Dayan's Speech to the Labour Party/1971/Page 2.

⁶³ LPA/2-021-1971-106/Page 4.

⁶⁴ LPA/2-021-1971-106/Pages 6-7.

⁶⁵ LPA/2-021-1971-106/Page 19.

undefined state, but in the historic land of Israel'.⁶⁶ According to Galili, the Labour Party had won the trust of the nation because of its commitments to the realisation of the Jewish aspirations of settling the land of Israel, as well as its sincere desire to pursue peace.⁶⁷ Galili explained that he was happy the party did not draw any maps, 'When the time comes and there is a real chance for peace we will submit our map'. Galili, in his usual verbose style, claimed that Israel wanted 'secure and recognised borders' corresponding to its 'geographical, topographical, strategic, security, historical and political considerations' and in accordance to Israel's 'Zionist and security' needs as well as 'the political realities'.⁶⁸

These remarks, by Meir, Dayan and Galili, raise several important issues. First, it is clear that members of the Kitchenette attached a great deal of importance to Israel's security considerations and viewed the territories mainly through a military-strategic prism. Second, despite the importance attached to the strategic-military considerations, it is clear that Meir, Dayan and Galili grappled with the Normative-Instrumental dichotomy. Their views regarding Israel's strategic imperatives were thus modified by their cultural and identity images, i.e. their views on Zionism, its realisation and the historic relationship between the Jewish people and the land of Israel. Furthermore, it is apparent that these views were modified by the resurgence of New Zionism ideology; this is particularly noticeable in the language used by Galili. Third, their willingness to accept territorial concessions reflected the degree of trust they attributed to the Arab leaders and their proposals. Lastly, it is apparent from their stated views that Meir and Galili did not attach a great deal of importance to formulating a long-term territorial policy and therefore did not have an end-game in mind. This was in contrast to Dayan, who was pushing for Israel to adopt a Functional Solution.

⁶⁶ LPA/2-021-1971-106/Record of Galili's Speech to the Labour Party/1971/Page 4.

⁶⁷ LPA/2-021-1971-106/Page 5.

⁶⁸ LPA/2-021-1971-106/Pages 10-11.

Israel's Contradictory Approach

There were several reasons for the failure of the interim agreement and, to a lesser extent, the Jarring Talks, one of which was Israel's lack of a coherent and comprehensive long-term territorial policy. Throughout the negotiations, Israel was unable or unwilling to put forward a clear long-term policy in regards to the Sinai Peninsula. This lack of policy meant that Israeli decision makers were not working together towards the achievement of a particular outcome; Israel's contradictory security approach and Meir's reaction to Dayan's new initiative attest to the lack of policy coordination. Meir stated Israel's willingness to negotiate with Egypt in order to achieve a peace agreement on the basis of secure and recognised borders. According to Meir, secure and recognised borders meant the retention of the Rafah Plains by Israel and a contiguous strip of land stretching from Eilat to Sharm El-Sheikh by Israel; these areas were within the parameters of the Oral Law and were deemed essential for Israel's national security. However, despite agreeing, in principle, to withdraw from the majority of the Sinai Peninsula, in practice, the Meir government argued with the American mediators over every inch, while constantly adding new 'strategically important' areas from which Israel could not withdraw. Furthermore, and as shown, Israel's settlement activities in the Sinai Peninsula were not directly related to its professed security needs; Israel's development of the Sharm El-Sheikh-Eilat area clearly did not match its stated significance.

On the one hand, the government, in its attempts to negotiate a peace agreement with Egypt, viewed the Sinai Peninsula as a bargaining chip. On the other hand, it viewed the territory, particularly after the War of Attrition, as a strategic asset to its national-security – one which provided Israel with strategic depth and maritime freedom. In addition to this already complex dichotomy, Israeli politicians could not agree on the nature of Israel's security needs in its pursuit of secure borders. Moreover, and despite stating its desire to retain these areas, Israel was unable, or unwilling, to define their future status. In fact, in his diary, Weitz questioned whether it would be feasible to annex the territories Israel deemed strategically important.⁶⁹ It is not exactly clear what Israel's long-term objectives in regards to the Sinai Peninsula were. Israel's

⁶⁹ YTA/15Weitz/4/28/Weitz's Personal Diary/1969/Page 174.

professed strategic aims, i.e. retaining control over the Rafah Plains and Sharm El-Sheikh, could have only been realised with American diplomatic support. Israel's stated reasons for demanding these territories were purely strategic-military. However, when the American administration addressed Israel's security concerns, Israel refused to change its stance. Not only was Israel unwilling to change its stance, but it was also unwilling to define its future relationship with these territories.

Israel's contradictory security approach towards the Sinai Peninsula and the Occupied Territories was made amply apparent during a series of meetings with Sisco, and Yevgeny Primakov (the Deputy Director of the USSR's Academy of Sciences' Institute of World Economy and International Relations). Sisco explained to Meir that the US was willing to look at its long-term financial and military commitments to Israel in order to ensure its security, after it withdrew, as part of an interim agreement.⁷⁰ Sisco reaffirmed that in the final agreement Sharm El-Sheikh would remain under Israel's control, as stipulated in Rogers A, adding that the US did not accept Jarring's interpretation of Resolution 242. Replying to a question from Meir, Sisco informed her that the US position had not changed and that it remained fully committed to Rogers A.⁷¹ Nevertheless, even though the US was willing to address Israel's security concerns and ensure that Sharm El-Sheikh remained in Israeli hands, Israel refused to budge. Meir informed Sisco, that Egypt was unwilling to enter into negotiations without preconditions and that, in her opinion, Sadat was not ready to sign a peace agreement with Israel. Israel, according to Meir, did not want the resumption of hostilities and was therefore willing to work towards an interim agreement, as long as this was consistent with its national security.⁷²

Following Sisco's visit, Primakov came to Israel, at the behest of the Soviet leadership, for a series of secret meetings with Meir, Dayan and Eban. Primakov informed Eban that the USSR was willing to discuss all of Israel's security concerns, although to Primakov, Israel's policies appeared to have little to do with security concerns and more to do with the acquisition of territories.⁷³ Primakov stated that Arab recognition of Israel, and its territorial integrity, was more important to security

⁷⁰ ISA/7037/16-a/Record of Meir's Meeting with Sisco/2.8.1971/Page 7.

⁷¹ ISA/7037/16-a/Pages 10-12.

⁷² ISA/7044/17-a/Record of Meir's Meeting with Sisco/4.8.1971.

⁷³ ISA/7037/17-a/Record of Eban's Meeting with Primakov/29.8.1971/Page 21.

than territorial changes, reaffirming the USSR's willingness to address Israel's security concerns. According to Primakov, Resolution 242 provided Israel with the territorial recognition it desired, as long as this was 'not a question of territorial acquisition'.⁷⁴ Sadat, he claimed, was willing to sign a peace agreement with Israel - an opportunity Israel should take. Furthermore, he added that Israel's demand for direct negotiations without preconditions was not consistent with its stated desire to retain the Golan Heights, Sharm El-Sheikh, parts of Sinai and Jerusalem.⁷⁵ Eban replied that Israel's main concern was security and not territories, but that some territories were essential for its national security.⁷⁶ Primakov explained that in his view the Arabs had shown a great deal of diplomatic flexibility and Israel should now dispel the notion that it was happy with the status-quo and was bent on territorial acquisition. He reassured Israel that the Arabs were no longer interested in destroying it and that the USSR was willing to provide help and assurances to ensure the success of the negotiations.⁷⁷ Dayan inquired about the Soviet position regarding the territories.⁷⁸ Primakov asserted that the USSR agreed with Sadat's demand for a complete Israeli withdrawal to the international border, but was willing to consider different scenarios for the Gaza Strip, none of which would involve an Israeli presence there.⁷⁹

There are several reasons behind Israel's lack of a clear long-term policy and its failure to produce such a policy during this period, (e.g. the interim agreement negotiations and the Jarring Talks) but probably the most important reason was the unwillingness of the American administration to either impose a solution or apply sustained pressure on Israel. Throughout the interim agreement negotiations and the Jarring Talks, Israel's position regarding the Occupied Territories was influenced by the (fluctuating) levels of pressure it was under from the Americans (which can be seen in the example of Israel's secret peace plan of 1970). Additionally, and as stated by Dayan, as long as the US did not impose a solution on Israel, the Israeli government could continue promoting the status-quo. There is no doubt that the US could have applied pressure on Israel, had it wanted to do so; Kissinger once asked

⁷⁴ ISA/7037/17-a/Pages 22-23.

⁷⁵ ISA/7037/17-a/Pages 23-24.

⁷⁶ ISA/7037/17-a/Page 25.

⁷⁷ ISA/7037/17-a/Summary of Meir's Meeting with Primakov/30.8.1971/Pages 1-2.

⁷⁸ ISA/7037/17-a/Record of Dayan's Meeting with Primakov/31.8.1971/Page 5.

⁷⁹ ISA/7037/17-a/Page 6.

Rabin how would Israel react if the US decided to cut the aid. This is not the place to examine the reasons behind the American reluctance to apply pressure on Israel, but there is nevertheless two important points that needs to be mentioned: Kissinger was not supportive of Rogers' Middle East initiatives and the 'bureaucratic turf struggle' between the two affected US diplomatic efforts and, as a consequence, Israel's territorial policy (or rather the lack of it).

Another important reason for Israel's lack of clear long-term policy was Meir's preference for a non-committing territorial approach that allowed her to avoid dealing with the controversial issues. Meir, the quintessential 'Jewish mother', was the most dominant figure in the government and, as such, gave the tone on the most important issues, with most ministers reluctant to confront her.⁸⁰ According to Meir, Israel did not have suitable peace partners, while the interim agreement and the Jarring Talks were the start of a process that would culminate in Israel's full withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula. Furthermore, Meir's distrust of Rogers, whom she accused of treating Israel unfairly,⁸¹ and Jarring, whom she considered a dishonest person who had sold himself to the Arabs and the Soviets,⁸² led her to believe that no meaningful negotiations were possible. Arguably, this perception, in addition to her general distrust of Sadat and her belief that the Arabs would eventually accept Israel's terms, led her to conclude that time was on Israel's side. She was, therefore, in no rush to take controversial decisions and define Israel's long-term territorial policy.

Meir apologists, such as Mordechai Gazit and Meron Medzini, argue that Sadat was not ready to sign a peace agreement with Israel and therefore Meir was correct in the way she handled the negotiations. While their analysis may raise some valid arguments, Gazit and Medzini are unable to articulate exactly what were Meir's policies for the Sinai Peninsula.⁸³ The fact of the matter is that Meir insisted on maintaining the territorial status-quo, she did not put forward a clear long-term policy and avoided making any controversial decisions regarding the Sinai Peninsula.

⁸⁰ Interview with Beilin.

⁸¹ ISA/7044/17-a/Summary of Meir's Meeting with Barbour/1.11.1971/Pages 1-2.

⁸² ISA/7038/14-a/Record of Ministerial Meeting regarding Jarring/3.3.1972/Page 7.

⁸³ Meron Medzini, *Golda: A Political Biography* (Tel Aviv, Yedioth Ahronoth Books, 2008) (Hebrew), Pages 452-453, 497-506. Mordechai Gazit, *The Peace Process 1969-1973: Efforts and Contacts* (Jerusalem, The Magnes Press, 1983), Pages 122-126.

The Rafah Plains

In January 1972, several Bedouin tribes petitioned to the Israeli Supreme Court, claiming that the army had expelled them from their homes in the Rafah Plains.⁸⁴ The petition was supported by members of Hashomer Hatz'air,⁸⁵ who helped uncover the incident. Chief of Staff David El'azar claimed the orders did not emanate from him, and established a fact-finding commission to investigate the incident.

On the 15th of March 1972, members of Hashomer Hatz'air presented Mapam's central committee with the findings from their report into the treatment of the Bedouin in the Rafah Plains. They claimed that Israel was creating an Arab-free area, south of the Gaza Strip, in order to separate the Strip from the Sinai Peninsula. This, they suggested, was part of a plan to clear certain areas before settling them with Jews, and linking or annexing them to Israel. They remonstrated with the faction's leaders, reminding them that in a 'proper state' the government must act in a transparent manner.⁸⁶ Health Minister Victor Shem-Tov professed to have had no prior knowledge of the incident and claimed that no decision regarding the Bedouin had ever been taken by the government.⁸⁷

Hashomer Hatz'air provided the Mapam Central Committee with a detailed report of the geographical area in which lands had been appropriated and the number of Bedouins dispossessed (around 5,000). The report included maps showing existing and planned settlements, and outposts, in the Rafah Plains and the Gaza Strip, most of which were on appropriated lands. The areas cited by Hashomer Hatz'air were Abu-Midan (Gaza Strip) and Samiri (Rafah Plains), the same areas in which Allon and Dayan had previously proposed establishing security outposts.⁸⁸ The report also uncovered details of a possible planned city in the Rafah Plains. Referring to the existing settlements in the Gaza Strip, members of Hashomer Hatz'air asked the committee 'how was it possible that a transitory outpost established by the army, for security purposes, could transform into a civilian settlement'. The report alleged that

⁸⁴ Gorenberg, The Accidental Empire Page 221.

⁸⁵ Mapam's Youth Movement.

⁸⁶ YYA/Mapam/90/68/Hashomer Hatz'air's Report: 'Appropriation and Settlement in the Gaza Strip'/15.3.1972/Page 2.

⁸⁷ YYA/Mapam/90/68/Record of Mapam's Central Committee Meeting/15.3.1972/Page 18.

⁸⁸ YYA/Mapam/90/68/Hashomer Hatz'air's Report/15.3.1972/Pages 3-5.

the majority of the settlements created in the Rafah Plains and the Gaza Strip were not of a military nature. The report advised the party to examine whether this method of operation was evident in other regions as well.⁸⁹ In fact, unknown to Hashomer Hatz'air, Galili, citing important political reasons, proposed establishing an industrial area in the Gaza Strip that would supply the army and the four settlements already established there.⁹⁰

In his defence, Shem-Tov claimed that he was unaware of any government decision regarding the local population of the Rafah Plains. He added that from a conversation he had recently (after the case was brought to light) he concluded that neither Dayan nor El'azar were involved. Some members of Mapam inquired how it was possible that, despite being part of the Labour Party, and the ruling coalition, they were kept in the dark on this matter. Shem-Tov replied, 'How could I know of something I only read a few hours ago in the Press?'.⁹¹

The Rafah Plains were seen as vital for Israel's national security, as a way of separating the Gaza Strip from the Sinai Peninsula while at the same time providing it with strategic depth.⁹² The first proposal to establish settlements in the area came from Allon. On the 10th of December 1968 he proposed creating a series of settlements in the triangular area of Abu-Agheila, El-Arish and the city of Rafah.⁹³ Allon based his proposal on a survey done in the area, by the Settlement Department, which included a detailed plan for four settlements.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, the Settlement Department clearly stated in its proposal that parts of the area were inhabited and cultivated by Bedouins.⁹⁵ On the same day, Israel, in its response to Jarring, proclaimed that it would not withdraw from the Gaza Strip and that it would retain a strip of land linking Sharm El-Sheikh with Eilat. This decision opened the door for the establishment of settlements in the area,⁹⁶ and prompted the Settlement Department to present a revised plan for the creation of six to seven settlements in the

⁸⁹ YYA/Mapam/90/68/Page 5.

⁹⁰ ISA/6692/15-a/Galili's Proposal/22.10.1972.

⁹¹ YYA/Mapam/90/68/Record of Mapam's Central Committee Meeting/15.3.1972/Page 22.

⁹² Interview with Hillel.

⁹³ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Allon's Proposal/10.12.1968.

⁹⁴ Pedatzur, The Triumph of Embarrassment Page 246.

⁹⁵ ISA/7920/7-a/Settlement Department's Proposal/(no date).

⁹⁶ Pedatzur, The Triumph of Embarrassment Page 247.

Rafah Plains.⁹⁷ This was followed, on the 26th of January 1969, by a different proposal to establish two settlements in the area.⁹⁸ During a government meeting on the issue, Dayan explained that they would need to relocate the Bedouins who lived there. He added that the project should be defined as a military one, and that Israel should strive initially to establish Nahal outposts in the area. Dayan claimed the area was one from which Israel would not withdraw as it was vital for its national security.⁹⁹

Arguably, the government's inability to find a long-term solution to the Gaza Strip was behind its decision to establish settlements in the Rafah Plains.¹⁰⁰ The Gaza Strip presented the government with several challenges, chief among them the need to contain and pacify the population of the territory, in particular the 'terrorist' threat emanating from it.¹⁰¹ Israel's policies in the Rafah Plains were an attempt to compensate for its lack of a clear long-term policy approach towards the Gaza Strip and to provide an answer to the strategic and demographic problems posed by the territory. On the one hand, Israel could not afford to annex the Gaza Strip, because of the demographic implications. On the other hand, it feared its withdrawal would lead to the use of the area as a base by a foreign army.¹⁰² In other words, Israel's strategic-military needs, regarding the Gaza Strip, dictated, to a large extent, its settlement activity in the Rafah Plains.¹⁰³

The idea to settle the Gaza Strip was first suggested by Allon in 1967. In the Allon Plan the Gaza Strip was to be an integral part of Israel, while its refugees were to be resettled.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, the decision to establish settlements in the area would only be taken on the 13th of September 1970. It is important to note that the idea of settling the Gaza Strip received broad political support, including from Mapam.¹⁰⁵ This decision came as a result of Galili's proposal to establish two Nahal outposts in the Gaza Strip (Kfar Darom and Netzarim), in order to assert Israel's claims to the area,

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Government Decision no.841/26.1.1969.

⁹⁹ Pedatzur, *The Triumph of Embarrassment* Page 249.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Hillel.

¹⁰¹ ISA/8162/4-a/KFDC briefed by General Gur/13.2.1969/Pages 5-9.

¹⁰² Demant, *Ploughshares into Swords* Page 231.

¹⁰³ Interview with Hillel.

¹⁰⁴ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/The Allon Plan/26.7.1967.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Shem-Tov.

in the aftermath of the War of Attrition.¹⁰⁶ In January 1970 Galili became Israel's settlement Tsar, replacing Allon as head of the Ministerial Settlements Committee (MSC). In a discussion in the MSC, prior to the government's decision, general Gazit claimed the settlements were necessary for 'political-psychological' reasons 'to give an electric shock to the residents of the strip', even though he acknowledged they served no 'tactical point'.¹⁰⁷ General Ariel Sharon (Head of Israel's Southern Command) went even further arguing that the settlements would 'wean the Arabs of the Gaza Strip from the illusion that we will eventually get out of there'.¹⁰⁸

The decision by the government to settle the Gaza Strip and the Rafah Plains had been taken before the long-term future of these areas was decided upon. The Eshkol government had avoided taking a decision over the long-term future of the Gaza Strip until it could find a solution to the demographic problem it posed. Several ideas were discussed, among them exchanging the Gaza Strip for parts of the West Bank in order to conclude a deal with Hussein. The decision to settle the Gaza Strip by the Meir government, not only hampered negotiations with Hussein, but also plunged Israel into a demographic conundrum. In fact, a proposal by Dayan, to provide the residents of the Gaza Strip with Jordanian passports, in order to strengthen Jordan's ties with Gaza, was rebuffed by Meir and Galili, who expressed fears the move would provide Jordan with a foothold in the territory.¹⁰⁹ On the 11th of November 1971, Meir informed Hussein that the hand-over of the Gaza Strip was no longer an option.¹¹⁰

As mentioned earlier, the decision to settle the Rafah Plains was clearly in opposition to Israel's professed desire to negotiate with Egypt without preconditions. Israel was creating facts on the ground that would hinder such negotiations. Furthermore, the appropriation of lands in order to create a new reality by reshaping the landscape discredited Israel's democratic and legal traditions. However, despite these problems, the idea that the Rafah Plains would remain under Israel's control after any agreement became central to Israel's territorial position.¹¹¹ This idea was strengthened, in May 1973, when Israel's Supreme Court rejected the Bedouin tribes' petition regarding the

¹⁰⁶ YTA/15Galili/40/1/30/Galili's Proposal to settle the Gaza Strip/8.9.1970.

¹⁰⁷ Gorenberg, *The Accidental Empire* Page 213

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ YTA/15Galili/Report by Galili, summarising Israeli-Jordanian relations/9.8.1973.

¹¹⁰ ISA/7034/15-a/Summary of Meir's meetings with Hussein/(no date)/Page 3.

¹¹¹ Interview with Yadlin.

appropriation of lands on the Rafah Plains. The court accepted the army's argument that the area was essential to Israel's security needs and that the decision to appropriate lands and resettle the Bedouin population was taken out of 'military necessity'.¹¹² However, during the court case several of Israel's daily newspapers published accounts of a secret plan by the Ministry of Defence for the establishment of a large, deep-sea port, city in the Rafah Plains named Yamit.¹¹³ These detailed plans were drawn up by Dayan and Galili with the assistance of the Settlement Department long before the court case began.¹¹⁴

Gazit wrote that the case of the Rafah plains illustrated the perverse dichotomy inherent in Dayan's concept of 'enlightened occupation'.¹¹⁵ On the one hand, Dayan envisioned a long-term Israeli-Arab coexistence, under Israel's rule while, on the other hand, he supported the expansion of Israel's settlement activity, which included, among others, land appropriation. Nevertheless, it is important to note that Dayan was well aware of the economic, political and social problems that existed in the Occupied Territories, and had urged both the government and the Knesset to do more for the welfare of the Palestinian population.¹¹⁶ One of the reasons the government was not investing more was that, according to Israeli analysts, socio-economic and security conditions in the Occupied Territories were improving dramatically.¹¹⁷ Moreover, the fact that the security and political situations in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were under control (from Israel's perspective), while Palestinian living standards were improving, meant that the government was in no hurry to re-assess its territorial approach.

The fact-finding commission established by the army found extensive irregularities in the conduct of Sharon.¹¹⁸ It concluded that Sharon acted on his own accord, and in contravention of procedures, and that neither the government nor the army command was involved. Nevertheless, the committee recognised that the new situation in the Rafah Plains was advantageous from the army's perspective and therefore advised

¹¹² Eldar and Zertal, Lords of the Land Page 454.

¹¹³ Eldar and Zertal, Page 455.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Bernstein.

¹¹⁵ Gazit, Trapped Page 74.

¹¹⁶ ISA/8163/4-a/KFDC briefed by Dayan/27.3.1973/Pages 8-10.

¹¹⁷ Neve Gordon, Israel's Occupation (Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2008), Pages 62-68.

¹¹⁸ Gorenberg, The Accidental Empire Page 222.

El'azar not to take any further action, other than to officially reprimand Sharon.¹¹⁹ Arguably, Sharon understood the importance that the government, and the army, attributed to the area and the difficulty they had in making such a decision. He therefore decided to support their efforts, and made that decision for them; Sharon later claimed that Dayan 'had been fully aware of what was going on'.¹²⁰ Indeed, in a letter to Meir, during the court case, Galili proposed establishing a regional centre in the area, explaining that it was *now* relatively empty. Galili added that the proposal was done in consultation with Dayan and Gvati.¹²¹

Hussein's Federal Plan

Israel's incoherent policies were not limited to the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip and the Rafah Plains; in fact, it was the West Bank which proved to be the epitome of Israel's confused and muddled territorial approach. Instead of agreeing on a comprehensive long-term approach, decision-makers appeared content with the implementation of both the Allon Plan and Dayan's Functional Solution.

The Israeli government chose to leave the question of defining its long-term relationship with the Occupied Territories open, even though the establishment of settlements and outposts continued unabated. With the exception of the Jerusalem municipal area, the Occupied Territories existed in a legal limbo, with Israel unwilling to extend its jurisdiction, even to areas it declared would remain under its control.¹²² Arguably, the government preferred the status of the territories to be determined through negotiations and did not wish to jeopardise those by taking unilateral action. However, with the Israeli occupation of the territories entering its fifth year, the undefined status of the territories, in particular of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, created numerous problems for Israel, not least that of legitimacy.

¹¹⁹ Gazit, The Stick and the Carrot Page 74.

¹²⁰ Uzi Benziman, Sharon: An Israeli Caesar (London, Robson Books, 1987) Page 119.

¹²¹ ISA/6692/15-c/Letter from Galili to Meir/22.10.1972.

¹²² Sasson Levi, "Local Government in the Administered Territories" in Daniel J. Elazar (Ed) Judea, Samaria and Gaza: Views on the Present and Future (Washington D.C, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1982), Page 104.

The idea that Israel would be required to remain in the territories for a long period of time was not new. Back in 1967, Dayan put forward a proposal that would have seen the territories (the West Bank and the Gaza Strip) remain under Israeli control indefinitely, i.e. the so-called Functional Solution.¹²³ Subsequently, during his time in the Defence Ministry, Dayan worked towards the realisation of this solution with the apparent backing of the government. As noted by Shem-Tov, when it came to the implementation of political, social and economic decisions regarding the Occupied Territories, Dayan was ‘completely and exclusively’ in control.¹²⁴ In fact, the Directors-General Committee, which was nominally in charge of coordinating the government’s activities in the Occupied Territories, made budgetary proposals for the financial year 1970-1971 that appeared to be in line with Dayan’s vision.¹²⁵

This included a drive towards Palestinian ‘self-rule’ by which Israel recognised and supported local-elected officials. Dayan’s and, consequently Israel’s, actions empowered local officials, particularly the mayors, and enhanced their position. Subsequently, the relative financial weakness of the Palestinian municipalities, and their dependence on the military administration for public services and investment in infrastructure provided Israel with a great deal of control over them.¹²⁶

Israel’s need to legitimise and empower local officials necessitated holding fresh elections in the West Bank (later followed by elections in the Gaza Strip); the previous local elections were held in 1963. The elections were seen by Dayan as a way of empowering local officials in order to strengthen the case for Palestinian self-rule and his idea of a Functional Solution, even if they represented an action against the interest of Jordan - with whom Israel appeared to want a deal. It is worth noting that Dayan’s belief in the Functional Solution appeared to be justified by the positive economic and social statistics emanating from the military administration.¹²⁷ The relative ease by which Israel administered the territories, and the apparent success of Dayan’s occupation model, contributed to the government’s lack of urgency in adopting a long-term approach.

¹²³ Interview with Halperin.

¹²⁴ YYA/Victor Shem-Tov/87-95/1/2/Personal Notes/1970-1974.

¹²⁵ ISA/3191/9-f/The Directors-General Committee’s budgetary proposals/20.8.1969.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Arie Bergman, Economic Growth in the Administered Areas 1968-1973 (Jerusalem, Bank of Israel Research Department, 1974) Pages 4-13.

In 1972, elections were held in the West Bank, with the process run and supervised by local officials without Israeli interference. From an Israeli perspective, the elections proved to be a great success (participation levels were above 80%),¹²⁸ despite vocal resistance by the PLO and unhappiness expressed by Jordan.¹²⁹ The elections did not bring about an immediate change to life in the territories. They did represent, however, the first instance in which Palestinians were able to determine their political future, with several prominent members of the old Palestinian establishment losing their seats to up-and-coming young independent runners. Consequently, the political leadership of the West Bank resembled a three-headed hydra, caught up between Jordan, the PLO and local independent groups.¹³⁰ This situation (i.e. the fragmentation of the Palestinian political leadership) undermined both Dayan's Functional Solution and Israel's Jordanian Approach.

On the 15th of March 1972, King Hussein unveiled a new diplomatic initiative 'The Federal Plan', through which he hoped to reaffirm his claim to the West Bank. The plan was timed to coincide with the mayoral elections in the West Bank. It was meant to restore Hussein's credentials and support - damaged in the aftermath of Black September - among Palestinians. Hussein proposed linking the West Bank, and possibly the Gaza Strip, with Jordan in a federal agreement, creating an autonomous Palestinian region under Jordanian control with Jerusalem as its capital.¹³¹ The plan was immediately dismissed by the Arab world, with Hussein accused of trying to sign a separate peace deal with Israel. Among Palestinians, the mood - not surprisingly considering the events of Black September - was sour. The PLO issued a statement condemning and rejecting the plan, claiming that the Palestinians should be accorded the right to determine their own future, and accusing Hussein of being an accomplice of America and of Zionism. The plan did not receive much approval in the West Bank either, with only a minority of elected officials welcoming it.¹³²

¹²⁸ Gazit, The Stick and the Carrot Page 166.

¹²⁹ Levi, "Local Government in the Administered Territories" Pages 116-119

¹³⁰ Mordechai Nisan, Israel and the Territories: A study in Control 1967-1977 (Ramat Gan, Turtledove, 1978), Pages 122- 123.

¹³¹ Lukacs, Israel, Jordan and the Peace Process Page 117.

¹³² Shlaim, Lion of Jordan Pages 343-344

The rejection of the plan by the Arab states was followed by a formal Israeli rejection. The plan prompted a vote in the Knesset, recognising Israel's historic rights to the West Bank. The government, while not rejecting the federal solution outright, did not accept the territorial aspects of Hussein's plan. Meir called the plan a pretentious and one-sided statement that failed to recognise Israel's claims in the West Bank.¹³³ One of the few to welcome the plan was Allon, who claimed the federal solution was compatible with his plan, even if he rejected its territorial aspects.¹³⁴ Allon claimed that there was no reason to dismiss Hussein's federal plan. Allon believed there was a 'real possibility' of reaching a solution based on it and the Allon Plan, adding that the federal plan offered a good solution to the Palestinian problem. Nevertheless, Allon argued that in order to bring about a solution based on these plans, Israel should continue to create facts on the ground. He called for the establishment of a new city on the Jerusalem-Jericho road (Ma'ale Adumim), and stated that additional settlements were needed in those areas that would remain under Israeli control after a peace agreement was signed.¹³⁵

Despite rejecting Hussein's plan, the Israeli government, with the exception of Dayan who operated in accordance with his vision, continued to view the Jordanian Approach as the most suitable for the West Bank. Indeed, on the 11th of November 1971, during a meeting with Hussein, Meir stated that Israel had no desire to keep the Palestinians under its jurisdiction: 'They belong to you, they are your people'.¹³⁶ Meir proposed a solution based on 'substantial changes to the border' along the lines of the Allon Plan,¹³⁷ with Jerusalem remaining under Israel's control but, with Jordanian administration over the Muslim holy sites.¹³⁸ Hussein informed Meir that he had no problems discussing border changes, but that these should be based on reciprocity and be based on a desire for long-lasting peace between the two states.¹³⁹

¹³³ Shlaim, Page 346

¹³⁴ Yeruham Cohen, Allon's Plan (Tel Aviv, Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1972) (Hebrew), Page 155.

¹³⁵ Ma'ariv, Interview with Allon, 24.3.1972.

¹³⁶ ISA/7034/15-a/Summary of Israel's negotiations with Jordan regarding the West Bank/1973/ Page 3.

¹³⁷ ISA/7034/15-a/Pages 1 and 3.

¹³⁸ ISA/7034/15-a/Summary of Israel's negotiations with Jordan regarding Jerusalem/1973/Page 1.

¹³⁹ ISA/7034/15-a/Summary of Israel's negotiations with Hussein/'The Jordanian Position'/1973/Pages 3-4.

On the 21st of March, Meir met with Hussein and his Prime Minister Zaid Rifai to discuss the Jordanian federal plan. Meir started the meeting by complaining that Israel was not notified prior to the unveiling of the plan. She informed him that his plan disregarded Israel's historic claims to the West Bank, and that any future agreement on the West Bank must be based on substantial changes to the pre-war borders. These, she proceeded to explain, would be similar in substance to those proposed in the Allon Plan. With regards to Jerusalem, Meir stated that she was willing to discuss administrative solutions to the Muslim and Christian holy places but that the city would remain under Israel's control.¹⁴⁰ In response, Hussein stated that he was willing to sign a separate peace deal with Israel but that this depended on Israel's position. He proceeded to explain how his federal plan would work. The West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which would form the Palestinian part of the federation, would remain demilitarised, and under Jordanian control. Jordan would be willing to accept some minor border changes and a unified Jerusalem- as long as it was also the capital of the Palestinian autonomous region. On the matter of Jerusalem, Hussein asked Meir to desist from changing the status-quo in Jerusalem irreversibly.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, Rifai informed Meir that, while it was willing to pursue a separate peace with Israel, Jordan could not agree to an Israeli plan that envisioned major border modifications. He went on to explain that any future peace agreement must be 'acceptable, workable, durable, something we can be proud of, something that his Majesty can present to the Arab nations and to the world'.¹⁴²

Meir dismissed the federal idea outright, informing Hussein that if this was his position, then they should stop negotiating. In reply, Hussein told Meir not to be despondent and that they should both try, for their next meeting, to find constructive ways to bridge their differences. Meir said that this would not be necessary as the differences between them were too big. She explained that Hussein was basically offering Israel a revised version of the Rogers Plan which Israel had already rejected.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ ISA/7042/1-a/Telegram from Dinitz to Rabin summarising Meir's conversation with Hussein/March 1972/Page 1.

¹⁴¹ ISA/7042/1-a/Page 2.

¹⁴² ISA/7034/15-a/Summary of Israel's negotiations with Jordan/'Major Points of Discussion'/1973/Page 2.

¹⁴³ ISA/7042/1-a/Telegram from Dinitz to Rabin summarising Meir's conversation with Hussein/March 1972/Page 3.

One of the main problems faced by the Israeli government, regarding its negotiations with Jordan, was its lack of an agreed position. Caught between two contrasting plans (the Allon Plan and Dayan's Functional Solution) Israel could not articulate to Hussein its vision of a Jordanian-Israeli peace plan. In a meeting, on the 18th of June 1972, with Allon and Galili, to discuss Dayan's planned meeting with Hussein, Meir said that the government ministers needed to decide what it was that they wanted. She inquired whether either of them knew what Dayan was going to offer Hussein and asked what they thought he should offer.¹⁴⁴ Allon suggested that Dayan limit himself to security and military issues and that he should not bring up his plan (the Functional Solution) in the meeting with Hussein. Galili informed Meir that Dayan had previously raised the idea of allowing Hussein some administrative powers in the West Bank, as part of an interim agreement (which would have fitted well with Dayan's plan). He suggested that Dayan stick with the offers already made by Meir and limit himself to listening and reporting back to the government.¹⁴⁵ As it turned out, Dayan did not deviate from the government's position. The only new idea he brought with him was a suggestion for a defence pact between the two states. In the meeting, he urged Hussein - who was disappointed that Israel did not come up with any new proposals - not to miss the opportunity and to reach an agreement with Meir.¹⁴⁶ The meeting exposed Israel's inability to put forward a clear plan; Dayan explained, to Hussein, Israel's philosophy as 'a formula ... not an expression of exact territory, although it carries territory with it, naturally'.¹⁴⁷

According to the Israeli Press, Hussein had proposed (possibly to Dayan) a revised version of his federal plan.¹⁴⁸ On the 23rd of August, Dayan allegedly said in a close meeting of Labour ministers, that there was a real chance for peace with Jordan. He explained that Jordan was willing to sign a separate peace agreement with Israel, based on: minor border modifications; Israeli military presence in the Jordan valley; and Jordanian control over the Gaza Strip. Dayan explained that Hussein was willing to consider different solutions regarding Jerusalem as well as leaving the final status

¹⁴⁴ ISA/7038/14-a/Record of Ministerial Consultation at Meir's house/18.6.1972/Page 2.

¹⁴⁵ ISA/7038/14-a/Page 3.

¹⁴⁶ Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan* Page 350.

¹⁴⁷ ISA/7034/15-a/Summary of Israel's negotiations with Jordan regarding the West Bank/1973/ Page 1.

¹⁴⁸ *Al-Hamishmar*, Front Page, 30.7.1972.

of Jerusalem for future negotiations.¹⁴⁹ This appears to be in line with Hussein's remarks in a meeting with Meir on the 3rd of February 1972, regarding border modifications:

'...we realised that changes [to the border] must occur. But the point is how significant, and how drastic? When we spoke of a reciprocal basis, it was reciprocal in terms of land, in terms of something that really be accepted by people. And we have a very open mind.'¹⁵⁰

Nevertheless, Dayan did not accept Hussein's terms and, arguably, neither would the majority of Labour MKs. Dayan explained that because Hussein would not accept the Allon Plan, or any plan that would satisfy Israel's demands, Israel should examine its policies in the West Bank, taking into account that it would probably remain there for many years.¹⁵¹

During the talks, Hussein had presented a clear and consistent position while showing a great deal of diplomatic flexibility to ensure the talks were successful. Hussein went as far as discussing different administrative solutions to resolve the diplomatic impasse over Jerusalem and offered several concessions with regards to Israel's security needs in the West Bank. While rejecting Hussein's proposals, the Israeli government did not clearly express what it was that it wanted other than major border modifications. The only plans presented to Hussein, by both the Eshkol and the Meir governments, were variations of the Allon Plan - a plan that was never approved by either government. It is important to remember that the Kitchenette had previously rejected Allon's interim plan, which was based on the Allon Plan.

Had Hussein agreed to any of Meir's suggestions, there would have been no guarantee these would have been approved by either the government or the Knesset. If the details reported, by the Israeli Press, regarding Hussein's offer to Dayan, are to be believed, then there would have been no reason for it to be rejected by the government. According to the Press, Hussein had expressed his willingness to address all of Israel's security concerns, including a provision for an Israeli military presence

¹⁴⁹ Yedioth Aharonot, Front Page, 23.8.1972.

¹⁵⁰ ISA/7034/15-a/Summary of Israel's negotiations with Hussein/'The Jordanian Position'/1973/Page 3.

¹⁵¹ Ha'aretz, Front Page, 24.8.1972.

in the Jordan Valley.¹⁵² According to Rifai, Israel was acting in a way that defeated its declared purposes.¹⁵³ An examination of Israel's approach during the negotiations with Hussein leaves the impression that Israel was moving in two opposing directions. On the one hand, Israel made it clear that it did not want to control the heavily populated areas of the West Bank, while, at the same time, it provided Dayan with the opportunity to implement his Functional Solution. On the other hand, Israel stated that its preferred option with regards to the West Bank was the Jordanian one, while it offered Hussein a plan it knew he would never accept. Israel's government had been informed on numerous occasions, by various committees and reports, that Hussein would not accept the Allon Plan. In conclusion, the Meir government adopted an incoherent and contradictory approach towards the West Bank, which was based on the partial implementation of two different plans, while actively undermining these plans and weakening its own negotiating position vis-à-vis Jordan. It is worth reiterating again that the Allon plan and the Functional Solution, while differing in their long-term aims, shared many short-term objectives.

¹⁵² Ha'aretz, the Editorial, 25.8.1972.

¹⁵³ ISA/7034/15-a/Summary of Israel's negotiations with Hussein/'The Jordanian Position'/1973/Page 6.

Chapter Three

The Grand Debate

Between September 1972 and April 1973, the Labour Party held a lengthy debate - known as the Grand Debate - on the future of the Occupied Territories. The debate - the brainchild of Party Chairman Aharon Yadlin¹ - was held in response to 'mounting pressure' to resolve the party's internal disagreements,² and was meant to reconcile the differences amongst party members prior to the elections (October 1973); instead, it exacerbated them.³ The debate exposed the growing rift between the leading figures in the party, with Allon, Sapir and Eban on the one side and Galili, Dayan and Meir on the other.⁴

The debate within the party was not so much between factions as between two main groups: those advocating a Functionalist Approach and those advocating a Territorialist Approach (i.e. the Allon Plan). But there were also two smaller groups, the first of which included the supporters of The Land of Israel Movement (i.e. those associated with New Zionism ideology), while the other was associated with a Reconciliationist Approach (i.e. a withdrawal from the majority of the territories). The latter raised, for the first time, the possibility of a Palestinian state; these included Arie Lova Eliav (the former Secretary General of the party) and Yitzhak Ben-Aharon (Secretary General of the Histadrut). Eliav called on the party to support an Israeli withdrawal from the majority of the territories and adopt a two-state solution; Eliav was one of the first in the party to publicly acknowledge the existence of a Palestinian nation.⁵ Amongst the party elites, only Allon recognised the importance of finding a solution to the Palestinian problem. Even so, Allon argued that only a territorial compromise based on a Jordanian Approach held the keys to the Palestinian problem.⁶

¹ Interview with Yadlin.

² Ibid.

³ Kieval, Party Politics in Israel Page 73.

⁴ Yishai, Land or Peace Page 91.

⁵ LPA/2-024-1972-100/Record of Labour Party Meeting/21.9.1972/Pages 48-50

⁶ ISA/YAOH/Meeting 3/Pages 28-30.

Ben-Aharon was particularly concerned about the demographic problem, and asked what did party members want, a Jewish state or a bi-national state?⁷ He, therefore, called for a unilateral withdrawal from the majority of the territories:

I am not sure that we need to wait for a peace agreement to decide upon the future of the territories. I feel that one day we may realise that it would be better if a particular area and population was outside of our area jurisdiction without the need of a signature.

Ben-Aharon was concerned that, because of adverse political developments in the Arab world, Israel might be left in control of territories and population centres it did not intend to keep, and that this would become a burden on it.⁸ However, despite his demographic concerns, Ben-Aharon was firmly in favour of an Israeli retention of the Golan Heights and the Gaza Strip and against any division of Jerusalem.⁹ In addition, Ben-Aharon did not rule out a unilateral withdrawal from the West Bank in accordance with the Allon Plan.¹⁰

Opening the debate, Yadin reminded members that they were required to discuss and determine the party's policies towards the Occupied Territories. However, he added that '...whilst doing so [i.e. determining the party's policies], we forget our disagreements regarding the exact strategic borders, which in my opinion, can be left until we enter into meaningful negotiations with the Arab states.'¹¹ Yadin added that the debate was not solely about Israel's future borders, but also about its future political and economic relationship with the Occupied Territories.¹²

Sapir acknowledged that the debate within the party was intensifying and getting louder. He claimed that, in the aftermath of the Six Day War, and unlike other ministers, he had reached certain conclusions in regard to the territories; Sapir added that recent events only helped to strengthen his convictions.¹³ He maintained that, before entering into meaningful negotiations, Israel should first decide what kind of

⁷ LPA/2-024-1973-101/Record of Labour Party Meeting/1.2.1973/Page 40.

⁸ LPA/2-024-1973-101/Page 41.

⁹ YTA/15Ben-Aharon/8/3/38/Record of Ben-Aharon's Meeting with the Jerusalem Post staff/15.11.1972.

¹⁰ YTA/15Ben-Aharon/8/4/3/Ben-Aharon's Personal Notes/11.2.1973.

¹¹ LPA/2-024-1972-100/Record of Labour Party Meeting/21.9.1972/Pages 3.

¹² LPA/2-024-1972-100/Page 7.

¹³ LPA/2-024-1972-100/Record of Labour Party Meeting/9.11.1972/Page 22.

solution it desired and refrain from engaging in activities that would hinder the future of these negotiations.¹⁴ He provided the example of Yamit to illustrate types of activities that would hinder future negotiations. Sapir questioned the logic behind the investment of large sums of money in Yamit, ‘over the next 25 years’, and asked whether ‘this is what Israel needs at the moment’. He ridiculed party members who argued that the investment in Yamit would not come at the expense of Israel’s development towns (*Ayarot Pituah*). Sapir asserted that the territories were a financial burden - one that would only increase with time.¹⁵

For Sapir there was ‘no difference between a formal decision on annexation - as those who believe in greater Israel advocated - and annexation that was not decided upon but creeps up on us [i.e. the Functional Solution].’ In regard to the Functional Solution, he said ‘I find it strange that senior political figures, some of whom will enter the history pages, succumb, even if for a short while, to this delusion.’¹⁶ Israel, according to Sapir, could ill afford to control the territories without providing - at some point in the future - full legal and economic rights to the population, in addition to raising their living standards to be on par with Israel’s. Sapir asserted that treating the population as second class citizens would not work in the long run: ‘The world will not agree to it, the Arab population will not agree to it ... and we, under no circumstances, will agree to it.’ Referring to the Israel’s inevitable demographic problem, Sapir commented that ‘the demographic projections are so simple that even a child could calculate them’.¹⁷

Sapir agreed that it was counter-productive to start drawing up maps and taking unilateral actions in the territories as this would hinder future peace talks. Nonetheless, Sapir warned that if Israel maintained the status quo it might not be able to extirpate itself from the territories in the future; he provided an allegory about ‘a boy who ties himself to a tree and then shouts that the tree will not leave him’.¹⁸

¹⁴ LPA/2-024-1972-100/Page 40.

¹⁵ LPA/2-024-1972-100/Page 41.

¹⁶ LPA/2-024-1972-100/Page 32.

¹⁷ LPA/2-024-1972-100/Page 36.

¹⁸ LPA/2-024-1972-100/Page 42.

Allon, agreeing with Sapir, claimed that Israel did not need to agree on a final map, but needed to know - at least in general terms - its parameters, within which it was necessary or possible to establish and expand settlements. However, fearing a demographic problem, he argued that it was necessary to avoid settling in heavily-populated areas as well as in those areas from which Israel was planning to withdraw. For Allon, only the Territorialist Approach guaranteed Israel's security and preserved its Jewish nature.

The discussion should be focused on Israel's strategic long-term peace policy and the correct approach by which to administer the territories until peace arrives.¹⁹ If I am in favour of a territorial compromise, it is from the viewpoint of political-realism and a humanist viewing of Zionism, which requires that we adhere to, and strive for, peace.²⁰

Allon argued that what went on in the territories was temporary and could not last, and it was, therefore, in the interest of Israel that the situation did not become permanent. He confessed that assertions made by Dayan, that the local population could live indefinitely under Israeli rule, 'made me wonder'.²¹ Allon contended that a Functional Solution would deny political rights from the Palestinian population. He argued that the Jewish people 'of all people' should not be those to deliver an unjust and deplorable political system 'Israel should not deny the elementary political aspirations of the local population'.²² Responding to snipes from attending party members, Allon declared that a Palestinian entity existed, whether or not it was defined as a nation. In his view, Israel should work towards a solution that addressed its security and political needs as well as providing a solution to the Palestinian political problem: 'If Israel does not ignore the Palestinian element, it might prove to be an important element in the march for peace.' He suggested that Hussein's Federal Plan might be the right approach to achieve such a solution, whilst revealing that he personally rejected its territorial component.²³

Allon claimed that, for the past five years, Israel's economic relationship with the territories had not been properly scrutinised and that there was a need to redefine this

¹⁹ LPA/2-024-1972-100/Page 3.

²⁰ LPA/2-024-1972-100/Page 6.

²¹ LPA/2-024-1972-100/Page 3.

²² LPA/2-024-1972-100/Page 7.

²³ LPA/2-024-1972-100/Page 12.

relationship in a manner that would leave Israel with flexibility in terms of its diplomatic options. He asserted that there was a need for two separate economic entities that would cooperate, but not integrate. Allon emphasised that the economic cooperation between the two entities should not lead to the creation of a single economic structure.²⁴

The peace Israel requires, the peace for which Israel should strive and that which can be attained, cannot be any other than a peace based on compromise. No one should be under the illusion that Israel can achieve peace while holding on to all the territories while, at the same time, no one should delude himself that Israel can achieve security while withdrawing from all the territories.²⁵

Speaking several weeks after Allon and Sapir, and in an attempt to heal the growing rift, Eban argued that the time to resolve the differences and disagreements within the party had not yet arrived. Eban suggested that Israel would be ready to make the necessary territorial compromises according to its security needs, when the time arrived.²⁶ This, he acknowledged, was inherent in the Allon Plan but, like Meir, he too claimed that this was not the only plan available. He proceeded to propose that the party maintain its current policies, as stated in the Oral Law and the party's manifesto.²⁷ Israel, according to Eban, should maintain the current 'temporary' situation because that would leave all of the diplomatic options open. Eban argued that, when Israel came to sign a peace agreement, the accord should be based on the establishment of proper relations between Israel and its neighbours, and on substantial territorial changes that would guarantee Israel's long-term security needs.²⁸

In contrast to Eban, Dayan remarked that, after six years of controlling the territories, it was time for the party to decide 'what we should and should not do'. Dayan argued that there was no 'objective need' to tie Israel's policies in the territories with the issue of Israel's future borders.²⁹ On the matter of settlements, Dayan stated that Israel would not withdraw from areas it was now settling, even though he conceded that none of the settlements served any security purpose. Furthermore, Dayan asserted that there was a difference between borders or areas that served a 'military-security'

²⁴ LPA/2-024-1972-100/Page 11.

²⁵ LPA/2-024-1972-100/Page 17.

²⁶ LPA/2-024-1972-10/Record of Labour Party Meeting/23.11.1972/Page 42.

²⁷ LPA/2-024-1972-10/Pages 49-50.

²⁸ LPA/2-024-1972-10/Page 57.

²⁹ LPA/2-024-1973-101/Record of Labour Party Meeting/12.4.1973/Page 18.

purpose and those that served a ‘diplomatic-security’ purpose. He elaborated that the latter was more desirable and if Israel was in a position to achieve real peace then it would most probably have to relinquish some of the areas it was currently holding.³⁰

He disagreed with the assertions that Israel should only establish settlements for security purposes (Mapam’s position) or only in areas it planned to keep (the Allon Plan). Israel, according to Dayan, should expand and strengthen its settlement activity in the territories; he proposed establishing industrial centres as well as new agricultural, urban and civilian settlements. Furthermore, he proposed regulating the Israeli Land Authority (ILA) to allow corporate entities and private individuals to purchase land in the territories.³¹

Dayan scoffed at Sapir’s claim that ‘there is no difference between a formal decision on annexation and annexation that was not decided upon, but creeps upon us.’ Dayan claimed that Israel was not engaged in a slow and gradual annexation of the territories. Moreover, he made it clear that he was against annexation, claiming he would rather withdraw from the territories than accept the Palestinian population as Israeli citizens. However, he admitted to be uncertain with regards to the Golan Heights; he spoke about providing the Druze population with Israeli citizenship if it requested it.³²

Dayan agreed that no formal decision was needed over the issue of the final borders but, taking into account the amount of time that had already passed, the party needed to define its future relationship with the territories. He contended that Israelis and Palestinians could live together under the military administration and that Ben-Aharon and Eliav were wrong to suggest that ‘what is west of the Green Line is Israel and what is east of it is Palestine’.³³ Dayan was basing his statement, to an extent, on the IDF’s assessments regarding the Occupied Territories. The IDF’s coordinator of activities in the Occupied Territories General Shlomo Gazit described Israel’s relationship with the occupied population in the economic, social and political spheres as ‘outstanding’; he attributed the situation to the trust-building measures and

³⁰ LPA/2-024-1973-101/Page 22.

³¹ LPA/2-024-1973-101/Pages 24-26.

³² LPA/2-024-1973-101/Page 30.

³³ LPA/2-024-1973-101/Page 39.

activities to restore confidence by the military administration and to the lack of foreign pressure on Israel.³⁴ Arguably, it was this lack of foreign pressure and the relative ease by which Israel administered the territories, which provided Israel with little incentive to adopt controversial long-term policies.

Taking the middle ground between Allon and Dayan, Galili explained that the party had a 'pragmatic and practical' policy but that it had not yet defined its long-term strategic-territorial aims nor did it agree on 'our final map'.³⁵ Galili rejected the call for a Palestinian state, arguing that the 'Palestinians' right to self-determination is a ploy for the real diplomatic purpose of establishing a Palestinian state over the ruins of Israel.³⁶ The future of the West Bank, according to Galili, was within a Jordanian framework based on significant changes to the pre-war borders. However, 'in the absence of peace, we do not withdraw nor do we leave a void; instead, we create settlements.' Galili maintained that Israel's policy in the West Bank should be defined by what 'is good and necessary for Israel', taking into account the needs of the local population. He defined the main points of this approach: 'continuation of the settlement activities in the territories', 'continuation of the Open Bridges policy', the establishment of an 'enlightened administration' in the territories, the need to 'regulate the employment of workers from the territories in Israel' and for the local population 'to live their lives without foreign intervention'. Referring to the demographic problem, Galili asked 'what would be a bigger threat, the population living under an enemy Arab leader or under Israel's control?'³⁷ Galili's comments must be understood in relation to the relative ease by which Israel controlled the Occupied Territories.

Galili expanded on how he saw the final settlement. He proposed that Israel should take over the Gaza Strip and that the large population areas of the West Bank be handed over to Jordan 'similarly to what was suggested in the Allon Plan'. Galili called for the continuation and expansion of the settlement activities in those areas that Israel intended to retain after a peace agreement. Galili made it clear that the West Bank would be demilitarised and that its population would enjoy 'some of their

³⁴ ISA/8163/3-a/KFDC briefed by Gazit/27.2.1973/Page 14.

³⁵ LPA/2-024-1973-101/Record of Labour Party Meeting/12.4.1973/Pages 14-15.

³⁶ LPA/2-024-1973-101/Page 3.

³⁷ LPA/2-024-1973-101/Pages 9-11.

rights from Jordan and some from Israel'.³⁸ On the one hand, Galili called on the party not to make unilateral decisions that would block the chances for peace, while, on the other hand, he called for the continuation of the settlements activity and the 'enlightened occupation'.³⁹ The proposed solution, as suggested by Galili, appeared to be an amalgamation of the Allon Plan with parts of Dayan's Functional Solution. Galili maintained that there was no need to revise the party's chapters regarding the territories; nothing had happened that would justify that. For Galili, the time for peace had not yet arrived and there was no need to make any decisions: 'This was not the hour to decide'.⁴⁰

The last speaker, in the Grand Debate, was Prime Minister Meir. Meir tried to diffuse the argument by stating that, as there was no sign of a 'real chance for peace', there was no need to make firm decisions at that moment.⁴¹ 'When the time comes' she claimed, the party would need to either reject or support the proposals that would be put in front of it. She admitted that she had a map of her own which, she claimed, would provide Israel with secure borders, and that there were territories from which she would not withdraw, but that at that moment it was nothing more than an academic exercise.⁴² Meir made clear her opinion that the territories were neither an obstacle for peace nor a recipe for war. She reminded party members that in 1957 Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip, and from the Sinai Peninsula, 'an act that did not lead to peace', while in 1967 Israel did not hold any territories and yet war broke out: 'We want to be here while they [the Arabs] do not want us to be here'.⁴³

Meir claimed (untruthfully) to have never met with Hussein, although she expressed her desire to do so; she stated 'I would have loved to meet him' but 'unfortunately, he did not want to meet'. She clarified that it was not for her to determine whether the Palestinians were a nation or not, but that between Israel and Jordan there was place for only two states, 'not three'. She added that Israel would never enter into

³⁸ LPA/2-024-1973-101/Page 13.

³⁹ LPA/2-024-1973-101/Pages 9-10.

⁴⁰ LPA/2-024-1973-101/Page 11.

⁴¹ LPA/2-024-1973-101/Page 42.

⁴² LPA/2-024-1973-101/Page 47.

⁴³ LPA/2-024-1973-101/Pages 48-50.

negotiations with the heads of the terrorist organisations that aimed ‘to destroy Israel’.⁴⁴

Striving to preserve party unity, Meir questioned the need to make difficult and far-reaching decisions: ‘If I am allowed to voice my opinion, there is no need to make decisions or reach conclusions’.⁴⁵ Unsurprisingly, the Grand Debate ended without any decisions being taken, conclusions being reached or resolutions voted on. Despite the debate lasting for over 80 hours, being held over eight sessions and showcasing 80 speakers, the party could not even agree on a concluding statement. Unable to heal the growing rift between its elites, the party, rather than risk a possible split in its ranks, preferred not to decide.

The Galili Document

On the 8th of April 1973, and in preparation for the upcoming elections, Dayan, unhappy with the indecisiveness shown by the Labour Party and the government, on the territorial issue, presented Meir with a ten-point plan titled ‘The policy in the territories in the next four years’. In his plan, Dayan called for:

1. An increase in resources for development and infrastructure in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.
2. The expansion of Jerusalem’s urban and industrial areas to the north, south and east, beyond the Green Line.
3. The development of Yamit as a regional-industrial centre for the Rafah Plains, and the construction of a deep-sea port south of Gaza.
4. The establishment of an industrial centre in the Qalqilya-Tulkarm area.
5. The creation of an urban-industrial centre in the Golan Heights.
6. The establishment of new settlements in accordance with proposals made by the Settlement Department.

⁴⁴ LPA/2-024-1973-101/Page 51.

⁴⁵ LPA/2-024-1973-101/Page 58.

7. Israel's priorities in the territories to be re-examined with the aim of 'strengthening urban population, village settlements, and establishing industrial enterprises in them'.
8. Private Jewish businessmen to establish industrial enterprises in the territories.
9. Israel's Lands Authority (ILA) to acquire lands in the territories with the aim of making them available for settlements, public and private enterprises and 'land exchanges'.
10. The regulation of the ILA to allow for the acquisition of land by companies and individuals within the political and security concepts.⁴⁶

Dayan's radical ideas generated controversy and hostility among government ministers and his plan was rejected by a small majority. Ministers rejected Dayan's proposals because, for the first time, he put forward elements of his Functional Solution which clearly contrasted with the Allon Plan. The majority of ministers (including Meir) were deeply concerned that these proposals would close the door on the possibility of achieving a territorial settlement. It is important to note that several of Dayan's proposals, such as the establishment of a regional centre in the Golan Heights, were 'within the government's consensus'.⁴⁷ Despite the rejection of his proposals by the government, Dayan did not relinquish his drive to influence Israel's territorial policy. On the 23rd of July, he declared that, due to the Labour Party's present territorial policy, he will have to reconsider his position within it,⁴⁸ especially after the party mirrored the government's decision and rejected his proposals.⁴⁹ Dayan requested that the party reconsider his ten-point plan as the basis for its electoral platform. He made it clear that his participation in the elections, as part of the Labour Party, was conditional on the adoption of his document.⁵⁰ Unwilling to risk a defection by the Rafi faction to the opposition, so close to the elections, and taking into account Dayan's electoral appeal, Meir entrusted Galili with the responsibility for drafting a compromise document that would be accepted by Dayan and the party.⁵¹ The Galili Document, as it became known, eroded most of Dayan's proposals but did not reject them out of hand. In fact, Galili, with a clever use of

⁴⁶ Gazit, *Trapped* Page 228.

⁴⁷ Harris, *Taking Root* Page 56.

⁴⁸ Gazit, *Trapped* Pages 228-229.

⁴⁹ LPA/2-914-1970-272/Labour Party Press Office/14.4.1973.

⁵⁰ Yishai, *Land or Peace* Page 91.

⁵¹ YTA/12-3/94/2/Letter from Galili to Allon detailing the evolution of the Galili Document/14.8.1973.

elaborate phrasing, managed to produce a document that met most of Dayan's demands while being in accordance with the government's and the party's existing decisions i.e. the Allon Plan and the Oral Law.⁵²

Party Chairman Yadin opened the party's secretariat debate on the Galili Document, by commenting that there was no need for the party to talk about 'winners and losers', since, on this particular occasion, 'the party as a whole won by adopting the document'.⁵³ After a brief introduction by Yadin, Galili proceeded to explain the document's main points. Galili made it clear that the document, if agreed upon, would represent the party's territorial policies 'for the next four years'. Galili contradicted himself when he explained that the document did not correspond to any real change in the government's policies, while arguing that it was a more comprehensive and substantial plan. He claimed that the document guaranteed Israel's security needs and it addressed the core issues.⁵⁴

On the matter of settlements, Galili explained that all new settlements were to be established according to government decisions: 'We have a system according to which we shall operate in the future'. The Galili Document referred to the idea of strengthening and expanding the existing settlements programme within the parameters already established by the government. Galili went on to say that, within those parameters, and subject to government regulations, there will be some scope for non-governmental bodies as well as private individuals to take part in the establishment and developing of new settlements. This last point was an attempt to address one of Dayan's core demands without rejecting it.⁵⁵ With regards to Dayan's proposal to establish a regional centre in the Rafah Plains (Yamit), Galili claimed 'there could be no mistake when it comes to the government's position with regards to the settlement and development of the Rafah Plains.' According to him, the government intended to expand the existing settlements and establish an urban centre by 1977. Galili clarified that the government had agreed in principle to establish a deep-sea port in the area for economic as well as political-military reasons. However,

⁵² Harris, *Taking Root* Page 57.

⁵³ LPA/2-024-1973-101/Record of Labour Party's Secretariat Meeting/3.9.1973/Page 2.

⁵⁴ LPA/2-024-1973-101/Pages 8-9.

⁵⁵ LPA/2-024-1973-101/Pages 16-18.

he claimed that the final decision on the matter may take two to three years.⁵⁶ Galili stated that 'Israel's Land Authority will be directed by the government to purchase every land necessary for settlement, development, housing and industrial purposes.' However, this will be undertaken only in areas identified by the government and in accordance with its policies. Galili declared that the party was united on the issue of settlements and that even Mapam (as part of the Alignment) agreed with the settlement programme in certain areas such as the Golan Heights, Sharm El-Sheikh and Gush-Etzion.⁵⁷

The Galili Document gained a near-unanimous approval, with only Aliev refusing to vote for it. Aliev declared that the document 'stood against all that I understand to be the values of the Labour movement' and that it gave credence 'to the strangulation of Zionism'! Aliev made it clear that he 'would never, under any circumstances and in any forum vote for such a document'.⁵⁸ In contrast, Allon, and many other prominent Labour leaders, claimed the document did not fundamentally change the party's existing policies. As part of the Alignment but not the Labour Party, Mapam did not partake in the debate. Nonetheless, Mapam stated that it did not agree with the Labour Party on this matter, and that it 'regretted' the adoption of the Galili Document. Furthermore, Mapam claimed its members would vote against the adoption of the document as the electoral platform of the 'Alignment'.⁵⁹ The near-unanimous approval of the document proved that Dayan and his supporters, despite being a minority in the party, yielded 'greater actual power' and were able to influence the party's policies in their favour. Dayan, through 'implicit threats' and intimidation, was able to 'constrain' the power of the moderates and overcome their 'numerical superiority' in the party.⁶⁰

The Galili Document was a patched up solution approved by the party in order to avoid adopting the more radical proposals of Dayan.⁶¹ Nevertheless, some of the proposals in the Galili Document did represent a clear change to the party's position. While not containing Dayan's proposal to expand the urban and industrial

⁵⁶ LPA/2-024-1973-101/Page 16.

⁵⁷ LPA/2-024-1973-101/Page 22.

⁵⁸ LPA/2-024-1973-101/Page 36.

⁵⁹ YYA/Mapam/4/331/90/Mapam's Political Committee Decision/(no date).

⁶⁰ Kieval, Party Politics in Israel Page 77.

⁶¹ Yishai, Land or Peace Page 92.

development of Jerusalem to the north (into Samaria), the document did propose expanding it to the south and east, beyond its municipal boundaries. Additionally, the document adopted Dayan's proposal for developing an industrial area in the Qalqilya-Tulkarm area⁶² - extending, in this regard, the scope of the Allon Plan. Indeed, Lochery points out that the document 'satisfied most of Dayan's demands and was considered extremely hawkish as well as accelerating the settlement programme.'⁶³ Nonetheless, he states that 'The Galili Document, although endorsed by the party institutions, was never binding on members of the Labour Party.'⁶⁴

On the 5th of October, Kissinger asked Eban, during their meeting, 'why was this document necessary?' Kissinger claimed it only affirmed, in the eyes of the Arabs, that Israel was content with the current status quo in the territories. Eban explained that the Galili Document did not represent a change in the Labour Party's or the government's policies, to which Kissinger replied – ironically - that he was certain that 'with your great intellectual prowess you would be able to prove what you say'.⁶⁵

The Yom Kippur War

The Galili Document was based on a scenario in which war was an unlikely event and Sadat's actions (such as ordering the departure of all Soviet military personnel out of Egypt in the summer of 1972) gave no immediate indication of an impending war. But, by not providing Sadat with a diplomatic recourse, Israel had made the war a certainty. It is not the purpose of this research to deal directly with the narrative of the Yom Kippur War. This research will, however, focus on those aspects of the war that relate to Israel's territorial policy: the 'Concept'; Israel's tactical decisions during the war regarding the territories; and the changes that occurred in Israel's relationship with the US as a result of this war.

The 'Concept' is the term used to describe AMAN's, and the political leadership's, guiding assumption about Israel's relations with its Arab neighbours in the pre-war

⁶² LPA/2-024-1973-101/The Galili Document.

⁶³ Lochery, The Israeli Labour Party Page 56

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ ISA/7049/35-a/Letter from Eban to Meir, summarising his conversation with Kissinger/5.10.1973.

period. It was assumed that Israel's military might, in conjunction with the military and political support it received from the US, was sufficient to deter any Arab attack against it. The Arab states, it was assumed, would have to come to terms with Israel's demands for new borders.⁶⁶ The assumptions and predictions made by the AMAN and the political echelons were based, to a large extent, on this 'Concept'. As mentioned earlier, matters of national security and foreign policy were dealt with mainly by a small and informal group of ministers (the Kitchenette) which included Meir, Dayan and Galili as well as (depending on the occasion) Allon, Haim Bar-Lev (the Industry Minister and former Chief of Staff) and Ya'akov Shimshon Shapira (Justice Minister). This group of decision-makers, in particular Meir, Dayan and Galili, operated in relative isolation and exhibited qualities such as 'self-righteousness and self-assurance' (in taking the right course of action), in short they engaged in what is referred to as 'group think'.⁶⁷ This is why Israel's leaders, trapped in their own 'Concept', were in no rush to conclude negotiations with either Egypt or Jordan and, more pertinent to this thesis, were in no rush to define Israel's long-term territorial policy. The belief that time was on their side, and that the Arab states would eventually come around to accept Israel's position,⁶⁸ proved to be mistaken. Israel's leaders were well aware of the possibility of signing a peace agreement- or at least an interim agreement- with Egypt, based on full withdrawal to the pre-war borders. However, held captive by their own convictions, they chose to overlook these possibilities. On the 3rd of April 1973, Eban briefed the Knesset Foreign Affairs & Security Committee that Egypt had reiterated its call for an interim agreement. Moreover, he acknowledged that Egypt was willing to sign a peace agreement based on an Israeli withdrawal to the pre-war borders.⁶⁹

Israel's wrong assumptions and predictions, which were based on the 'Concept', led to the rejection of several potential Arab proposals regarding the Occupied Territories (such as Sadat's Interim Agreement Proposal and Hussein's Federal Plan), but also to a situation in which its leaders were able to avoid taking decisions on the Allon Plan and the Functional Solution. It is clear that the Kitchenette in general and Meir in

⁶⁶ Goldstein, Rabin Page 237.

⁶⁷ Amos Perlmutter, Politics and the Military in Israel 1967-1977 (London, Frank Cass, 1978) Pages 65-66.

⁶⁸ Abraham Rabinovich, The Yom Kippur War (New York, Schocken Books, 2004), Page 15.

⁶⁹ ISA/8163/4-a/KFDC briefed by Eban/3.4.1973/Pages 3-5.

particular adopted ‘objectionist’ and ‘obstructionist’ attitudes towards these and other suggestions regarding the Occupied Territories.⁷⁰ Meir’s dominance was such, that even in those instances where members of the Kitchenette were in favour of a particular Arab proposal (e.g. Dayan and the interim agreement) they were unwilling to challenge her. This attitude would come back to haunt the government; in the aftermath of the ‘Yom Kippur War’ Meir admitted that, at the time, she did not understand the logic behind Dayan’s interim agreement proposal.⁷¹ Blinded by their ‘Concept’, Israel’s leaders were in no hurry to find a long-term solution to the Occupied Territories, believing that Egypt and Jordan would eventually come to accept Israel’s need for secure borders.

The majority of assumptions held by Israel’s decision-makers regarding the territories were proved wrong. They assumed that, in the unlikely event that the Egyptian army tried to cross the canal, the Bar-Lev line would be sufficient to hold it back long enough for Israeli forces “to move up and destroy it”.⁷² In reality, the Bar-Lev line - from which Meir refused to withdraw during the negotiations for the ‘interim agreement’ - proved not to be an obstacle for the crossing army. It was widely believed that it was essential for Israel to control Sharm El-Sheikh,⁷³ in order to ensure free passage through the Straits of Tiran.⁷⁴ This, however, did not prevent the Egyptian forces from blocking the straits further south at Bab El-Mandab.⁷⁵ This last point was put to Dayan in a closed Labour Party meeting after the war.⁷⁶ Additionally, the perceived wisdom that settlements contributed to Israel’s national security proved to be misplaced. Israel was required to evacuate its settlements in the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula during the war, dispelling the notion that they served a security purpose. Interestingly, the claim that settlements did not contribute to Israel’s security had been one of the main criticisms against the Allon Plan.

⁷⁰ Interview with Beilin.

⁷¹ Goldstein, Rabin Page 243.

⁷² Matti Golan, The Secret Conversations of Henry Kissinger: Step-by-step Diplomacy in the Middle East (New York, Bantam Books, 1976), Page 146.

⁷³ This was a widely held belief amongst Israeli leaders, e.g. ISA/7042/3-a/Record of Meeting between Meir and Barbour/13.3.1972/Page 3.

⁷⁴ ISA/4781/7-f/Israel’s Foreign Ministry’s ‘Security Assesments’/4.7.1968.

⁷⁵ Zeev Schiff, October Earthquake: Yom Kippur 1973 (Tel Aviv, University Publishing Projects Ltd, 1974), Page 313.

⁷⁶ LPA/2-15-1973-92/Record of ‘Special Meeting between Dayan and Party Members’/10.11.1973/Page 7.

It can be argued that only with regard to the notion of strategic depth were Israel's military concepts correct. This, of course, is based on the assumption that Egypt's and Syria's war efforts were not based exclusively on retrieving those territories that supposedly contributed to Israel's strategic depth. Sadat's limited war plan and his army's limited capability of fighting outside the range of its SAM-3 anti-aircraft-missile batteries are a testimony to that. It is also questionable whether the Syrian forces would have invaded the Upper Galilee region had they managed to secure the Golan Heights. This is not to say that both armies would not have expanded the fighting theatre had their initial successes been left unchecked.

Militarily, Israel had managed to secure a resounding victory despite being caught off guard. In addition, the decision to counter-attack in the Golan Heights and advance into Syria, in order to balance the possible loss of territories in the Sinai Peninsula and bring about the rapid collapse of the Syrian army,⁷⁷ left Israel in possession of additional territories. On the Sinai front, the Egyptian forces managed to secure several bridgeheads on the first days of the war and transport considerable amount of forces to the eastern side. Sadat was adamant on holding parts of the eastern bank at all costs. The war thus became one of attrition along the canal until Israel managed to cross it and surround the Egyptian forces. By the time the ceasefire was negotiated, on the 23rd of October, Israel's forces not only encircled the main Egyptian force along the canal, but they were also on the outskirts of Suez City and on their way towards Cairo. The outcome of the war was a resounding military victory for Israel, while providing Sadat with a much needed diplomatic coup - his forces were on the east part of the canal.

More than anything else, the war and its aftermath exposed the degree to which Israel became reliant on American financial and military support. During the war, the US provided Israel with 22,000 tons of military equipment, one-and-a-half times the combined Soviet military aid to Egypt and Syria.⁷⁸ In the aftermath of the war Israel's military and financial dependence on the US only increased. To illustrate this last point, the military support provided to Israel by the American administration, in the period leading up to the war averaged \$400 million a year; this sum grew to \$1.5

⁷⁷ Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War* Page 304.

⁷⁸ Rabinovich, Page 491.

billion a year during the years 1974-1975 - 'fully 42% of Israel's defence spending'.⁷⁹ This unhealthy state of dependency was not lost on the American administration. It became apparent to the Americans, in particular to Kissinger, that they could turn this situation to their advantage by bringing Egypt, as well as Jordan, to the negotiating table in the full knowledge that they could secure Israeli territorial concessions.⁸⁰

The Fourteen-Point Document

The Yom Kippur War had a 'traumatic effect on the Labour Party and throughout Israeli society, leading to a crisis of confidence in both the leadership and the party as a whole.'⁸¹ The months following the war were characterised by 'shock and recrimination';⁸² the deep sense of public anger and frustration were channelled through protest movements, which were initially composed of army reservists returning from the battlefield. The public, which seemed to want an outlet to sound its disappointment and frustration with the leadership, accused the politicians of letting down the entire nation and demanded their resignation. Dayan - more than any other leader - was held directly responsible for the failures of the war.⁸³ The protest movements' demands that those responsible for the 'Mehdal' (the blunder) be brought to justice led to the establishment of an investigative committee headed by Shimon Agranat (the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court). The committee, established in November 1973, would publish its first report in April 1974- four months after the elections took place.

The growing public resentment at its leadership was not the only obstacle faced by the Labour Party in the run up to the 1973 elections. The war had provided discontented members of the party with an opportunity to speak out against policies, in particular those relating to the Occupied Territories, with which they did not agree and a leadership they no longer supported. Dayan and the Galili Document were held as symbols of a party that had lost its way. For the first time since the Lavon Affair,

⁷⁹ Safran, Israel: The Embattled Ally Page 316.

⁸⁰ Quandt, Peace Process Page 131.

⁸¹ Lochery, The Israeli Labour Party Page 17.

⁸² Harris, Taking Root Page 125.

⁸³ Rabinovich, The Yom Kippur War Page 501.

senior party members were openly challenged and asked to resign. On the 25th of October, Ya'akov Shapira called for the resignation of Dayan, blaming him for Israel's 'lack of preparedness' at the outbreak of the war; Shapira later resigned following Meir's decision to support Dayan.⁸⁴ Shapira expressed his frustration at the hard-line policies adopted towards the Occupied Territories. He blamed the party's leadership for making promises to promote territorial concessions while, in practice, hoping that the territories, 'if not all of them, than at least a large portion of them' would be 'annexed, or integrated, or united with the state of Israel'.⁸⁵ A group comprising former army officers, and headed by the mayor of Hertzelia Joseph Nevo, spoke for many in the party, in particular its grass roots, when they called for the party's political and military policies to be revised. Nevo referred to the Galili Document as 'irrelevant', and asked whether it was possible 'to go to elections with the present leadership and policy'.⁸⁶

The simmering feeling of discontent in the party finally erupted, on the 5th of December, during the Central Committee's vote on a new electoral platform - referred to as the 'Fourteen-Point Document'. One after another, senior members of Mapai, as well as several from Ahdut-Ha'avoda, expressed their support for the new document while retracting their support from the Galili Document, claiming they had voted for it only to prevent a split in the party. Haim Tzadok (Chairman of the KFDC), claimed that the Yom Kippur War made it clear that the Galili Document was based on political misconceptions.⁸⁷ Allon reminded party members that the Galili document was adopted in order to 'save' the party from a more radical document 'which party member Moshe Dayan tried to force upon it'. Allon asserted that the document was not relevant to Israel's needs at the time it was voted on, and is 'probably irrelevant to our current situation'.⁸⁸ Some party members, however, presented a different viewpoint. Rahel Yanait Ben-Tzvi, the widow of former Israeli President Yitzhak Ben-Tzvi and prominent Mapai member - who was associated with New Zionism and

⁸⁴ Interview with Yadlin.

⁸⁵ Kieval, *Party Politics in Israel* Pages 95-96.

⁸⁶ Aronoff, *Power and Ritual* Pages 144-145.

⁸⁷ LPA/2-15-1973-92/Record of the Labour Party's Central Committee Meeting/evening session/5.12.173/Pages 16-17.

⁸⁸ LPA/2-15-1973-92/morning session/5.12.173/Page 24.

the Land of Israel Movement - criticised the party for its willingness to give away the territories.⁸⁹

The new platform, which was drafted by Eban, was an attempt to ‘negate the concessions made to Dayan in the Galili Document’ and to redress the balance of power within the party, in the aftermath of the war.⁹⁰ In this respect, the new document represented a clear shift away from Dayan’s policies towards the Occupied Territories, as advocated in the Galili Document. The Fourteen-Point Document did not - with the exception of Jerusalem - mention any particular area as being ‘indispensable to Israel’.⁹¹ Additionally, it refrained from mentioning any of the urban and industrial centres, which had been planned to be built in the territories, and which had been agreed in the Galili Document. For the first time, a document drafted by Israeli decision makers discussed the rights of the Palestinians, and in that sense, broke new ground.⁹² Moreover, the document clearly indicated that Israel was ready to offer territorial concessions, though not a return to the 1967 borders, in exchange for peace. Additionally, and as mentioned by Allon, the new document at least mentioned the Palestinian problem and tried to address it.⁹³ Nevertheless, the new document did not define Israel’s long-term territorial policy.

The Fourteen-Point Document stated, among other things, that:

- Israel would strive towards peace agreements based on territorial compromises that would provide it with secure borders.
- Israel would not return to the pre-war borders.
- ‘The Jewish nature of the state of Israel’ must be protected, in any future peace agreement, ‘in order for it to fulfil its Zionist destiny’.
- Israel would strive to achieve a peace agreement with Jordan based on the concept of two independent states.
- Israel rejected the notion of a Palestinian state separate from Jordan in the West Bank.

⁸⁹ LPA/2-15-1973-92/morning session/5.12.173/Page 60.

⁹⁰ Harris, Taking Root Page 126.

⁹¹ Kieval, Party Politics in Israel Page 98.

⁹² Interview with Yadlin.

⁹³ LPA/2-15-1973-92/Record of Labour Party’s Central Committee Meeting/5.12.173/Page 23.

- The rights of the Palestinians to self-determination could only occur within a Jordanian-Palestinian state.
- With regards to the settlements: Israel would continue to establish and expand settlements, according to the decisions that would be made by the government ‘from time to time’, with particular emphasis on Israel’s security needs.⁹⁴

At the end of a particularly fiery session, calls were made - most notably by Aliev - for the party to revoke the Galili Document. Sapir, fearing the rejection of the document would create a terminal schism within the party, and unwilling to challenge Meir, claimed there was no need to revoke the document. Instead, he decided to leave the party with two contradictory documents, and requested Aliev not to call for a vote on the Galili document.⁹⁵ Dayan interpreted the move as neither the sanctioning of the new document nor the revoking of the Galili Document.⁹⁶ Meir demanded a vote and accused Sapir of not solving the party’s problems with his actions, but making things worse. Yadin, instructed by Sapir to find a bureaucratic loophole, stated that a vote was unnecessary, as the party’s secretariat decision (the Galili Document) could not be changed by the Central Committee (the Fourteen-Point Document).⁹⁷ Meir, desperate to cement her position within the party, and clearly upset with Sapir’s decision, requested a vote of confidence in her candidacy. Despite requests for a secret ballot, Yadin decided to have a vote by a show of hands; in the end, 291 voted in favour, 33 opposed and 17 abstained.⁹⁸ However, the vote was anything *but* a vote of confidence as half of the 615 members left the meeting before the vote was taken, arguably because of the late hour.⁹⁹ The party had once again reluctantly decided not to decide, choosing unity over policy.

⁹⁴ LPA/2-023-1973-108/‘The Labour Party’s Electoral-Platform’/20.12.1973.

⁹⁵ LPA/2-15-1973-92/Evening Session/Pages 115-116.

⁹⁶ LPA/2-15-1973-92/Evening Session/Page 121.

⁹⁷ Interview with Yadin.

⁹⁸ LPA/2-15-1973-92/Evening Session/Page 122.

⁹⁹ Aronoff, Power and Ritual 1999 Page 151

The 1973 Elections

The 1973 elections were held on the 31st of December, which was later than for scheduled because of the Yom Kippur War. The elections were unique in there being two electoral campaigns: a pre-war campaign in which domestic issues dominated the agenda, and a post-war campaign that focused on peace and security.¹⁰⁰ The participation rate - the second-lowest in Israeli history (75.1%)¹⁰¹ - reflected the fact that the elections were held with the public being in a state of shock, and with many reservists still on duty. The Labour Party, despite the fact that it was headed by Meir and Dayan, managed to retain its status as Israel's dominant party, albeit with its lowest ever share of the votes.

On the political Right, through a series of unifying processes, a new force emerged: the Likud. The party comprised of Begin's Gahal, the State List (Ben-Gurion's former party), the Free Centre and the Land Of Israel Movement (which included former Labour Party members associated with New Zionism). The Likud won 39 seats, while the Labour Party gained 51 - losing 10 seats over the previous two elections. These results reflected a general shift to the right and indicated a change in Israel's political system from a dominant-party system to a two-party system.¹⁰² Labour's loss of seats forced the party to form a government with a nominal majority of two seats - the smallest majority it had ever held.

In addition to its weak parliamentary base, the new government was further constrained in its ability to formulate policies in regard to the Occupied Territories by two important developments: the effect of generational and ideological change within the National Religious Party on the dynamics of the Coalition, and Israel's growing military and diplomatic dependency on the US. The NRP had been Mapai's, and subsequently the Labour Party's, preferred coalition partner due to its size and polity, i.e. a medium-size moderate religious party with middle-of-the-road views on foreign affairs and security matters. As a result of the changes the NRP underwent, and

¹⁰⁰ Jonathan Mendolow, Ideology, Party Change, and Electoral Campaigns in Israel, 1965-2001 (Albany, State University of New York Press, 2003), Page 82.

¹⁰¹ Asher Arian, "Introduction" in Asher Arian (Ed), The Elections in Israel 1973 (Jerusalem, Jerusalem Academic Press, 1975), Page 13.

¹⁰² Colin Shindler, The Land Beyond Promise: Israel, Likud and the Zionist Dream (London, I.B.Tauris, 2002), Pages 75-76.

influenced by New Zionism, its new leadership demanded, as a minimum requirement for joining a Labour-led Coalition a firm commitment from the Labour Party that there would be no withdrawal from the West Bank.¹⁰³ Meir, after a lengthy negotiation period, and in order to secure a working majority, made a specific pledge to the NRP that the government would put any agreement with Jordan, which was based on a territorial compromise in the West Bank, to new general elections.¹⁰⁴ In reality, this pledge and the additional ministerial seats procured by the NRP represented a clear change in the balance of power within the ruling coalition and in the government's approach towards the Occupied Territories. Furthermore, this represented the first incident in which the Labour Party's territorial policy was, indirectly, constrained by the rise of New Zionism.

The elections were held against a backdrop of 'unprecedented' American involvement in the region in an effort to find a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.¹⁰⁵ Kissinger, who had taken over as Secretary of State brought with him new diplomatic methods, i.e. the step-by-step and shuttle diplomacy. Moreover, Kissinger, with the full backing of Nixon, chose not to link 'diplomatic steps' with the final outcome of the negotiations - leaving this to the parties. The American involvement and Kissinger's new approach yielded early dividends. Kissinger, under the cover of an international peace conference, set the stage for direct talks between Israel and Egypt. These talks culminated in a disengagement agreement signed on the 18th of January 1974. The agreement proved to be similar in nature to Dayan's interim agreement proposal, with its success highlighting Kissinger's new approach and the magnitude of the American administration's previous diplomatic failures.

Meir's Meetings with Hussein

Throughout 1972 and 1973, and in particular after Hussein unveiled his Federal Plan, Israel and Jordan held frequent meetings, which did not bring the sides any closer to signing a peace agreement. Jordan had hoped, in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War to be rewarded for its neutrality and diplomatic stance: King Hussein had

¹⁰³ David Nachmias, "Coalition Myth and Reality" in Arian, The Elections in Israel 1973 Page 250

¹⁰⁴ ISA/7025/18-a/'The Coalition Agreement'/8.3.1974.

¹⁰⁵ Quandt, Peace Process Page 130

personally warned Israel of the impending surprise attack. Yet, lingering doubts persisted in the Jordanian side regarding Israel's willingness to negotiate and the real purpose of the international peace conference organised by the Americans. The conference, they believed, was a cover for ongoing American efforts to reach a separate agreement between Egypt and Israel.¹⁰⁶ In order not to be left out of the diplomatic process and keen to reach an agreement with Israel, Hussein and his Prime Minister Zaid Rifai met with Meir and Dayan. The meeting (held on the 26th of January 1974) revolved around Jordan's proposal for a parallel disengagement process - similar to the one advocated by Kissinger between Israel and Egypt - and the return of Jordanian civil administration to those areas vacated by Israel.¹⁰⁷

Hussein warned Meir that Israel would be left to negotiate with the PLO, if it failed to reach an agreement with Jordan. Rifai explained that Jordan was taking a risk by trying to secure a peace agreement with Israel. Instead, it could just 'disassociate' itself from the process and support the PLO, which had received the backing of most Arab states as the sole representative of the Palestinian people;¹⁰⁸ this, he added, would 'please the Arabs and get everyone off our backs'.¹⁰⁹ Meir challenged the Jordanian assertion that the Palestinians would come to view the PLO as their representatives. Hussein replied that they might not do so at present, but if Jordan disengaged from the West Bank 'it will not be Israel that they will look to'. Meir agreed that they must 'use our imagination' to find ways to allow for closer engagement between Jordan and the West Bank.¹¹⁰

Rifai proposed a step-by-step disengagement, or a partial withdrawal process, that would be negotiated 'as we went along'. The Jordanian proposal called on Israel to withdraw parallel to the Jordan River; this, according to Rifai, would include the dismantling of Israel's settlements and military positions along the river and the repositioning of Jordanian civil administration in the area. According to Rifai, this plan would 'put an end to any possibility of the theory of a Palestinian state'.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan* Page 373

¹⁰⁷ ISA/7043/26-a/Record of Meir's Meeting with Hussein/26.1.1974/Pages 12-13.

¹⁰⁸ Schiffan Dan *A Jordanian Option The Yishov and the State of Israel Vis-à-vis the Hashemite Regime and the Palestinian National Movement* (Tel Aviv, Yad Tabenkin, 1986) (Hebrew), Page 333

¹⁰⁹ ISA/7043/26-a/Record of Meir's Meeting with Hussein/26.1.1974/Page 19.

¹¹⁰ ISA/7043/26-a/Page 21.

¹¹¹ ISA/7043/26-a/Pages 27-28

Dayan, after questioning Rifai's plan, inquired 'if we asked for the proposal for the real and sincere and final peace settlement, what would it be?'¹¹² Rifai suggested two kinds of agreements: a contractual peace agreement based on the pre-war borders with some 'rectifications' and including Arab sovereignty over East Jerusalem 'but with a new status to it'; or another agreement based on phases, where the line 'can vary from month to month' without a need for contractual agreement and based on a de-facto peace. Meir questioned whether the second suggestion would eventually lead to 'the reestablishment of the 4th-of-June Line', to which Rifai answered: yes!¹¹³

Unhappy with Rifai's suggestions, Meir proposed the Allon Plan as a framework for the disengagement process - one that would be implemented initially only at the Jericho area. She explained that even this would be difficult for her to implement, as she was in the midst of coalition negotiations, which might lead to new elections. Dayan, expounding on the idea, suggested that 'the Allon Plan or something like that' would be the maximum the Labour Party could agree to, if it hoped to win a new election.¹¹⁴ The plan suggested by Meir and Dayan was similar to an earlier plan proposed by Allon (in October 1970) which they rejected. However, it is reasonable to believe that, even if Hussein had accepted the basic tenets of the Allon Plan, the government - because of the NRP, the internal division within the Labour Party and its weak parliamentary base - would not have been able to approve the agreement.

Dayan - questioning the need to evacuate settlements and army strongholds along the Jordan River - asked whether Jordan could envision a situation in which Israel maintained its military positions in the West Bank. Meir quickly added that Israel would be willing to lease the land for the military bases. Rifai tried to convince the Israeli duo that, with its forces situated along the mountain ranges, Israel would, even after a partial disengagement, still dominate the West Bank militarily. He suggested that Jordan might be able to agree to some limited military presence, but what was important was the purpose behind Israel's need for it.¹¹⁵ Hussein added that he could live with an Israeli radar position, or something of that sort, on some hill tops: 'In a

¹¹² ISA/7043/26-a/Page 30.

¹¹³ ISA/7043/26-a/Page 31.

¹¹⁴ ISA/7043/26-a/Pages 42-44.

¹¹⁵ ISA/7043/26-a/Page 59.

state of peace, this is something we can live with'.¹¹⁶ Rifai articulated Jordan's position: 'If Israel wants territory, expansion, corridor here and corridor there and positions and settlements, and take the meat and get rid of the bones ...' then 'it are impossible for His Majesty and for us to accept any settlement on those lines'. He explained that if Israel did not withdraw, it would eventually be stuck with Arafat.¹¹⁷

Dayan suggested that Israel withdraw from the Jericho area, which would provide Jordan with a corridor into the West Bank, to which Rifai asked, 'What is your hang-up on the river itself. It isn't much of a barrier, you know'. Rifai proceeded to explain that he did not see 'any great cost to Israel if it withdraws 5 or 10 or 15km from the Jordan Valley'.¹¹⁸ Hussein, unable to understand Dayan's fixation with the river, asked whether Israel had in fact any military bases there to which Dayan replied, 'Very, very close to it'.¹¹⁹ In fact, Israel had established its military bases in accordance with Dayan's plan on the mountain ranges. Meir suggested allowing Jordanian civil administration to be exercised over some of the West Bank population centres. Hussein and Rifai agreed, provided that it was linked to the first stage of the disengagement process. Both refused to 'be sucked' into a plan that had all the hallmarks of the Allon Plan. Meir tried to explain that she could not go to the government or the Knesset and suggest a disengagement plan, when both sides were not engaged in any fighting: 'People would laugh at me'. Rifai, in a jovial manner, asked Meir, 'Must we go to war in order to be taken seriously? Do you want us to fight so that you can withdraw'?¹²⁰ Towards the end of the meeting Dayan once again brought up the Allon Plan, explaining that it was the least to which Israel could agree. Rifai explained that Jordan would not consider the Allon Plan:

...if we are going to start playing with the West Bank and we give you one part of the valley and we keep this here and this here, and fortifications and you have a corridor. We would much rather, honestly, have you keep the whole lot. And there won't be any peace, there won't be any settlement.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ ISA/7043/26-a/Page 60.

¹¹⁷ ISA/7043/26-a/Page 66.

¹¹⁸ ISA/7043/26-a/Pages 70-71.

¹¹⁹ ISA/7043/26-a/Page 72.

¹²⁰ ISA/7043/26-a/Page 76-77.

¹²¹ ISA/7043/26-a/Page 79.

The meeting with Hussein summed up Meir's approach towards the Occupied Territories in general, and the West Bank in particular. After five years in power, Meir was unable to articulate Israel's preferred long-term approach towards the Occupied Territories. While Hussein appeared to acknowledge and address Israeli concerns, Meir and Dayan were fixated on a plan which they had never approved and which they knew Hussein could not accept. In fact, throughout his period in office, Dayan, with Meir's knowledge, worked towards the establishment of a Functional Solution. It is interesting to note that, during a KFDC briefing, Meir once claimed to favour a Functional Solution over a territorial solution with Jordan.¹²² On the one hand, Meir and the Kitchenette pursued a Jordanian Approach based on the Allon Plan, while, on the other hand, they allowed Dayan to implement his Functional Solution, thus undermining Jordan's position in the West Bank. The Israeli government under Meir did not only take a decision not to decide, but it was - by design or by default - undermining its own initiatives and plans.

On the 2nd of April 1974, the Agranat Committee published its provisional report. In its report, the committee criticised the conduct of AMAN and called for the dismissal of its senior rank. More importantly, the committee held Chief of Staff El'azar directly responsible for the Mehdal. However, in a move that provoked widespread condemnation, the committee absolved Meir and Dayan of responsibility.¹²³ On the 10th of April, Meir - standing in front of party members, and in response to growing criticism and condemnation -¹²⁴ announced her resignation, 'I cannot bear this yoke any longer...I have reached the end of the road'.¹²⁵ Arguably, the Meir period will forever be remembered for the Yom Kippur War.

¹²² ISA/8163/3-a/KFDC Meeting/25.2.1973/Page 17.

¹²³ Rabinovich, The Yom Kippur War Page 502.

¹²⁴ Rabinovich, Page 502

¹²⁵ Gorenberg, The Accidental Empire Page 270.

Summary

Golda Meir was, with the exception of David Ben-Gurion, Israel's most dominant Prime Minister, with her position within the government unparalleled.¹²⁶ Meir did not only dominate the government, but also the foreign affairs and national security decision-making process. Policies were formulated and approved by her and a small group of ministers (the Kitchenette) who, on most occasions, either shared her point of view or chose not to challenge her. Meir believed that time was on Israel's side and as a consequence felt no pressure to define Israel's long-term territorial policy. In fact, at every juncture, she worked either to postpone or to undermine attempts, by the government and the Labour Party, to define Israel's territorial policy.

Under Meir, the slogans 'secure and recognised borders' and 'negotiations without preconditions' came to epitomise Israel's diplomatic stance; the government would repeat these like a mantra at every opportunity. As argued by Shapira, these empty slogans served only to delay and obstruct negotiations and decisions regarding the territories. Israel, under Meir, was caught in a predicament. It created facts on the ground that corresponded with its perceived 'secure and recognised borders', while refusing to define its long-term relationship with the territories, out of desire to maintain unity and out of fear of closing the door on its diplomatic options.

However, the failure to define Israel's long-term territorial policy cannot be the sole responsibility of Meir. Ministers cannot be absolved of the responsibility they shared; time and again, ministers refused to challenge or criticise Meir. Senior ministers, in particular Sapir, Eban, Allon and Dayan, deferred to Meir instead of challenging her on matters upon which they believed she and the government as a whole were wrong.¹²⁷ On numerous occasions, they criticised the lack of policy and called on the government and the Labour Party to reach a decision. But, when push came to shove, they ultimately toed the government's line, as demonstrated by Dayan's approach of 'If Golda does not support my position, than I do not support my position'. In fact, Galili, criticising dissenting party members, stated that decisions relating to the territories, 'even Hebron', were authorised by the government and backed by the

¹²⁶ Interview with Beilin.

¹²⁷ Interview with Halperin.

Labour Party. He questioned why those who were against those decisions never voiced their opinions.¹²⁸

At no time did the government, or for that matter the Labour Party, under the leadership of Meir, put forward a clear and comprehensive long-term vision of Israel's relationship with the territories. Israel established settlements and industrial centres in the Rafah Plains, the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights without ever agreeing on the political future of these areas. The Oral Law and the Galili Document, upon which the government and the Ministerial Settlement Committee based many of their decisions, were not blueprints for the government's long-term territorial policy. These documents were born out of 'haste and intimidation' and owed more to Dayan's threats of resignation,¹²⁹ than to any serious attempt at forming a coherent policy. Moreover, within the Labour Party, unity became the main political goal and, as such, served as a source of diplomatic and political immobilisation.¹³⁰ Labour Party officials and government ministers preferred not to deal with the long-term strategic questions,¹³¹ choosing instead to adopt a non-decision in order to maintain party unity.

The sole exception to Israel's rigid diplomatic stance was its acceptance of Rogers B, which came as a result of sustained American pressure. Israel based its diplomatic and security stance towards the Occupied Territories on the understanding that the US, or for that matter the UN (through Resolution 242), would not require it to withdraw to the pre-war borders. However, Israel was made aware, on numerous occasions, that the American position, as articulated in Rogers A, was based on only minor changes to the pre-war borders. Both sides were well aware of the discrepancies between their positions. Kissinger once commented that Israel's diplomatic approach, in particular in regard to its relationship with the US, 'reflected a basic misunderstanding'.¹³² However, with the exception of Rogers B, the American administration did not apply substantial pressure on Israel during the entire Meir period. One could only guess

¹²⁸ LPA/2-15-1973-92/Record of Labour Party's Central Committee Meeting/evening session/5.12.173/Pages 49-51.

¹²⁹ Interview with Yadin.

¹³⁰ Beilin, *The Price of Unity* Page 158.

¹³¹ Gazit, *Trapped* Pages 32-33.

¹³² Yaacobi, *On the Razor's Edge* Page 121.

what would have happened had the US put its full weight behind the Israeli-Egyptian interim agreement or the Jordanian track.

In conclusion, the government did not have a coherent and comprehensive long-term territorial policy during the Meir period; its insistence on 'secure and recognised borders' was nothing more than a hypothetical exercise at prevaricating. Arguably, it was Israel's rigid diplomatic stance, its exaggerated self-confidence, which was based on the 'Concept', as well as its unwillingness to define its territorial policy, that led to the Yom Kippur War.

The Rabin Period

Introduction

Israel does not have a foreign policy only a domestic policy.¹

The resignation of Meir was the culmination of a generational transition that had started over a decade earlier. The majority of Labour Party veterans that had led the state for over a decade, and who were considered as pillars of the political system, were gone: Meir, Haim Gvati, Abba Eban, Pinhas Sapir, Ya'akov Shapira and Moshe Dayan. Replacing them was a new generation of politicians - Israeli born technocrats and military men. In this state of generational flux a new government was established headed by Yitzhak Rabin - the youngest and least experienced Prime Minister in Israel's history. This new and relatively inexperienced government faced many challenges: maintaining a stable coalition, conducting extensive negotiations with Israel's neighbours, i.e. Syria, Egypt and Jordan, confronting the rise of Palestinian nationalism and the PLO as well as dealing with the challenges to the rule of law brought about by Gush-Emunim. The need to provide solutions to the ongoing and evolving challenges, in particular in regard to the Occupied Territories, required long-term strategic planning. The Rabin government, however, did not stand up to these challenges. It allowed Gush-Emunim to dictate and influence its settlement policies and missed an opportunity to distance itself from the vague and failed approaches of its predecessor. The government failed to decide upon Israel's long-term relations with the Occupied Territories. Instead, it provided a platform for the expansion of settlement activity into areas previously outside of the consensus, i.e. the Allon Plan.

The next two chapters will detail and examine the choices available to and the decisions taken by Israel in regard to the Occupied Territories through several case studies: Israel's interim agreements with Egypt and Syria; the Jericho First episode and the establishment of Ma'ale Adumim, Ofra and Kadom. It will demonstrate that the government, under the weak leadership of Rabin, and constrained by domestic factors, in particular the rise of the NRP and Gush-Emunim, as well as by Israel's

¹ A quote attributed by many secondary sources to Henry Kissinger.

economic and military needs (supplied by the US), was unable to put forward clear and comprehensive policies for the Occupied Territories. Unable to define its long-term strategic imperatives, it employed an ad-hoc short-term incremental approach to decision-making. In short, the government chose, because of its inherent weakness and for reasons of self-preservation, not to deal with the strategic long-term implications of Israel's relationship with the territories.

Chapter One

The Rabin Government

The collapse of the Meir government left the Labour Party in a difficult situation. Its popularity had diminished considerably as a result of the Mehdal and the reputation of its veteran politicians was tarnished. In order to fill the leadership vacuum, and fearing new elections and a renewed succession battle, the party needed to find a compromise candidate behind which it could unite.² The party's main candidate Finance Minister Sapir had made it clear that he would not accept the nomination. Due to Sapir's unwillingness, several names were mentioned: Allon, Foreign Minister Eban and Transport Minister Shimon Peres - who had the backing of Rafi. Both Eban and Allon were informed by Sapir that the party would not support their nomination: Eban had no party backing and nominating Allon could have caused Rafi to withdraw from the Labour Party. In the absence of a unifying figure, Sapir and Mapai turned to Rabin - whom Allon and Ahdut-Ha'avoda agreed to support.³ Rabin appeared to be the perfect candidate - from Sapir and Mapai's perspective. The reputation of the former Chief of Staff, and Ambassador to the US, who had managed to maintain his national hero status for his role in the Six Day War, was not tainted by the Mehdal. Moreover, Rabin had previously received wide support among the electorate and was seen as one of Labour's most promising politicians. Additionally, Rabin's lack of a party base would force him to rely on Mapai for support.

For the first time in its history, the Labour Party's central committee put forward two candidates: Peres and Rabin. Both had known each other for many years and did not share much respect for one another. Peres, during his time as Deputy Defence Minister, successfully blocked Rabin's appointment to become Chief of Staff. He viewed Rabin as an unsuitable future Prime Minister because he lacked any political experience.⁴ Rabin's attitude towards Peres did not differ by much; he suspected that Peres was behind Ben-Gurion's early decision not to promote him to Chief of Staff.

² Moshe Baram, Not in a Furrow (Tel Aviv, Am Oved, 1981), Pages 217-220.

³ ISA/YAOH/Meeting 10/Page 5.

⁴ Michael Bar Zohar, Phoenix: Shimon Peres a Political Biography (Tel Aviv, Yedioth Ahronoth Books, 2006), Pages 416-418.

Additionally, he resented the fact that Peres was not a military man and, according to Rabin, someone who did not serve in the military was not suitable to lead.⁵ The central committee convened on the 22nd of April to vote for its new party leader and future Prime Minister by a secret ballot. The primary contest was marred by allegations, emanating from both camps, regarding both candidates' character. The primaries were won by Rabin, albeit by a small majority of 298 to 254; Rabin's narrow victory put him in a difficult situation within the party. Peres' strong showing in the primaries made him a leading candidate for the Defence Ministry - the second most important position in the government. In fact, Rafi threatened to withdraw its support for the new government if Peres was not chosen for the coveted position; Rabin had initially nominated Allon,⁶ and he would later claim that he only reluctantly accepted Peres as the new defence minister.⁷ In order to placate Allon and Ahdut-Ha'avoda, Rabin made him the foreign minister, while deposing Eban, with whom Rabin did not have a good working relationship during his term as ambassador to the US.⁸ This may explain why some of Mapai's veterans, most notably Eban, supported Peres in his battles with Rabin.

Rabin's first task was to form a coalition government. The NRP - influenced by its young guard - decided against joining the government. Thus, the Alignment (the Labour Party and Mapam) was forced to settle on a minority government, which included the Independent Liberal party (headed by Tourism Minister Moshe Kol) and the new Citizen's Rights Movement (headed by former Labour Party member Shulamit Aloni). Holding only 58 seats (in a 120-seat parliament), and needing to rely on support from the Arab parties in the Opposition, Rabin's government was the weakest in Israel's history. In order to address his weak parliamentary base Rabin announced that, at some point in the future, the NRP would be invited to join the government.

The Rabin government, with its relatively inexperienced government and a neophyte for Prime Minister, was at a disadvantage from day one. It lacked veteran political heavyweights, with the exception of Allon and Minister without Portfolio Israel

⁵ Rabin, The Rabin Memoirs Page 257.

⁶ Interview with Hillel.

⁷ Rabin, The Rabin Memoirs Page 189.

⁸ ISA/YAOH/Meeting 10/Page 12.

Galili, as most of the Labour Party's founding generation withdrew. Additionally, Rabin was not a member of a party faction and therefore suffered from the lack of a solid party base.⁹ This lack of support meant that Rabin could not count on any of the factions and had to operate on the basis of consensual politics.¹⁰ Furthermore, the government's decision-making process was destined to be fragmented because of the uneasy working relationship between Rabin, Peres, and, to a lesser degree, Allon.¹¹ The relationship amongst the triumvirate (Rabin, Peres and Allon) threatened to return the government to the decision-making immobilisation that reigned under Prime Minister Levi Eshkol.¹² The ability of this new government to agree or decide on the future of the Occupied Territories was thus severely hampered from the start.

Syria and the Golan Heights

On the 31st of May 1974, Israel and Syria signed a separation-of-forces agreement, in what was to be the last act of the outgoing Meir government, and the first important decision of the new Rabin government. The agreement included an Israeli withdrawal from Syrian territories it had conquered during the Yom Kippur War and several smaller areas it had held since the Six Day War, including the city of Quneitra.¹³ Israel's acceptance of the separation-of-forces agreement created a precedent in regard to the issue of the Golan Heights. Until that moment, Israeli politicians, of all political persuasions, as a by-product of Syrian belligerency and Israel's perceived security needs, accepted the notion that Israel would remain indefinitely in the Golan Heights.

The driving force behind Israel's acceptance of the separation-of-forces agreement with Syria was the application of US pressure. It is true that Israel's acceptance of the separation-of-forces agreement was also due to its desire to stop the war of attrition that had broke out on its northern border in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War and

⁹ Roberts, *Party and Policy in Israel* Page 37.

¹⁰ Kieval, *Party Politics in Israel* Page 106.

¹¹ Interview with Yadlin.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ ISA/7033/11-a/'The Separation-of-Forces Agreement'/(no date).

its desire to conclude a P.O.W exchange deal with Syria¹⁴ - Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad tied the exchange of prisoners with the agreement. However, in order to conclude the agreement, Israel required the assistance of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and American assurances and guarantees.¹⁵ Furthermore, Israel only agreed to sign the agreement once it was told by Kissinger that Assad had sent him a secret letter agreeing to prevent attacks from Syrian territory into Israel.¹⁶ Allon commented that the agreement had more to do with Israeli relations with the US than with Syria.¹⁷

From Israel's perspective, it became apparent that Assad would not sign a peace agreement for less than a full Israeli withdrawal from all the territories occupied in 1967 and a solution to the Palestinian refugee problem.¹⁸ This was a price Israel was not willing to pay. Kissinger made it clear that the US did not view the new line (the separation-of-forces agreement line) as the final border between the sides.¹⁹ However, Israel concluded that it could not afford to withdraw from large parts of the Golan Heights without risking Israel's national security. Because of the belligerent and radical nature of the Syrian regime and the strategic implications of withdrawal, ministers were advised to put the idea of negotiating with Syria on hold, and shift their attention to negotiations with Egypt and Jordan instead.²⁰

Since the War of Independence, Israel had viewed Syria as its most vociferous and belligerent enemy. Leading up to the Yom Kippur War, Syria had refused to negotiate with Israel either directly or through mediation. Therefore, the future status of the Golan Heights did not come up during either the Jarring mission or the Israeli-American discussions. Israel was initially inclined to view the Golan as a bargaining chip, which can clearly be seen in its 19th of June Decisions, while its reluctance to withdraw from the Golan Heights can be attributed to both Syrian intransigence and its perceived strategic imperatives. It was widely believed that Israel's position, on top of the Golan mountain ranges, 60 km from Damascus, provided a constant deterrent

¹⁴ Golan, The Secret Conversations of Henry Kissinger Page 179.

¹⁵ ISA/7033/11-a/Israel-US Memorandum of Understanding/June 1974.

¹⁶ ISA/7033/11-a/Record of Meeting between Kissinger and Israel's negotiating team/29.5.1974.

¹⁷ YTA/15Allon/Notes/Allon's Personal Note/(no date).

¹⁸ Interview with Yadlin.

¹⁹ Saadia Touval, The Peace Brokers: Mediators in the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948-1979 (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1982), Page 259.

²⁰ YTA/15Galili/32/4/5/Dossier detailing Israel's Foreign Policy (probably written by the Foreign Ministry)/26.8.1974.

and ensured that Israel enjoyed strategic depth.²¹ In addition, remaining on the Golan Heights provided Israel with the ability to protect its main water sources and its northern region from Syrian and Palestinian attacks.²² Syria's refusal to negotiate and its belligerent activities against Israeli interests, coupled with the significance of Israel's strategic imperatives, meant that public and political opinion in Israel was steadfast in its determination not to make any concessions in the Golan.²³

The agreement among political parties, of the need to keep the Golan Heights, influenced Israel's settlement and development policy. Indeed, early (1969) development plans for the Golan set very ambitious targets, as they presupposed the area would remain under Israel's control. The plans estimated a Jewish population of about 45-50,000 in urban centres and agricultural villages within ten years, in addition to the development of industrial and tourist centres across the Golan Heights.²⁴ However, these plans never materialised. By 1973 the total population of the Golan Heights was only 1300, including several hundred Nahal soldiers, concentrated in three main settlement clusters in the southern region of the Golan. These were small, self-sufficient, agricultural-based settlements, in an area rich in resources and close to the settlers' base of the Upper Galilee region. Outside of the southern region Israel had only six settlements, of which only one was in the crucial central region - the most important area strategically for Israel.²⁵ Furthermore, the settlements suffered from a lack of adequate funding; this problem was brought up by the settlers²⁶ and by members of the Knesset who visited the settlements.²⁷ The fact that Israel's settlement activities in the Golan Heights neither matched its rhetoric (its desire to remain in the territory indefinitely) nor its strategic needs (i.e. settlements in the central region) clearly indicates that Israel did not have a clear long-term policy.

²¹ Interview with Hillel.

²² Avi Zeira, "The Settlement in the Golan and the Struggle to Maintain it", in Moshe Maoz (ed), The Golan: Between War and Peace (OrYehuda, Hed Arzi, 1999) (Hebrew), Pages 101-102.

²³ Interview with Hillel.

²⁴ YTA/15Galili/72/1/2/the Settlement Department's 'Regional Plan for the Golan Heights'/Jan 1969.

²⁵ Harris, Taking Root Pages 67-77.

²⁶ ISA/6503/32-c/Letter by Merom Golan's Secretariat detailing the settlement's budgetary problems/12.3.1970.

²⁷ ISA/6504/31-c/Letter to the Knesset Chairman detailing a visit by MKs to Ramat-Magshimim/18.8.1970.

There are two main reasons why the development and settlement of the Golan Heights, prior to the Yom Kippur War, did not match the political will. First, settlement activity in the region was beset by many logistical and technical problems, e.g. lack of water supply, cost of land reclamation, scarcity of suitable agricultural land, harsh topographical conditions and lack of infrastructure.²⁸ The Second and most important factor concerning Israel's attitude towards the Golan Heights was the American diplomatic stance towards Syria. Israel could neither annex the Golan nor heavily develop the region without drawing the ire of the US. An example of US influence on Israel, in this matter, can be found in Meir's secret peace plan of 1970. As a consequence of US pressure during the Rogers talks, Israel was willing to agree, in principle, to withdraw from up to a third of the territory.²⁹

In the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War, the government came to the conclusion that it had to anchor its presence in the Golan Heights. It was widely believed that it was Syrian intransigence and its refusal to negotiate with Israel which was at the heart of the conflict and not Israel's presence in the Golan. It was, therefore, concluded that Israel must increase the number of settlements and allocate more resources to the development of the region.³⁰ In addition, Israel feared that the US would use the fact that the central region of the Golan was largely empty to demand concessions there.³¹ The fact that Israel remained on the Golan Heights, prompted new development plans which aimed to settle the central region and increase investment.³² In its first few weeks in office, the Rabin government agreed to expand and strengthen Israel's presence in the Golan by constructing an urban centre (Katzrin), an industrial area and an additional agricultural settlement in the central region.³³ Yet, despite these efforts, the government had to scale down its plans for the region because of its geographical features and the logistic problems these created, the on-going negotiations with the Arab states and its desire to avoid antagonising the US. Additionally, most politicians assumed that the Golan would remain under Israel's control and therefore saw no

²⁸ YTA/15Galili/77/1/11/the Settlement Department's 'Development Plan for the Golan Heights 1973-1977'/July 1973.

²⁹ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Allon's Peace Plan/15.9.1970.

³⁰ Interview with Hillel, interview with Yadlin.

³¹ Harris, *Taking Root* Page 71.

³² YTA/15Galili/77/4/13/the Settlement Department's 'Plan for the Development of the Golan Heights'/1975.

³³ YTA/15Galili/Notes/Personal Note/11.7.1974.

need to hasten settlement activity there, ‘there was no need to create facts on the ground’.³⁴ Moreover, Israel’s housing minister at the time, Avraham Ofer, was known as a moderate and as one who was against large-scale works that would harm peace negotiations.³⁵ Another important factor inhibiting Israel’s policy towards the Golan Heights was the local Druze population. The precedent created by the disengagement agreement with both Syria and Egypt changed irrevocably the attitude of the Druze population towards Israel. Once seen as natural allies of Israel, and at one stage its leaders even appeared to support the idea of an Israeli annexation,³⁶ the Druze community became vocal, though non-violent, opponents of Israel’s occupation.³⁷ It is therefore not a surprise that, despite the government’s plans and intentions, the population of the Golan Heights did not increase much under Rabin. Only in the later stages of the Rabin government did the area witness a steady rise in development and infrastructure, but even then it was only done on a small scale.

Israel’s desire to hold on to the Golan Heights was a by-product of Syrian belligerency and diplomatic inflexibility, as well as the recognition of the region’s value in meeting Israel’s strategic needs. However, despite its continued presence on the Golan Heights, Israel was unable to implement its stated settlement and development aims for the region. This was mainly because of technical and logistical problems associated with the area’s geography, and external political constraints placed on Israel by the US. Moreover, because of the geographical problems Israel’s settlement and development plans did not match its stated strategic needs (i.e. the settlement and development of the central region). Nevertheless, despite refusing to annex the territory and vowing to keep its diplomatic options open, the incremental decisions taken by successive governments - in particular the increased development of the central region by the Rabin government - were moving Israel towards a de-facto annexation of the region.

³⁴ Interview with Hillel.

³⁵ Interview with Aloni, interview with Yadlin.

³⁶ ISA/YAOH/Meeting 4/Page 18.

³⁷ Interview with Hillel.

Jericho First

On the 3rd of June 1974, the new government stated its foreign policy approach: it declared its willingness to hold direct negotiations without preconditions with its Arab neighbours in order to bring about peace agreements. These agreements would be based on territorial compromises that would provide Israel with secure and recognised borders. Until such agreements were reached, Israel would continue to remain on the cease-fire lines.³⁸ On the 21st of June, the government made clear its intentions with regard to Jordan; it concluded that an agreement with Jordan was the only viable solution for the West Bank. The government stated that an agreement with Jordan would be based on an Israeli state, with Jerusalem as its capital, and a Jordanian-Palestinian state, where the political aspirations of the Palestinians would be fulfilled. Furthermore, it decided not to negotiate with 'terrorist organisations whose sole purpose is the destruction of the state of Israel', i.e. the PLO.³⁹

In reality, Israel's intentions towards Jordan were slightly different. It sought to normalise relations with Jordan in order to reach a de-facto peace, which would include a nominal Jordanian presence in the West Bank (as long as it did not infringe upon Israel's security) in order to limit the influence of the PLO. Israel believed that, if this objective was met, the possibility of peace between the two states, whether based on a Functional Solution or a territorial compromise, would be enhanced in the long run.⁴⁰ The resumption of the debate within the government on Israel's intentions for the Occupied Territories within the government (which had been nullified under Meir) exposed stark differences among ministers - particularly among the triumvirate - regarding to Jordan and the West Bank, and illustrated the problems it faced formulating a clear long-term policy: Allon favoured an agreement based on his plan; Peres pressed for a Functional Solution; and Rabin favoured some form of the Territorialist Approach, combined with security elements taken from the Functionalist Approach.⁴¹ In light of this, it is not a surprise that the government adopted a tentative approach towards Jordan.

³⁸ LPA/2-021-1977-133/The Government's Principles/3.6.1974.

³⁹ YYA/Victor Shem-Tov 87-95/1/2/Letter from Galili to Rabin/27.2.1975.

⁴⁰ YTA/15Galili/32/4/5/Dossier detailing Israel's Foreign Policy/26.8.1974.

⁴¹ Interview with Yadlin, interview with Shem-Tov.

Allon believed that the best way to advance relations between the two states would be through an interim agreement based on his plan. This, he thought, would lead to a permanent peace between the two states and would cement the political future of the West Bank with Jordan.⁴² This idea is referred to as the Jericho First plan, because Allon envisioned that this interim agreement would be initially implemented in the Jericho area.⁴³ The idea was supported by Kissinger who, in turn, pressed both Jordan and Israel to accept it. According to Kissinger Israel had two choices in regard to the West Bank: either negotiate with the Jordanians or deal with the Palestinians; he favoured the former.⁴⁴

In a meeting on the 28th of August, King Hussein, accompanied by his Prime Minister Ziad Rifai, proposed to the Israeli triumvirate a disengagement plan along the Jordan River - similar to what he had proposed to Meir in February; Rabin and Peres rejected this. Peres proceeded to propose an agreement along the lines of a Functional Solution. Hussein expressed surprise that, after conducting so many meetings, Israel would come up with an offer 'like that'.⁴⁵ Allon, in an attempt to rescue the talks, suggested an Israeli withdrawal from the Jericho area as an interim agreement and the establishment of a Jordanian civilian administration there. Hussein was against that idea; Rifai explained that Hussein would settle for either for a disengagement-of-forces agreement along the Jordan River or a complete Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank.⁴⁶

On the 19th of October, a second meeting between Hussein and the Israeli triumvirate took place. There is some controversy over what exactly occurred during this meeting, as its content has not yet been made public. It is unclear whether Hussein, growing anxious because of the upcoming Arab League summit in Rabat, was willing to consider the Jericho First plan. According to Allon, Hussein was inclined to settle for the Jericho First plan but, because of the proximity of the meeting to the Rabat Summit, chose not to. Allon claimed to have told Hussein that, he would only advise the government to support the Jericho First plan if Hussein agreed to commit to the

⁴² ISA/YAOH/Meeting 5/Page 11.

⁴³ Lukacs, Israel, Jordan and the Peace Process Page 133.

⁴⁴ Henry Kissinger, Days of Upheaval (Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1982), Page 1139.

⁴⁵ Moshe Zak, Hussein makes Peace (Jerusalem, Bar-Ilan University, 1996) (Hebrew), Page 164.

⁴⁶ Shlaim, Lion of Jordan Page 382.

plan, regardless of the summit's outcome.⁴⁷ According to Aloni, however, Hussein agreed to the plan because he wanted to prove, before going to the summit, that he was still the rightful representative of the Palestinian people.⁴⁸ The merits of the 'Jericho First' plan were debated in the government, with some uncertainty as to what actually happened during this debate. According to Aloni, ministers debated the plan and then voted to reject it: only Aloni, Transportation Minister Gad Ya'akobi and Information Minister Aharon Yariv voted in favour.⁴⁹ This has been denied by Police Minister Shlomo Hillel and Education Minister Aharon Yadlin, who stated that the government did not hold a formal vote on the plan and that the debate never reached the stage where a decision had to be made.⁵⁰

However, there is an agreement over the fact that the main reason the plan was not accepted by the government was due to Rabin's desire to include the NRP in his coalition.⁵¹ Aloni asked Rabin why the plan was rejected; Rabin replied that a promise had been made to the NRP that any territorial concessions in the West Bank would necessitate either new elections or a referendum. Aloni expressed her amazement that 'a promise made by Meir [who had since resigned] during coalition negotiations [as part of a government that had since resigned] to the NRP [who were not part of the current coalition] should be honoured.'⁵² There is some evidence to support Aloni's version of events. Rabin, in a meeting with Mapam members, expressed hope that Hussein would be accepted as the representative of the Palestinians in Rabat, but that he would not call for elections over Jericho. Rabin stated that an agreement with Jordan was not feasible at the time, and stressed the importance of focusing on reaching an agreement with Egypt, believing that doing so would lead to a breakthrough on the Jordanian front.⁵³

In the ensuing summit in Rabat, the Arab League passed a unanimous resolution declaring the PLO the sole representative of the Palestinian people. The resolution was passed unanimously - even Hussein was resigned to support it - despite

⁴⁷ ISA/YAOH/Meeting 8/Page 16.

⁴⁸ Interview with Aloni.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Interview Hillel, interview Yadlin.

⁵¹ Interview with Aloni, interview with Shem-tov, interview with Yadlin.

⁵² Interview with Aloni.

⁵³ YYA/Haika Grossman 69-95/30/4/Personal Notes/(no date, prior to the Rabat Summit).

considerable American pressure on several Arab states to support Jordan's position.⁵⁴ The summit completely changed the nature of the debate within Israel and highlighted the Palestinian question.⁵⁵ Kimchi described the summit as 'one of the most significant turning points of this period'.⁵⁶

It is unclear whether or not Hussein pursued an interim agreement based on the Jericho First plan. It is also unclear whether procuring an agreement from Israel would have changed the outcome of the summit in Rabat. However, it is clear that Rabin had decided to pursue an interim agreement with Egypt first and deferred negotiations with Jordan to a later stage. This decision was taken with a desire to broaden his parliamentary base in mind, and was possibly due to the lack of American pressure for an interim agreement with Jordan. It could be argued that Kissinger could have applied pressure on Hussein to lower his expectations and on Israel to show more flexibility, but Kissinger was more interested in the Egyptian track.

The government was also deeply divided on the subject of territorial compromises in the West Bank. The doves were in favour of territorial compromises beyond the Allon Plan, the majority of the ministers favoured a territorial compromise along the lines of the plan, while others - most notably Peres - were arguing for a Functional Solution. The inability of the government to reach a common position on the matter, regardless of whether it would have been accepted by Hussein, attests to its lack of a comprehensive and coherent clear long-term policy towards the West Bank. As if to confirm this, Allon claimed that Rabin's promise to the NRP was not as big a problem as Rabin imagined it to be, and could have been easily overcome.⁵⁷ Additionally, the missed opportunity highlighted the continual failure among dovish politicians to have any influence on Israel's territorial policies.

⁵⁴ Shlaim, Lion of Jordan Pages 384-385.

⁵⁵ Interview with Hillel.

⁵⁶ David Kimche, After Nasser, Arafat and Saddam Hussein: The Last Option, The Quest for Peace in the Middle East (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991), Page 41.

⁵⁷ ISA/YAOH/Meeting 8/Page 17.

The NRP

One of the main reasons behind Rabin's rejection of the Jericho First Plan, and his government's lack of a clear long-term policy towards the West Bank, was his desire to include the NRP in the Coalition. On the 30th of October 1974, and on the heels of the Rabat Summit, the NRP joined the government, which prompted the resignation of Aloni's Citizen's Rights Movement. Rabin's decision to include the NRP in order to broaden his parliamentary base followed months of negotiations with the NRP and the other coalition members, to which Aloni was not invited.⁵⁸ This explains why Mapam and the Independent Liberal Party - which both favoured the Jordanian track - did not push the government on the Jericho First plan, even though Mapam's leaders stated that a settlement with Jordan was necessary.⁵⁹ Negotiations between the Labour Party and Mapam regarding the NRP shed light on the relationship between the government's handling of the territorial policy and its inner politics. In a series of meetings that took place during August, Rabin explained that he had reached an agreement with the NRP about joining the coalition and, as a result, could not make any substantial decisions in regard to the Occupied Territories. Rabin added that, in regard to the West Bank, he did not foresee any serious developments taking place before the next general elections.⁶⁰ Rabin promised the NRP that the government would allow settlements in all the land of Israel, while assuring Mapam and the Independent Liberal Party that they could abstain or vote against any resolution regarding the settlements.⁶¹

The coalition negotiation process revealed deep anxieties within the Alignment regarding the NRP. The NRP was presented as a 'Trojan horse' that would sideline Mapam and the peace process while serving the interests of the Likud.⁶² However, others within the Alignment called for the inclusion of the NRP in order to block a potential link with the Likud and heal a growing national rift over religious matters. This was expressed as a fear over the possible future collaboration between radical

⁵⁸ Interview with Aloni.

⁵⁹ YYA/Mapam Protocols 79-90/7/79/9/Mapam Central Committee Meeting/15.7.9174/Page 146.

⁶⁰ YYA/Mapam Protocols 79-90/7/79/9/Record of Mapam's Central Committee Meeting/21.8.1974/Pages 168-169.

⁶¹ YYA/Mapam90/36/2/Letter from MK Meir Talmi regarding coalition agreements/10.11.1975.

⁶² YYA/Mapam Protocols79-90/7/79/9/Record of Mapam's Central Committee Meeting/21.8.1974/Pages 172-173.

nationalism and a radical religious movement.⁶³ The fears expressed regarding the inclusion of the NRP - perennial coalition partner of the Labour Party, known for its diplomatic and religious pragmatism - were a result of the changes that occurred within the NRP during the previous decade.

In the aftermath of the Six Day War, Israel witnessed a period of religious revivalism. This manifested itself in the growing importance attached to religion and its inclusion in the political life. However, these changes were not a direct result of the war, but built upon demographic and institutional changes that had been brewing for many years, e.g. the growth of religious education, high birth-rates among the religious communities and the influx of 'low-status oriental immigrants' with a religious attachment.⁶⁴ On the back of this religious phenomenon, a new power base emerged within the NRP. The party - already preoccupied with faction-based politics - witnessed the inclusion of another faction, based on the emergence of several young leaders led by Zevulun Hammer and dominated by New Zionism ideology. Within this competitive system the emergence of the young guard proved to be a deciding factor.⁶⁵ The young guard demanded to have a more active role in the management of the party and a change to the party's traditional policies of alliance with Mapai, religious status-quo within the state and neutrality in foreign affairs. In addition, the growth of religious nationalism and a general shift to the right amongst the electorate forced the NRP to secure its electoral base, against the incursion of the Likud, which, in turn, strengthened the young guard.⁶⁶

The generational debate within the NRP took on a new dimension with the acquisition of the Occupied Territories, in particular the West Bank.⁶⁷ The territorial issue thus became entangled within an evolving religious debate.⁶⁸ The young guard refused to associate itself with a Labour Party that was willing to withdraw from the holy places

⁶³ Interview with Yadlin.

⁶⁴ Sammy Smooha, Israel: Pluralism and Conflict (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), Pages 236-237.

⁶⁵ Yael Yishai, "Factionalism in the National Religious Party: The Quiet Revolution", in Arian Asher (ed), The Elections in Israel 1977 (Jerusalem, Jerusalem Academic Press, 1980), Page 58.

⁶⁶ Ibid Page 58.

⁶⁷ Efraim Torgovnik, "Party Factions and Election Issues", in Arian Asher (ed), The Elections In Israel 1969 Page 26.

⁶⁸ Ernest Stock, "Foreign Policy Issues", in Arian Asher (ed), The Elections In Israel 1969 Page 48.

in the West Bank.⁶⁹ Therefore, in order to avoid alienating the young guard and wishing to preserve unity, the old guard avoided making decisions on the territorial issue.⁷⁰ Party leader Haim-Moshe Shapira went even further by associating himself with Dayan in an attempt to brandish his hawkish credentials.⁷¹ Although not a major factor, the unwillingness of the NRP to make controversial decisions on the long-term future of the Occupied Territories contributed to Israel's lack of clear policy under both Eshkol and Meir.

The Yom Kippur War strengthened the religious sentiment among the young guard of the NRP that it was necessary to retain the Occupied Territories.⁷² As a result, in the 1973 elections, the NRP tied its participation in the coalition with the government's territorial policies. Interestingly, this represented the first time in which New Zionism or for that matter nationalist or religious sentiments played an integral part in Israel's territorial policy. Moreover, the decision to join the Rabin government was only approved by the party's central committee by a narrow margin of 57% to 43%. The decision was severely criticised by the young guard, who decided to remain in the Opposition, and by many of Israel's leading Rabbis despite Rabin's promises to the NRP regarding the West Bank.⁷³ The young guard's identification with the concept of greater Israel and with the settlers' movement was most apparent in the formation and activities of Gush-Emunim - 'the Bloc of the Faithful'.

Gush-Emunim

When referring to the Gush-Emunim phenomenon, Ehud Shprinzak used the analogy of the 'tip of the iceberg': a small radical, ideologically motivated, group that arose out of a larger social context and therefore enjoyed broader public support than was initially apparent.⁷⁴ It is not the intention of this thesis to either explain or define New Zionism, or to rationalise the resurgence of nationalist and religious fervour during

⁶⁹ Yehuda Azrieli, Dor Hakipot Hasrugot (The Generation of the Knitted Skullcap) (Israel, Avivim, 1990) (Hebrew) Pages 36-37.

⁷⁰ Stock, "Foreign Policy Issues" Page 47.

⁷¹ Torgovnik, "Party Factions" Page 31.

⁷² Roberts, Party and Policy in Israel Page 68.

⁷³ Azrieli, Dor Hakipot Hasrugot Pages 37-38.

⁷⁴ Eldar and Zertal, Lords of the Land Page 273.

the period researched; what is of interest is the effect that individuals and groups associated with New Zionism had on Israel's territorial policy.

The outcome of the Six Day War was a predictable one for Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Cook, the son of Israel's first Rabbi and leader of the religious Zionist movement. His father had compared the establishment of the state of Israel to the beginning of the time of redemption. The Six Day War was seen as a direct validation of this process.⁷⁵ For Cook, it was the beginning of the messianic age, the return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel: 'We have just returned to the elevations of holiness and our holy city. We shall never move out of here'.⁷⁶ The immediate manifestation of this revelation was most apparent to a small group encompassing the young guard of the NRP and the students of Cook's 'Merkaz Harav' yeshiva - from which most of the Hebron and Gush-Etzion settlers came. They believed that the government was not fulfilling its role in this era of redemption and took it upon themselves to do so, first in Gush-Etzion and Hebron and later in Kiryat Arba. They found that the government - torn apart internally - was standing in their way. The group perceived Zionism as being associated with the creation of settlements on the land of Israel, as did early Labour Party members. However, for them the notion of settling the land of Israel was not only a Zionist mission but also a religious imperative; by settling the land of Israel they were redeeming their souls.⁷⁷ Thus, they attributed the Yom Kippur War to the government's insufficient settlement drive, which led them to found the Gush-Emunim movement.⁷⁸

Gush-Emunim considered the territories, in particular the West Bank, as part of the land of Israel. This view attributed neither a strategic nor a bargaining value to the Occupied Territories.⁷⁹ For Gush-Emunim there was no reason to negotiate with an Arab world bent on destroying Israel. This fear of annihilation by the Arab world, combined with a sense of religious justification, resulted in a rejection of the politics of the 'gentile world'.⁸⁰ The group rejected the internal Israeli political system as a

⁷⁵ Ehud Shprinzak, The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right (New York, Oxford University Press, 1991), Page 45.

⁷⁶ Ibid Page 44.

⁷⁷ Yishai, Land or Peace Page 131.

⁷⁸ Haggai Segal, Dear Brother (Jerusalem, Keter Publishing House, 1987) (Hebrew), Pages 26-27.

⁷⁹ Seliktar, New Zionism Pages 158-159.

⁸⁰ Yishai, Land or Peace Pages 127-128.

force for a change, arguing instead for a bottom-up grass-root approach. They were supported in their endeavours by many politicians from the Opposition, including Begin and Sharon. In addition, they were supported by followers of Tabenkin, who admired them for being the pioneers of a new generation and shared much of their Zionist zeal.⁸¹ Moreover, even prominent left-wing politicians such as Mapam's leader Ya'akov Hazan admired their zeal, which reminded him of the early Zionist pioneers.⁸²

Gush-Emunim initially tried to lobby the government for more settlements across the West Bank - particularly in Samaria - but with little success.⁸³ The government refused to grant them permission to settle; Rabin stated that settlement projects would only correspond to government policies. Several Attempts by Gush-Emunim to settle independently on several sites across the West Bank, and once on the Golan Heights, were unsuccessful. The government's refusal to allow the group to settle, and their forced eviction from sites, caused the group to view the government as illegitimate and immoral. For them, the actions of a government that deprived its own people of their 'God given right' to settle were akin to that of the British mandate's 'White Book' policies. Therefore, they perceived their opposition to the government's settlement policies as both right and moral.⁸⁴ For the first time since the Hebron incident, the government faced a group that was bent on influencing its settlement policies. Gush-Emunim did not only offer an alternative to the government's policy, they actively implemented one.⁸⁵ The government was thus faced with a determined and growing movement, which opposed its settlement policy and which was encouraged and supported by a broad section of society, opposition politicians and even members of the Labour Party. By influencing the government's settlement policies, Gush-Emunim was also influencing the future relations between Israel and the Occupied Territories.

⁸¹ Ehud Shprinzak, Everyman Whatsoever is Right in his Own Eyes: Illegality in Israeli Society (Tel Aviv, Sifriat Poalim, 1986) (Hebrew), Page 126-128.

⁸² Interview with Aloni.

⁸³ Gershon Shafat, Gush-Emunim: The Story Behind the Scenes (Biet-El Library, 1995) (Hebrew), Pages 74-77.

⁸⁴ Shprinzak, Everyman Whatsoever Page 124-126.

⁸⁵ Yishai, Land or Peace Page 131.

The group took upon itself the task of expanding settlement activities to areas outside of the mandate of the Allon Plan. Outside the publicised settlement attempts by Gush-Emunim, several low key attempts were made; two of them proved highly successful and signalled the end of the Allon Plan as the government's settlement concept. These two successes also proved, once and for all, that the Labour government did not have a clear and comprehensive territorial policy and had not agreed upon its preferred future relations between Israel and the Occupied Territories.

Ma'ale Adumim

Ma'ale Adumim represented the first clear example of Gush-Emunim's impact on the government's settlement plans. The idea of establishing a settlement in the area of Ma'ale Adumim had first been raised by Allon in 1968, while the exact location of the project remained obscure and was described as being in the vicinity of Jericho.⁸⁶ Allon later proposed that the exact location of the settlement be decided by the MSC. Although Allon had described the project as one which would help fulfil Israel's diplomatic and security objectives,⁸⁷ it was still rejected by the Eshkol government. One of the main issues regarding Ma'ale Adumim was that establishing a settlement in the area would help to divide the West Bank, by narrowing the strip of land in the Jerusalem-Jericho corridor connecting Samaria and Judea. Therefore, the decision over whether to establish a settlement in the area was not taken lightly by either the Eshkol or the Meir governments. As part of a discussion regarding the expansion of Jerusalem's municipal boundaries under Meir, an ad-hoc committee had been established to look at future industrial sites for Jerusalem. The committee advised the government to appropriate lands to the east and north of the city, because these represented suitable sites for future industrial areas.⁸⁸ The committee decided to start development in one of those areas - a site to the east of the city named Ma'ale Adumim. In addition, Galili advised the government to allow the Israeli Land Authority to support the effort by purchasing additional lands in the area.⁸⁹ Allon, being the head of the Ministerial Committee for Jerusalem and in charge of land

⁸⁶ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Allon's Proposal/10.12.1968.

⁸⁷ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Allon's Proposal/29.1.1969.

⁸⁸ YTA/15Galili/143/7/16/Record of the ad-hoc committee Meeting/(no date).

⁸⁹ YTA/15Galili/39/1/16/Galili's summary of Government decisions/9.8.1973.

appropriation, wrote that most ministers had already gathered that the area would eventually become an urban settlement.⁹⁰ He went on to say that this was the reason why several ministers were against the project, but supported the government's decision to establish an industrial area nonetheless.⁹¹

On the 28th of August 1974, during an MSC meeting, Galili raised the idea of settling in the Ma'ale Adumim area. Galili notified the committee that the government had already appropriated an area of 70,000 square km east of Jerusalem. He explained that the government had not yet decided what to do with the area, but was considering using it as an industrial area for Jerusalem. Galili explained that the area would initially serve as a storage facility for the army, but would be later transformed into an urban settlement. He told the committee that several private investors were willing to invest money in the project at a minimum cost to the tax payer.⁹² The discussion in the MSC followed some earlier discussions regarding Ma'ale Adumim at a ministerial level.⁹³

The idea of creating an industrial area in Ma'ale Adumim infuriated Yehiel Admoni, the head of the Settlement Department. From Admoni's perspective the project was outside the scope of, and therefore breached, the Allon Plan. However, because the exact parameters of the plan were never agreed upon and therefore remained vague,⁹⁴ Allon interpreted the project as being within the scope of his plan. Benvenisti argues that because the Allon Plan was vague, it allowed for the inclusion of areas that were not originally part of the plan, in particular in the Jerusalem region.⁹⁵ The fact that the head of the Settlement Department was unsure about the exact parameters of the plan implies that the Allon Plan was more of a rough guideline or concept than a detailed plan or policy.

One of the most important facts behind the creation of Ma'ale Adumim was the level of collaboration between Galili and Gush-Emunim. Demant argues - and this is backed by reports in the Israeli press - that Galili and the head of Israel's Land

⁹⁰ ISA/YAOH/Meeting 9/Page 16.

⁹¹ Ibid Page 17.

⁹² Admoni, *Decade of Discretion* Page 102.

⁹³ YTA/15Galili/4/10/2/Memo from Galili to Rabin/8.8.1974.

⁹⁴ Demant *Ploughshares into Swords* Pages 148-149.

⁹⁵ Meron Benvenisti, *The West Bank Handbook* (Jerusalem, Kana, 1987) (Hebrew), Page 148.

Authority Meir Zore'a (a supporter of the Land of Israel Movement) had extensive dealing with Gush-Emunim. It is important to note that Galili did not always disclose this fact.⁹⁶ Arguably, these dealings between Galili, Zore'a, the NRP and Gush-Emunim attest to the growing impact individuals and groups associated with New Zionism ideology were having on Israel's territorial policies. Demant goes on to argue that the decision to establish an industrial site in the area, and the subsequent decision to allow members of Gush-Emunim to settle there, were the products of deals struck with the NRP and Gush-Emunim.⁹⁷ It is also alleged that the project was promised to the NRP by Rabin as part of the coalition bargaining process.⁹⁸

On the 24th of November, the government agreed to develop Ma'ale Adumim as an industrial area for the city of Jerusalem. Hillel explains that the decision was taken in light of the need to create facts on the ground in response to the Rabat Summit resolution.⁹⁹ It was decided that the site would not be used as a civilian settlement and that only those employed in the construction could reside there.¹⁰⁰ This was followed, on the 9th of December, by a decision of the MSC, in consultation with Peres, to establish a work camp in Ma'ale Adumim as well as two new Nahal outposts in Kokhav Hashahar and Tko'a; these two outposts were only marginally inside the scope of the Allon Plan. The committee agreed that, within six months, a decision on whether these should become civilian settlements would be made.¹⁰¹

The Ma'ale Adumim project was beset by problems from the start. The most pressing problem was the lack of funds or budgetary capacity for it.¹⁰² In addition, several prominent figures were either against the project or were actively undermining it. Housing Minister Ofer was doing his best to delay the project while Labour MK Yossi Sarid was publicly stating that the government, by investing in the project, was neglecting Israel's developing towns. On top of that, the government was forced to restrict the Settlement Department's involvement in the project after it became

⁹⁶ YTA/15Galili/4/10/3/Memo from Galili to Rabin/20.10.1974.

⁹⁷ Demant, Ploughshares into Swords Pages 358-359.

⁹⁸ Demant, Page 358.

⁹⁹ Interview with Hillel.

¹⁰⁰ ISA/7032/14-a/Memo from Galili to Rabin/15.12.1974.

¹⁰¹ ISA/7032/14-a/Memo from Galili to Rabin/9.12.1974.

¹⁰² YTA/15Galili/4/10/13/Memo from Galili to Rabin/7.1.1974.

apparent that Admoni was acting against it;¹⁰³ this all came after Galili had initially intended for the Settlement Department to play an important role in the project.¹⁰⁴ Admoni's reluctance to show more support for the project may have been due to the project's location or to the involvement of Gush-Emunim.¹⁰⁵

In order to address some of the problematic issues raised by the Ma'ale Adumim project, a special ad-hoc ministerial committee was established. In its first meeting on the 8th of January, Finance Minister Yehushu'a Rabinowitz asked how the government could have authorised a project, and made financial commitments, when no budget had been allocated or agreed upon. He went on to say that, despite the government's decision on the matter, it was virtually impossible to monitor the progress, since the project lacked clear plans. Ofer claimed that, although the committee was discussing the possibility of creating an industrial zone at the site, there was always a suspicion that this was intended to be a civilian settlement.¹⁰⁶ It is unclear whether Ofer was aware of the fact that Galili had met with representatives of Gush-Emunim and allowed them to reside in the area while helping with the construction.¹⁰⁷ Galili explained to the committee that if the government did not develop the area the far right would. Galili claimed that developing Ma'ale Adumim was an 'ingenious' move, on his part, to quell some dangerous domestic developments. Rabin backed Galili by stating that although Sarid was making a fuss, he would only be able to bring tens of people to protest, while Yehuda Ben-Meir (NRP) would bring hundreds to support it.¹⁰⁸ This statement by Galili raises questions regarding the exact purpose and necessity of the project. Additionally, it further demonstrates that prominent decision makers, in this case Galili and Rabin, were influenced not only by political considerations, but also by individuals and groups associated with New Zionist ideology. Furthermore, it would appear that the project was a result of political deals and was not done in response to the needs of the city of Jerusalem. If true, this would not be the first time that decisions regarding developments and settlements in the Jerusalem area were taken without consulting

¹⁰³ ISA/7032/14-a/Memo from Galili to Rabin/7.1.1975.

¹⁰⁴ YTA/15Galili/4/10/7/Memo from Galili to Rabin/1.12.1974.

¹⁰⁵ YTA/Galili/4/10/16/Memo from Galili to Rabin regarding Gush-Emunim/24.1.1975.

¹⁰⁶ ISA/7032/14-a/Record of the Ma'ale Adumim Committee Meeting/8.1.1975/Page 7.

¹⁰⁷ ISA/7032/14-a/Memo from Galili to Rabin/24.1.1975.

¹⁰⁸ ISA/7032/14-a/Record of the Ma'ale Adumim Committee Meeting /8.1.1975/Page 11.

with the Jerusalem municipality.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, this clearly shows that the Ma'ale Adumim project was not part of a comprehensive long-term settlement policy.

In a subsequent meeting on the 10th of January, ministers continued to debate the project's budget and appeared genuinely unsure as to who was responsible for it. Rabin informed the committee that the Finance Ministry would 'by hook or by crook' find the appropriate funds for the project. Rabinowitz insisted that the main problem with the settlement was political, and that is why there was a great deal of confusion. Nonetheless, he added, that as the decision had been taken by the government, he would comply with it.¹¹⁰ In the end, the committee decided to establish 25 residential units for 100 settlers/workers at the site.¹¹¹ The political and economic problems that marred the project attest to the fact that it was not part of the government's long-term strategic planning. In one particularly revealing episode, Galili - struggling to find money for the project - urged Rabinowitz to allocate funds for the project.¹¹² Mapam alleged that Galili and Zore'a had allocated money to the project without receiving the government approval for the budget. Leaks of revolts within the government on this issue exposed the complexity of decision-making within a fragmented government.¹¹³

On the one hand, several ministers, in particular Mapam's, were working to undermine the project.¹¹⁴ On the other hand, Rabin and Galili were working hard to satisfy the NRP's demands for the project. While Galili claimed that ministers supported the decision to include Ma'ale Adumim in the future boundaries of the state of Israel, the decision to build residential units on the site only passed by a slim majority (11 to 8).¹¹⁵ The decision - to build a small number of units and to limit their availability to site workers - appeared to be an attempt to satisfy both the NRP's demand for a civilian settlement and Mapam's opposition to one.¹¹⁶ The government's inability to agree on a comprehensive settlement policy, and the need to reach a consensus within a divided coalition, forced the government to revert to an

¹⁰⁹ YTA/15Galili/2/2/38/Letter from Jerusalem's mayor to Galili/22.1.1975.

¹¹⁰ ISA/7032/14-a/Record of the Ma'ale Adumim Committee Meeting/10.1.1975/Page 3.

¹¹¹ ISA/7032/14-a/ Ma'ale Adumim Committee' decisions/19.2.1975.

¹¹² YTA/15Galili/4/10/14/Memo from Galili to Rabinowitz/12.1.1975

¹¹³ ISA/7032/14-a/Memo from Galili to Rabin/26.1.1975.

¹¹⁴ YTA/15Galili/2/2/37/Memo from Galili to the Knesset's Finance Committee Chairman/26.1.1975.

¹¹⁵ ISA/7032/14-a/Memo from Galili to Rabin/26.1.1975.

¹¹⁶ Demant, Ploughshares into Swords Page 358.

incremental mode of decision-making. Thus, the weakness of the dovish ministers and the growing influence of Gush-Emunim and the NRP contributed to the fact that this far-reaching decision was taken as a political compromise.

Ofra

The growing threat from Gush-Emunim was a source for concern within the government. On the 26th of January, Rabin, Peres, Galili and Hillel met to discuss the illegal activities of Gush-Emunim. They agreed to use all means necessary to restrict the movement of its members within the Occupied Territories in order to hamper any attempts by them to create facts on the ground without a government decision. Rabin acknowledged that the political reality in Israel had changed as a result of Gush-Emunim. He stated that it was a political movement that would not be placated by giving in to their demands, in places such as Ba'al-Hatzor and Ma'ale Adumim. Rabin expressed the fear that the government might be unable to deter Gush-Emunim from future actions.¹¹⁷ His words provide an indication that the government, or at least some ministers, were negotiating with Gush-Emunim. Additionally, it represents the second occasion on which an official document mentioned the concessions made to Gush-Emunim in Ba'al-Hatzor. This fact was first revealed during the ministerial meeting regarding Ma'ale Adumim, where Peres informed the committee of 700 would-be settlers waiting to settle on the site. Rabin sarcastically replied that he could settle them in the Galilee as opposed to Ba'al-Hatzor.¹¹⁸

Ba'al-Hatzor is the highest peak of the Samaria mountain range and was designated as a new army base (based on the concept of 'Mobile Defences' and in accordance with the Dayan Plan). Under orders from the Defence Ministry, lands were appropriated in the area and construction began in late 1974. Several members of Gush-Emunim contacted Moshe Netzer (Peres' settlement advisor and former head of the Nahal) and requested permission to establish a working camp on the site in order to help with the construction. Netzer, acting under the direction of Peres, authorised the request.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ ISA/7020/6-a/Record of Rabin's Conversation with Peres, Galili and Hillel/26.1.1975.

¹¹⁸ ISA/7032/14-a/Record of the Ma'ale Adumim Committee Meeting/10.1.1975.

¹¹⁹ Moshe Netzer, Life Story (Ministry of Defence, 2002) (Hebrew), Page 290.

Peres authorised the move despite the fact that Ba'al-Hatzor was in the midst of a heavily populated area in the centre of Samaria and clearly outside of the prescribed parameters of the Allon Plan.

By April 1975 the settlers had established themselves next to the army base and were effectively living on the site; they named their camp/settlement Ofra. According to Netzer, Peres authorised the settlers to remain at the site as a way of cooling Gush-Emunim's settlement fervour.¹²⁰ Rabin, who was rumoured to have been upset by the incident, authorised Galili to find a solution to the problem. Galili's solution appeared to have been a compromise by which the settlers could remain at the site as long as they supported themselves and their numbers did not exceed 24.¹²¹ This compromise was taken without consulting the government and in full knowledge that most ministers would vote against it.¹²² Rabin's actions did not make much sense, unless he shared Peres' assertion that the move would help dampen the settlement zeal of Gush-Emunim. As it turned out, Rabin whether by design or by default, authorised the establishment of the first settlement outside the scope of the Allon Plan.

In June, due to inquiries made by Sarid, knowledge of the settlement became public. Sarid asked how a settlement could be established without a government decision and without anyone knowing anything about it.¹²³ The truth of the matter is that the decision to allow the settlers to remain in Ofra was taken by Peres¹²⁴ - who also ordered the Defence Ministry to support the settlers' effort.¹²⁵ Peres had previously met with members of Gush-Emunim and had expressed some support for their ideals.¹²⁶ Additionally, Peres believed in a Functional Solution and thus saw no problem with Jews settling in the Occupied Territories. Moreover, Peres believed that by supporting Gush-Emunim he was acquiring potential political support for the future.¹²⁷ Peres's decision was partly based on his continued rivalry with Rabin, but,

¹²⁰ Ibid Page 290.

¹²¹ YTA/15Galili/46/2/2/52/Letter from Galili to the Defence Ministry/29.4.1975.

¹²² Interview with Yadlin.

¹²³ Gorenberg, The Accidental Empire Page 317.

¹²⁴ Interview with Hillel.

¹²⁵ Netzer, Life Story Pages 290-292.

¹²⁶ Bar Zohar, Phoenix Page 429.

¹²⁷ Interview with S.Hillel.

his flirtation with Gush-Emunim was also a testament to the impact New Zionism ideology had on his views.

Peres' decision to allow Gush-Emunim to establish a working camp in Ofra proved to be a turning point for Gush-Emunim and for the government. It signalled the first time in which a settlement was created without the government's approval or knowledge. In addition, it was the first settlement established outside of the government's designated area, in a heavily populated region of Samaria. Peres' decision shattered the concept that the government had a comprehensive settlement or territorial policy based on the Allon Plan. According to an assessment by the US Embassy, 'the rational decision-making process, in regard to settlement creation, operates creakingly if at all'. This 'policy vacuum' provided Peres with the opportunity of 'keeping one foot within official guidelines and one in the pro-settlement camp on the right'.¹²⁸ The cases of Ofra and Ma'ale Adumim clearly indicate that the Rabin government did not have a coherent and comprehensive long-term policy regarding the Occupied Territories, in general, and the West Bank, in particular.

¹²⁸ NARA/D750215-0635/Cable from the Tel Aviv Embassy to the State Department/20.6.1975.

Chapter Two

Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula

The Rabin government's lack of long-term planning in regard to the Occupied Territories did not inhibit it from pursuing a second interim agreement with Egypt. The idea of a second interim agreement was supported by most ministers, including Allon, Peres and Rabin.¹ However, despite broad ministerial support, and before being asked to do so by Kissinger, the government was unable to take a firm decision on the matter. In a secret memo, Galili pointed out that an interim agreement with Egypt was both feasible and desirable. He explained that such an agreement would usher in a period of de-facto peace and ensure that psychological and political conditions which are essential for peace were attained. Only after a sustained period of stability was achieved could Israel examine the possibility of pursuing a permanent peace agreement. Until such an agreement was signed, Galili advised the government to hold on to as much of Sinai as possible in order to provide Egypt with an incentive to strive for peace.² Ministers raised concerns regarding a second interim agreement. They wanted to ensure that the agreement would include an end to the state of war between the sides and act as a prelude to peace agreements.³ Additionally, they feared that Israel might be required to withdraw from the strategically important Sinai passes and from Abu-Rhodis - the main oil field in Sinai.⁴ Lastly, some were sceptical about the real value of the American and international security guarantees.⁵

Israel's main objectives were to ensure an end to the state of war, to secure free naval passage and a non-belligerency agreement. In return, Israel was willing to withdraw to a strip of land 30-50 km wide along the 1948 international border, i.e. not including the Gaza Strip. In addition, Israel would continue to hold a continuous strip of land from Sharm El-Sheikh to Eilat.⁶ The negotiations with Egypt proved harder than expected as Sadat was unwilling to sign a non-belligerency agreement. As a result,

¹ Interview with A.Yadlin.

² YTA/15Galili/32/4/5/Gallili's Plan/26.8.1974.

³ ISA/7044/17-a/Government Decision/10.11.1974.

⁴ Kieval, *Party Politics in Israel* Pages 113-114.

⁵ ISA/7044/17-a/Dosseir (written by the Attorney General) regarding interim Agreements/7.10.1974.

⁶ ISA/7044/17-a/Foreign Policy Paper in preparation for the Geneva Conference/(no date)

Israel refused to pursue an interim agreement based on an Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai passes and Abu-Rhodis without achieving any of its objectives.⁷ Kissinger, acknowledging that Rabin was in a difficult position internationally, domestically and within his government, offered extensive American guarantees.⁸ Kissinger warned Israel that its refusal to sign an agreement would result in delays to its military and financial aid.⁹

The US agreed to provide Israel with military assistance, economic aid, oil supplies and diplomatic assurances. These assurances included: a US agreement not to recognise or negotiate with the PLO, an assurance not to press Israel for an interim agreement with Jordan and an assurance that it had not adopted a position regarding the final border between Israel and Syria.¹⁰ Additionally, Kissinger elicited an agreement from Sadat to provide Israel with free non-military naval passage through the Suez Canal. Only after the US agreed to provide Israel with extensive guarantees and assurances did the government agree to sign a second interim agreement. Some members of the Coalition, however, remained sceptical; in the Knesset vote on the agreement several Rafi members, including Dayan, and the young guard of the NRP, voted against.

The second interim agreement with Egypt revealed the extent to which America's Middle East policies affected Israel's territorial decision-making process. The agreement proved how important American guarantees and assurances were to Israel. Arguably, the main driving force behind the diplomatic effort was the American administration. According to Maoz, the interim agreements with Egypt and Syria shared similar characteristics: the agreements were in line with American Middle East policy and Israel only signed them in response to US incentives and under American diplomatic pressure.¹¹ In other words, despite the importance of the agreement to Israel, the government was unable to work towards its own objectives without direct US involvement. Furthermore, due to its fragmented decision-making process, domestic constraints, and weak leadership, the government was unable to take the

⁷ Rabin, *The Rabin Memoirs* Page 278.

⁸ Henry Kissinger, *Days of Renewal* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1999), Page 458.

⁹ Kieval *Party Politics in Israel* Page 116.

¹⁰ Quandt, *Peace Process* Pages 168-170.

¹¹ Maoz, *Defending The Holy Land* Page 420.

necessary decisions in regard to the Sinai Peninsula without being pressured, provided with incentives and rewarded with guarantees and assurances by the American administration. In fact, Rabin managed to reach a consensual decision on the matter only in response to American prodding.

The interim agreement was in line with Israeli interests, as it did not require it to withdraw from areas it regarded as essential for its national security. Despite agreeing to negotiate with Egypt without preconditions, successive Israeli governments had, since the Oral Law, agreed to hold certain areas in Sinai indefinitely.¹² This stemmed from Israel's desire to maintain strategic depth and ensure free naval passage through the straits of Tiran.¹³ Therefore, successive Israeli governments concluded that they could ill afford to withdraw from the Rafah plains and Sharm El-Sheikh. Instead, they chose to invest in settling and developing these areas in anticipation that they would remain under Israel's control.¹⁴ Under Rabin, Israel strengthened its presence in the Rafah plains by creating a dense and continuous line of settlements from Yamit to the Eshkol region east of the Gaza Strip.¹⁵ This helped Israel to control the Gaza Strip by surrounding it with Jewish settlements. It is important to note that the idea of controlling the Gaza Strip was linked to Israel's presence in the Rafah plains. Arguably, Israel had no intention of holding the former without the latter.¹⁶ The Gaza Strip was the price Israel was willing to pay in order to secure strategic depth in the Sinai Peninsula. However, it is important to note that, as with other regions, there was some disagreement over where the future border with Egypt should be and, in the absence of a clear decision, the line kept shifting.¹⁷ A clear example of this was the settlement of Nahal Sinai and the government's decision to establish an additional outpost near Abu-Agheila.

¹² Interview with Hillel.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ ISA/6692/15-c/Memo written by the Government's Secretary/18.10.1976.

¹⁶ Interview with Hillel.

¹⁷ Demant, Ploughshares into Swords Page 477.

Interim Agreements

In the run-up to the second interim agreement with Egypt, the Rabin government appeared to be willing to consider further territorial compromises with Syria and Jordan. This was partly the result of a change in public perception. After the initial interim agreement with Egypt and Syria, and according to the polls, the majority of Israelis were in favour of territorial compromises, though not a return to the 1967 borders.¹⁸ The government envisioned further interim agreement, with Jordan and Syria, based on an end to the state of war and further Israeli withdrawals. With regards to Jordan, the interim agreement would have been based on Israel's continued presence in the Jordan Valley and on the West Bank mountain ranges. On the matter of Jerusalem, Israel was only willing to discuss religious and administrative arrangements. Additionally, any agreement with Jordan would have necessitated either new elections or a referendum, as promised to the NRP. In regard to Syria, Israel was willing to withdraw from an area encompassing up to a third of the Golan Heights. Further Israeli withdrawals from the Golan Heights would have depended on an extended period of calm of 10-15 years, and would have been based on the signing of peace agreements.¹⁹ In March 1976, the government voted to accept the idea of interim agreements with Jordan and Syria based on a territorial compromise.²⁰ This followed several months of intense political debates in which the government appeared reluctant to vote on further territorial withdrawals. However, although the government decided in favour of interim agreements, it did not specify the exact nature of the territorial compromise it was proposing or its future relationship with the territories it planned to hold,²¹ so as not to create a schism within the Coalition, i.e. with the NRP.

According to Allon, Syria was unwilling to pursue an interim agreement with Israel. Israel offered an agreement that included an end to the state of war, transparency over the intentions of both states for Lebanon, and an additional Israeli withdrawal, albeit a small one.²² According to Yadin, the government discussed different approaches,

¹⁸ Seliktar, New Zionism Page 162.

¹⁹ ISA/7044/17-a/Foreign Policy Paper/(no date)

²⁰ LPA/2-021-1977-133/Record of Labour Party's Political Committee Meeting//14.1.1977/Pages 8-9.

²¹ ISA/YAOH/Meeting 18/Pages 30-31.

²² Ibid Pages 27-29.

including leaving Israeli settlements under Syrian control as long as the Golan Heights remained demilitarised. However, he confirms that Syria was not interested in an interim agreement with Israel.²³ Israel pursued an interim agreement because it knew Syria would not agree to a peace agreement for less than a full Israeli withdrawal from all the Occupied Territories and a solution to the Palestinian problem.²⁴ According to Kissinger, there was no progress on the diplomatic front because of: internal Arab divisions; the Lebanese civil war; reservations about what Israel could actually deliver; and the fact that nothing could happen until after the American elections of 1976.²⁵ In addition, the Labour government was unable to push for far-reaching and extensive interim agreements without risking its narrow parliamentary base. Israel was thus left with territories - parts of the Golan Heights and the areas in the West Bank not included in the Allon Plan - which it did not plan on holding and from which it was willing to withdraw. This provided Gush-Emunim with an opportunity to hijack the government's territorial policies.

Sebastia

The international stature of the PLO increased dramatically after the Rabat Summit. It was invited to join the discussions in the UN on the future of Palestine and was offered to become a permanent observer. In the UN, the PLO supported efforts to denounce Israel and banish it from the organisation.²⁶ On the 10th of November, the attempts by the PLO and the Arab states to de-legitimise Israel reached their pinnacle with a General Assembly resolution equating Zionism with Racism. In the MSC, Galili called for the establishment of 30 new settlements in 18 months as a response to this resolution.²⁷ Nevertheless, it was Gush-Emunim who took the opportunity to protest against the resolution by settling in the central region of Samaria, in a heavily populated area outside of the national consensus.

²³ Interview with Yadlin.

²⁴ ISA/YAOH/Meeting 18/Pages 27-29.

²⁵ Kissinger, Days of Upheaval Pages 1051-1056.

²⁶ Avi Beker, The United Nations and Israel: From Recognition to Reprehension (Toronto, Lexington Books, 1988), Page 84.

²⁷ Netzer, Life Story Page 293.

Back in October 1974, Gush-Emunim presented Galili and Rabin with their settlement plans. They requested that the government allow them to settle in the central region of Samaria, in the vicinity of Nablus. After being refused permission, the group attempted several times to settle illegally in the area, only to be forcibly removed by the army.²⁸ On the 29th of November 1975, Gush-Emunim members, along with hundreds of supporters, arrived at the old railway station in Sebastia - the location of the capital of the biblical kingdom of Israel - about 10km from Nablus. According to Gush-Emunim, their settlement attempt was in response to, and influenced by, the Rabat Summit and the resolution equating Zionism with Racism.²⁹ The government voted unanimously to remove the settlers, but ministers decided to wait until after the conclusion of a meeting of the leaders of the Jewish faith. The meeting, a show of solidarity with the Zionist cause, by leaders of the world Jewry, opened in Jerusalem on the 3rd of December.³⁰

On the 3rd of December, in a meeting of Mapam's political committee, members argued that by not removing the settlers immediately the government was effectively legitimising their attempt. There were calls for an ultimatum to be given to Rabin, regarding Mapam's participation in the government. In the end the committee decided to provide the government with more time to deal with the situation.³¹

The government's pause was exploited by thousands of Gush-Emunim supporters who joined the settlement attempt; amongst them were members of the NRP, MKs from the Opposition, leading Rabbis and even Rabin's special security advisor Ariel Sharon. Sharon appeared to be supporting the project while advising Rabin on how to deal with it.³² Because of the large number of supporters, and the delicate nature of the situation, concerns were raised by ministers, and by the Chief of Staff, regarding the possibility of bloodshed.³³ This prompted ministers to search for a solution that would remove the settlers without violence.³⁴ Additionally, the NRP exerted intense

²⁸ Admoni, *Decade of Discretion* Page 102.

²⁹ Shafat, *Gush-Emunim* Pages 131-132.

³⁰ Demant, *Ploughshares into Swords* Page 378.

³¹ YYA/(2)155.90/899/Record of Mapam's Political Committee Meeting/3.12.1975.

³² Eldar, Zertal, *Lords of the Land* Pages 72-73.

³³ Netzer, *Life Story* Page 293.

³⁴ Interview with Hillel.

pressure on Rabin to find a compromise.³⁵ While ministers debated the matter, Peres took it upon himself to negotiate a compromise, without consulting the government.³⁶ Peres' compromise was later approved because it was assumed that once the demonstration subsided, the government would gradually remove the settlers.³⁷ The compromise reached with Gush-Emunim allowed for 30 men - this later became 30 families - to relocate temporarily to the Kadom army base nearby, and be employed by the army, until the government decided on their fate.³⁸

On the 10th of December, Mapam's Political Committee agreed on a resolution describing the Sebastia incident as an attempt to create facts on the ground in order to realise the dream of greater Israel and hinder peace. It called the compromise with the settlers a dangerous precedent of yielding to illegal acts. Mapam's committee criticised the government's lame attempt to remove the settlers and concluded that the whole incident had hurt its credibility and authority.³⁹ Nevertheless, Mapam chose to remain in the Coalition.⁴⁰

It took the government almost six months to decide not to establish a settlement in the Sebastia area. The decision called for the relocation of the settlers to a suitable site in accordance with government decisions. Furthermore, it decided that no action should be taken in the area to imply the transformation of the temporary camp into a permanent one.⁴¹ This decision was promoted by the fact that the settlers were doing just that. In an official report, the Defence Ministry listed 23 families, 30-40 single people, and 45 children living in the camp. The report stated that the Defence Ministry was willing to establish several small factories, in order to employ the settlers, in jobs related to the defence industry.⁴²

On the 1st of June, Rabin requested that all of the settlers' activities in the Kadom camp be in accordance with the government's decision.⁴³ Earlier that day, Galili

³⁵ Demant, Ploughshares into Swords Pages 388-389.

³⁶ Interview with Shem-Tov.

³⁷ Interview with Hillel.

³⁸ Bar Zohar, Phoenix Pages 431-432.

³⁹ YYA/(2)155.90/899/Record of Mapam's Political Committee Meeting/10.12.1975/Page 50.

⁴⁰ Interview with Shem-Tov.

⁴¹ Interview with Yadlin, Interview with Hillel.

⁴² ISA/7037/11-a/Letter from the Defence Ministry to Rabin/27.4.1976.

⁴³ ISA/7037/11-a/Letter from Rabin to Peres/1.6.1976.

notified Rabin that some of the activities in the camp ‘might be’ contravening the government’s decision.⁴⁴ In response, Peres claimed that the activities alluded to, e.g. new structures being built, employment by the army, building of a synagogue, were all done in the period before the government’s decision and therefore did not contradict the government’s decision.⁴⁵ Despite Peres’ response, Galili informed Rabin that activities contravening the government’s decision were still being carried out.⁴⁶ Galili authorised Yehiel Admoni to offer the settlers alternative settlement sites, among them Mescha: a site not yet approved on the western edge of the West Bank.⁴⁷ The settlers, however, refused to relocate; they explained that there were other members of Gush-Emunim who would be glad to settle there. Admoni wrote back to Galili informing him of the settlers’ negative response and claimed that there was nothing more he could do.⁴⁸

On the 20th of July, Shem-Tov wrote to the government’s secretary demanding to know whether the government had invested any money in the camp. Furthermore, he asked whether or not a factory was established there and whether or not it employed the settlers. Additionally, he inquired whether any of these actions contradicted the government’s decision.⁴⁹ On the 27th of July, Netzer replied to Shem-Tov detailing what had happened in Kadom. The settlers were initially moved into a prescribed area in the camp and several tents and sheds were provided for them. At the request of the Defence Minister, and the Prime Minister, 30 caravans were borrowed from the Jewish Agency to provide for temporary accommodation. An area within the perimeter of the camp was allocated to the caravans and for several additional ‘temporary structures’ to serve as study rooms and toilets. These structures were connected to running water, sewage and electricity. The entire operation was done by the army, and the settlers, and was paid for by the Defence Ministry. Additionally, the settlers requested permission to establish several additional ‘temporary structures’, e.g. a mess hall, a synagogue, a mikvah and a small factory. The settlers were given

⁴⁴ YTA/15Galili/4/10/47/Memo from Galili to Rabin/1.6.1976.

⁴⁵ ISA/7037/11-a/Memo from Defence Ministry to Rabin/(no date).

⁴⁶ YTA/15Galili/4/10/49/Memo from Galili to Rabin/15.6.1976.

⁴⁷ YTA/15Galili/4/10/48/Memo from Galili to Rabin/13.6.1976.

⁴⁸ YTA/15Galili/4/10/52/Memo from Admoni to Galili/1.7.1976.

⁴⁹ ISA/7037/11-a/Letter from Shem-Tov to the Government’s Secretary/26.7.1976.

permission to establish these, on the condition that it was done at their own expense. The Defence Ministry did not provide any funds for these additional structures.⁵⁰

On the 9th of August, Tourism Minister Moshe Kol wrote to Rabin to inquire when the government was planning to implement its decision.⁵¹ This was followed by a letter from Aharon Barak (the government's Attorney General), who wrote in response to the settlers' demand for access to state education. Barak argued that the government should provide education for the settlers' children. However, because Israel's law did not apply to the Occupied Territories and as there was no legal settlement in the area, the government was not obliged to provide for education there, since doing so might have implied the transformation of the settlement into a permanent one. Israel, therefore, should provide access to state education outside of the Occupied Territories. In this way the government could fulfil its obligation to the settlers' children without changing its stance on Kadom.⁵²

Unable to resolve the problem and unwilling to confront the settlers or risk the dissolution of the coalition, the government decided to leave the matter of Kadom until after the elections.⁵³ The story of Kadom illustrated the difficulty of operating on the basis of consensual politics, within a broad coalition, on matters of national importance and controversy. It also indicated the level of support received by Gush-Emunim from elements within the Coalition. According to Yadlin, 'Sebastia was the government's submission to Gush-Emunim'.⁵⁴

The episode also provided clear indication of the hostile relations between Peres and Rabin, which helped to fragment the government's decision-making process. On the one hand, Rabin could not afford to dismiss Peres, because of factional politics, even though the latter was undermining the government. On the other hand, Peres' behaviour was partly in response to the disrespect shown to him by Rabin, in particular Rabin's decision to bypass Peres by appointing Sharon as a special advisor

⁵⁰ ISA/7037/11-a/Letter from Netzer to Shem-Tov/27.7.1976.

⁵¹ ISA/7037/11-a/Letter from Kol to Rabin/9.8.1976.

⁵² ISA/7037/11-a/Memo from Barak to Rabin/31.8.1976.

⁵³ Interview with Hillel.

⁵⁴ Interview with Yadlin.

on security matters.⁵⁵ The Kadom episode was followed by mutual recriminations. Rabin blamed the UN resolution, the fear of bloodshed and Peres;⁵⁶ he went as far as hinting that Peres served as a Trojan horse for Gush-Emunim.⁵⁷ In fact, Peres's actions cannot be fully understood without taking into account his relationship with Gush-Emunim and the ideological similarities they shared. There is no doubt that Peres's actions were influenced by his association with individuals and groups linked to New Zionism.

Most ministers, with the exception of the NRP, also blamed Peres for the government's capitulation.⁵⁸ Peres, however, blamed Rabin for undermining him - Rabin was apparently negotiating with the settlers through Sharon at the same time⁵⁹ - and the Chief of Staff for not wanting to remove the settlers; the army in-turn blamed the police.⁶⁰ More than anything else, Kadom exposed the inability or unwillingness of the dovish ministers - Mapam's in particular - to hold the government to account.⁶¹ Shem-Tov described his experience during the affair as a 'lone voice in the wilderness'.⁶² Yet, according to Hillel, during government meetings, Shem-Tov would deliver his condemnatory speeches, ministers would pretend to listen, and then the meeting would proceed as normal.⁶³

Settlement Policy under Rabin

Israel's early settlement approach was loosely based on a military-strategic concept. The government perceived the Occupied Territories, with the exception of Jerusalem, as serving either a strategic or a bargaining function, i.e. an Instrumental view. Therefore, territories were designated either as dispensable or indispensable; the Allon Plan served to distinguish the latter from the former. The indispensable

⁵⁵ Matti Golan, The Road To Peace: A Biography of Shimon Peres (New York, Warner Books, 1989) Pages 133-136.

⁵⁶ Rabin, The Rabin Memoirs Page 281.

⁵⁷ Bar Zohar, Phoenix Page 432.

⁵⁸ Interview with Hillel, interview with Yadlin.

⁵⁹ Bar Zohar, Phoenix Pages 432-433.

⁶⁰ Demant, Ploughshares into Swords Pages 382-383.

⁶¹ Interview with Aloni.

⁶² Interview with Shem-Tov.

⁶³ Interview with Hillel.

territories included the Jordan Valley, the Rafah Plains, the Golan Heights and Sharm El-Sheikh. This Instrumental view of the territories changed with the establishment of Gush-Etzion, and later Hebron and Kiryat Arba, and their inclusion in the Allon Plan, as these settlements did not serve any strategic purpose. This change (from an Instrumental to a Normative view) was further enhanced with the arrival of Gush-Emunim and the growing ideological importance, i.e. New Zionism, attached to the territories by the NRP and the Likud. However, the blame for deviating from the Allon Plan, and from the Instrumental view, was also due to the government's own actions, and the work of Galili as head of the MSC.⁶⁴

The Israeli settlements and army bases in the Jordan Valley provide us with a clear example. The Jordan valley was perceived as a strategically important area and as integral to the Allon Plan. During negotiations with Jordan, successive governments refused to compromise over this area. According to Netzer, the clearest indication of the Israel's settlement approach was in regards to the Jordan Valley.⁶⁵ In reality, however, the settlements established in the Jordan Valley were not as extensive or developed as intended; these were small agricultural settlements with 44 residents each on average.⁶⁶ It is unlikely that Israel based its security concept on these settlements. Even on a strategic level, the main army bases, and troop concentrations, were not in the area but, on the mountain ranges, in accordance with Dayan's 'Mobile Defence' concept. Additionally, Rabin made it clear that Israel would not relinquish its military control over those mountain ranges.⁶⁷ In essence, Israel was holding on to both the Jordan Valley and the mountain ranges even though, it stated that, from a military-strategic perspective, it needed only one of these. In short, it seems that the government was not operating according to the Allon Plan and was not acting purely on the basis of its strategic requirements. This lack of a clear and comprehensive long-term plan was acknowledged by Galili. On the 8th of June 1976, Galili informed the MSC that he did not intend to present a comprehensive settlement plan. Instead, he proposed that the committee discuss and decide on settlement issues in an incremental manner, in response to government decisions, as and when required.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Demant, *Ploughshares into Swords* Page 472.

⁶⁵ YTA/15Netzer/4/3/Confidential Army Interview with Netzer/9.11.1972/Page 9.

⁶⁶ Harris, *Taking Root* Page 113.

⁶⁷ LPA/2-021-1977-133/Record of the Labour Party's Political Committee Meeting/21.1.1977/Page 10.

⁶⁸ YTA15Galili/4/10/51/Memo from Galili to Rabin/27.6.1976.

This lack of long-term planning, however, provided an opportunity for new ideas and plans to be tested.

In January 1976, the government was presented with Avraham Wahman's Double Column plan. Wahman claimed that Israel's decision not to decide was a mistake and was a result of 'Israel not knowing what it wanted'.⁶⁹ The plan was an attempt to build on, and expand, the Allon Plan. The plan called for two columns of continuous settlements: a western one along Israel's coastal area to the Rafah plains (and from there to Eilat) and an eastern one from the Golan Heights to Sharm El-Sheikh. According to the plan the two columns would be connected by a series of roads that would intersect the West Bank. The plan called for the settlement of the Jordan Valley, the Sinai Desert and the Dead Sea region, not for security reasons, but as 'a necessary physical part of the state'.⁷⁰ The Palestinian population would be cast aside to live in autonomous areas in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip enveloped by Israel.⁷¹ The Labour Party decided to adopt some of the settlement ideas in the plan, but did not accept it as an expansion to the Allon Plan. The idea of expanding and strengthening the settlements in the Jordan Valley and the Rafah plains were clearly within the government's consensus, less so the settlement of the Sinai Desert. However, the idea of closing the Jericho corridor was not acceptable as it would have closed the door on the Jordanian option.⁷²

The second important plan to be considered was Peres' idea of thickening Israel's settlements on both sides of the green line, in order to 'enlarge Israel's tight hips'.⁷³ The areas along the green line were mostly uninhabited and marginal, and it was agreed that these were areas Israel should continue holding on to indefinitely.⁷⁴ Several new Nahal outposts were created towards the end of 1976 and the beginning of 1977 in accordance with this new approach: Sal'it, Reihan, Elkana and Ariel. It was widely understood that these would be transformed at a later stage into civilian

⁶⁹ Demant, *Ploughshares into Swords* Page 516.

⁷⁰ Admoni, *Decade of Discretion* Page 170.

⁷¹ Demant, *Ploughshares into Swords* Page 518.

⁷² YTA/15Galili/4/10/56/Memo from Galili to Rabin/28.10.1976.

⁷³ Alpher Joseph *And the Wolf Shall Dwell with the Wolf: The Settlers and the Palestinians* (Tel-Aviv, Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2001) (Hebrew), Page 23.

⁷⁴ Interview with Hillel.

ones.⁷⁵ Additionally, by controlling these areas, Israel controlled the region's main water aquifers, which affected the water resources of both Israel and the West Bank.⁷⁶ This also added a new dimension to Israel's territorial policy.⁷⁷

The idea of settling along the green line was raised by Gush-Emunim and was supported by the NRP. A group associated with Gush-Emunim had lobbied the government and the NRP for the right to settle in Mescha for several years.⁷⁸ Additionally, the area was identified by Galili and Admoni, after they were approached by the group, as suitable for settling, as part of Israel's efforts to thicken the green line. Galili explained to the group that, once a decision has been taken by the government, and the logistical problems had been overcome, they would be allowed to settle there.⁷⁹ Under pressure from Gush-Emunim and from the NRP to authorise this settlement, Galili wrote to Hammer explaining that attempts to forcibly settle in the area were unnecessary as the delay in settling the area was due to technical and logistical problems. Galili asked Hammer not to publicise the arrangement as this would hinder the project.⁸⁰ The Mescha outpost was established two weeks before the elections and settled by the group; the new settlement was called Elkana.

Elkana was not the only place in which the government either gave in to or cooperated with Gush-Emunim. In late 1976, following a request by Peres, and supported by Allon and Galili, the government approved the creation of a working camp in Ofra, a move reminiscent of the early settlement period of the Golan Heights. Furthermore, Galili informed the government of a proposal to transform Ma'ale Adumim into a permanent settlement.⁸¹ The Allon Plan was clearly no longer the driving force behind Israel's settlement activities and even Allon was supporting projects outside of its scope. Israel's settlement activities under Rabin demonstrated the gradual shift that had occurred in Israel's territorial policy from an Instrumental

⁷⁵ Demant, *Ploughshares into Swords* Pages 494-495.

⁷⁶ Admoni, *Decade of Discretion* Page 178.

⁷⁷ Gordon, *Israel's Occupation* Page 127.

⁷⁸ YTA/15Galili/2/2/114/Letter from Galili to the Mescha group/19.10.1975.

⁷⁹ YTA/15Galili/4/10/53/Memo from Galili to Rabin/11.7.1976.

⁸⁰ YTA/ 15Galili/4/10/66/Summary of Galili's Conversation with Hamar/1.3.1977.

⁸¹ YTA/15Galili/4/10/58/Memo from Galili to Rabin/22.12.1976.

into a Normative approach; this can be attributed to, among others, the impact of New Zionism.

The settlement activity of the Rabin government during its final year resulted from three developing trends. First, due to the lack of meaningful negotiations and international pressure, areas that were previously outside of the national consensus were labelled 'vacant'. Some of these were incorporated into the national consensus because of political pressure from the NRP and Gush-Emunim - in accordance with their vision of Greater Israel - as well as the growing ministerial appetite for redefining Israel's future borders unilaterally.⁸² Secondly, dovish ministers - in particular Mapam's - appeared unable to influence the territorial decision-making process. This stemmed from the lack of a dovish faction in the Labour Party and from Mapam's unwillingness to further weaken the government. Thus, in an effort to bolster Rabin's government, Mapam was allowing it to act with impunity. Lastly, it became clear that the US would not put undue pressure on the government regarding the creation of settlements. This was despite the fact that the American administration was fully aware of Israel's settlement activities,⁸³ and that it viewed these activities as illegal under international law.⁸⁴

The Palestinian Option

Despite the Rabat Summit resolution, Israel continued to view the Jordanian option as the most desirable one for the West Bank. However, Jordan's weakness in the diplomatic arena, and the growing international clout of the PLO, prompted the government to re-examine its approach towards the West Bank. The solution favoured by officials was the establishment of limited Palestinian self-rule (administrative rule), that would be in line with the Allon Plan, while not endangering the viability of the Jordanian Option.⁸⁵ This limited self-rule would be implemented by expanding the role of the mayors and by creating additional administrative roles for the locals in

⁸² Interview with Aloni.

⁸³ NARA/D570405-0029/Cable from the Tel Aviv Embassy to the State Department/20.11.1975.

⁸⁴ Douglas Little, American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945 (London, I.B.Tauris, 2003), Page 288.

⁸⁵ YTA/15Allon/11/6/2/Allon's Proposal for Self Rule/26.10.1975.

the West Bank, and to a lesser degree, in the Gaza Strip.⁸⁶ The move towards Palestinian self-rule was also influenced by international pressure and growing calls from within the American administration for Israel to pursue a Palestinian-based approach. A prime example was a report which was presented to the US Congress, regarding the centrality of the Palestinian problem to the Arab-Israeli conflict, by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Harold Saunders,⁸⁷ which was followed by another report from the Brookings Institute along the same lines. These reports were taken very seriously in Israel as it was feared they might entail a change in US policy.⁸⁸ Israel's concern was not misplaced; these reports were later adopted by the Carter administration.

According to Shlomo Gazit, Israel's decision in late 1975 to move towards Palestinian self-rule, was a move too little to late due to a number of social changes that had occurred in the territories.⁸⁹ These were reflected in the changing attitude of the Palestinian population towards Israel. The new Israeli-Palestinian relations were directly linked to the prolonged occupation, the worsening economic situation in the territories, as a result of Israel's recession and high inflation in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War, and Israel's settlement policies.⁹⁰

Israel's officials believed that the most effective way to promote limited self-rule would be through new local elections. It was hoped that these would promote a new leadership amongst Palestinians. This was despite growing fears among the Intelligence services that the new elections would be used by the PLO to strengthen its grip on the West Bank and remove pro-Jordanian notables. Indeed, the Intelligence services predicated accurately the outcome of the 1976 elections; it was a resounding victory for the PLO. Long-serving pro-Jordanian mayors, e.g. Al-Jabri in Hebron, were replaced by younger pro-PLO nationalists.⁹¹ The elections caused great distress in Israel and Rabin was quick to lay the blame at Peres's door.⁹² On the 28th of December 1976, a report by, the former head of AMAN, Yehoshafat Harkabi stated

⁸⁶ ISA/7022/3-a/Letter from Government's Secretary to ministers/15.4.1975.

⁸⁷ Little, *American Orientalism* Page 288.

⁸⁸ ISA/7027/7-a/Foreign Ministry's Analysis of the Saunders Report/16.11.1975.

⁸⁹ Gazit, *Trapped* Page 190.

⁹⁰ *Ibid* Page 82.

⁹¹ Lukacs, *Israel, Jordan and the Peace Process* Page 143.

⁹² Bar Zohar, *Phoenix* Page 433.

that it was very unlikely that a new Palestinian leadership acceptable to Israel would arise.⁹³ Despite the election result, the government was unwilling to consider a Palestinian option, based on the PLO. The government went as far as making it an offence for Israeli citizens to contact members of Palestinian terrorist organizations, i.e. the PLO.⁹⁴ Additionally, attempts, by Mapam and the Independent Liberal Party, to leave all diplomatic options open by promoting dialogue with any Palestinian group that was willing to recognise Israel's right to exist and renounce terrorism were not successful.⁹⁵

Approaching the 1977 general elections, the government was left in a difficult situation. Violent incidents and civil disobedience in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were on the rise, and Israel's settlement policies were only worsening the situation; in other words (and in contrast to Dayan's principles of non-intervention and non-visibility), a visible occupation and increased Israeli intervention in Palestinian economic, social and political life. This, in addition to Israel's lack of a long-term diplomatic solution, made the job of maintaining a stable and 'benevolent' occupation extremely difficult.⁹⁶ Israel supported a limited Palestinian self-rule in the hope that a new leadership might emerge. However, this was undermining Jordan's position in the West Bank and, as a result, complicated Israel's negotiations with Jordan. Nevertheless, negotiations with Jordan continued on the premise of a territorial compromise based on a variant of the Allon Plan. This in turn was in complete contradiction to the activities of Peres in the Occupied Territories. While Israel debated the merits of the Palestinian and Jordanian options, Peres was busy implementing Dayan's Functional Solution. Thus, in the absence of a guiding policy, Israel was advancing simultaneously in three different directions.

The 1977 Elections

On the eve of the 1977 elections, the Labour Party's political committee held a series of discussions in order to decide on the new electoral platform. Party Chairman

⁹³ Gazit, Trapped Page 81.

⁹⁴ YYA/Victor Shem-Tov 87-95/1/2/Governmnet Decision/7.11.1976.

⁹⁵ YYA/Victor Shem-Tov 87-95/1/2/Letter from Shem-Tov to Galili/8.9.1979.

⁹⁶ Gazit, Trapped Pages 85-86.

Danny Rosolio called for a meaningful debate on the merits of the Fourteen-Point document as the basis for the new platform. However, party members rarely discussed the document; instead they used the occasion to debate Israel's policies and long-term approach towards the Occupied Territories. Several issues were discussed and debated in the committee: interim agreements, future borders, the preferred West Bank approach, coalition promises made to the NRP and the party's platform. According to Rabinowitz, the main issue facing the party was what to offer in return for an interim agreement and whether this should be included in the platform.⁹⁷ There was a realisation within the party that further territorial compromises would be required. Ofer called on the party to face-up to the fact that it needed to take very hard decisions regarding the territorial issue.⁹⁸ Rabin declared that the party was willing to accept territorial compromises, but would not agree to return to the 1967 borders. He went on to say that the main reason peace had not been achieved was due to 'the other side' not being ready.⁹⁹ The reason behind the party's reluctance to return to those borders was, according to Yariv, based on the perception that the Arab world wanted a return to the situation that prevailed before the Six Day War, with the addition of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.¹⁰⁰ Dayan proposed that the party inform the electorate that the Arab states were offering peace agreements in return for a full Israeli withdrawal; a price the Labour Party was refusing to pay. Dayan, therefore, proposed asking the electorate directly whether they approved of this approach.¹⁰¹

The main areas of disagreement were the political future of the Golan Heights, the Sinai Peninsula and the West Bank. There was hardly any reference to the future status of Jerusalem or the Gaza Strip, even though the party never adopted a clear approach towards the latter. While the party was moving towards accepting a territorial compromise in the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula, albeit without agreeing on its scope, it remained deeply divided over the political future of the West Bank, so much so that it could not even define its preferred approach. Therefore, there was a fear, according to Galili, that, because of factional politics and the controversial

⁹⁷ LPA/2-021-1977-133/Record of Labour Party's Political Committee Meeting/21.1.1977/Page 18.

⁹⁸ LPA/2-021-1977-133/Political Committee Meeting/31.12.1976/Page 11.

⁹⁹ Ibid Pages 2-3.

¹⁰⁰ LPA/2-021-1977-133/Record of the Labour Party's Conference/24.2.1977/Page 68.

¹⁰¹ LPA/2-021-1977-133/Political Committee Meeting/14.1.1977/Pages 22-23.

nature of the territories, the final platform would not be accepted by the entire party.¹⁰²

The Sinai Peninsula

Some members appeared unconvinced by Sadat's drive for peace and the need for substantial territorial compromises. Meir referred sarcastically to Sadat as a moderate: 'We give him the oil fields - he takes, we move beyond the passes - he takes, what a man of peace!'¹⁰³ However, it was apparent that a majority within the party supported a third interim agreement with Egypt based on further Israeli withdrawals. The main question was the scale of these withdrawals and whether or not Israel intended to hold on to certain areas. Hillel complained that he did not know the party's position on Sinai. He added that the party was afraid of saying what it is that it wanted: 'We must say that there are areas [in Sinai] from which we will not withdraw, in which we plan to continue settling and developing.'¹⁰⁴ Rabin stated that Israel would be required to withdraw from a large portion of Sinai in order to achieve peace, but would not agree to return to the 1967 border. According to Rabin, the new borders would be in line with the Oral Law, i.e. Israel would continue to hold the Rafah plains and a continuous strip of land from Sharm El-Sheikh to Eilat. However, Rabin caused some confusion when he stated that Israel 'could leave open for interpretation what exactly is meant by territorial continuity'.¹⁰⁵ The idea that Israel might accept less than was stipulated in the Oral Law and the Allon Plan was raised by Yitzhak Navon. Navon surprised many when he explained that controlling Sharm El-Sheikh did not guarantee free naval passage, as the Egyptians could block naval access further south in Bab El-Mandab.¹⁰⁶

It is clear from the debate that the views expressed in the party were based mainly on the strategic value of the Sinai Peninsula and were consistent with the idea of further withdrawals. In addition, disagreements over the extent of future Israeli withdrawals were directly linked to the level of confidence members had in Sadat's commitment to

¹⁰² LPA/2-021-1977-133/Political Committee Meeting/21.1.1977/Page 18.

¹⁰³ LPA/2-021-1977-133/Political Committee Meeting/31.12.1976/Page 24.

¹⁰⁴ LPA/2-021-1977-133/Page 15.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid Page 5.

¹⁰⁶ LPA/2-021-1977-133/Political Committee Meeting/7.1.1977/Page 12.

peace. According to Yadin, the second interim agreement proved to most ministers that Sadat was bent on peace.¹⁰⁷ It was apparent that, after the second interim agreement, more party members were willing to consider territorial withdrawals beyond the scope of the Allon Plan.

The Golan Heights

There seemed to be a realisation amongst party members that further withdrawals would be necessary in the Golan Heights. Bar-Lev, speaking for many, did not see an opportunity for reaching peace agreements with Syria, but did not rule out the possibility of an interim agreement, which would include territorial concessions in return for a non-belligerency agreement.¹⁰⁸ Allon argued that Israel should advance talks of an interim agreement, since waiting for peace agreements and full normalisation was tantamount to ending diplomatic negotiations.¹⁰⁹ The consensus within the party, as outlined by Rabin, was that Israel ‘will not withdraw from the Golan Heights, but this does not necessarily mean sticking to the current line’.¹¹⁰ The party was able to reach a consensus on the necessity of pursuing an additional interim agreement, but not on the extent of the territorial compromise. The different approach from the Sinai Peninsula reflected a greater level of suspicion towards Syria. Nevertheless, and as with the Sinai Peninsula, the party did not outline the future status of these territories.

The West Bank

More than anything else, the subject of the West Bank exposed the widespread differences within the party, with different ministers and factions pulling in different directions. The ideas expressed and the solutions offered cannot simply be categorised as being based on either a Territorialist Approach, e.g. the Allon Plan, or a Functional Solution. Within the party and even within the different factions, these terms acquired different interpretations. Nowhere was this more apparent than in Ahdut-Ha’avoda. On the one hand, the resolution of Hakibbutz Hameuhad affirmed Ahdut-Ha’avoda’s

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Yadin.

¹⁰⁸ LPA/2-021-1977-133/Political Committee Meeting/7.1.1977/Page 20.

¹⁰⁹ LPA/2-021-1977-133/Political Committee Meeting/14.1.1977/Page 17.

¹¹⁰ LPA/2-021-1977-133/Political Committee Meeting/31.12.1977/Page 4.

support for the Allon Plan and for the continuation of the settlement activities, as the only method of realising the socialist-Zionist ethos. On the other hand, the resolution called for negotiations without preconditions with all Arab states on the basis of territorial compromises.¹¹¹ Additionally, and for the first time, prominent dovish members (Sarid, Eban, Moshe Carmel, Yitzhak Ben-Aharon and Yariv), representing all of the party's factions, joined forces to propose a peace plan.¹¹² This plan reflected a growing movement within the party of breaking up the old factions and replacing them with new ones which were based on political orientation.

In contrast to the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula, the debate regarding the West Bank did not relate purely to strategic and military considerations; the debate was complicated by the invocation of ideological, psychological and religious images. The debate related to members' perceptions of the land of Israel, the Jewish state, Zionism and Palestinian nationalism. Peres - the main proponent of the Functionalist Approach - stated that, while Israel required secure and defensible borders, neither international guarantees nor 'a 14 km wide strip of land' would be able to provide these.¹¹³ Peres explained that the Arabs would never agree to a territorial compromise that did not include Jerusalem. Because Israel would never accept this, he claimed 'I do not believe there is a territorial compromise that will be acceptable to the Arabs'; 'In my view, it is better to pursue a functional and political compromise than a territorial compromise'. Peres asked why it was acceptable to build settlements in Hebron but not elsewhere in the territories.¹¹⁴ The need to elaborate on what was meant by the term Functional Solution, prompted Meir to request a draft that would define 'what we mean when we say a Functional Solution',¹¹⁵ and that such a draft be circulated among members.¹¹⁶ Peres' concerns over the security merits of the Territorialist Approach were also raised by Hillel. According to Hillel, territorial compromises were necessary in the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights but, not in the West Bank: 'There is not enough strategic depth ... any withdrawal from the Jericho region will allow hostile elements into the area'. He argued that the party should stop stuttering on the issue of territorial compromises in the West Bank which,

¹¹¹ LPA/2-021-1977-133/Hakibbutz Hameuhad's Central Committee's Resolution/6.1.1977.

¹¹² LPA/2-021-1977-133/Alternative Peace Plan/27.10.1977.

¹¹³ LPA/2-021-1977-133/Political Committee Meeting/7.1.1977/Page 4.

¹¹⁴ LPA/2-021-1977-133/Page 9.

¹¹⁵ LPA/2-021-1977-133/Page 22.

¹¹⁶ LPA/2-021-1976-232/Paper explaining the Functional Solution/(no date).

according to him, were unnecessary; the solution to the Palestinian problem 'was not east of the Jordan River but west of it'.¹¹⁷

Nonetheless, concerns were raised regarding the Functional Solution. Carmel stated that 'Israel has no desire to rule over the population centres, as this might jeopardise its internal security and its sense of morality'.¹¹⁸ Allon maintained that a Greater Israel solution would necessitate providing full rights to the Palestinian population, which would turn Israel into a bi-national state. However, if Israel decided to annex the territories without providing Palestinians with full rights it would cease to be a democratic state. Allon added that some members of the party were trying to advance a Functional Solution: 'In my opinion, this kind of solution is a new edition or version of the South African approach' and 'the worst of all possible solutions'. According to Allon, the solution to the West Bank had to be based on a negotiated settlement with Jordan.¹¹⁹ Allon asked how it was possible that the party was talking about territorial compromises with Syria but not with Jordan.¹²⁰ By agreeing on the need for a territorial compromise with Jordan 'we are freeing ourselves of a great burden'.¹²¹ Allon stated that Israel did not want a third state between itself and Jordan and therefore, had to agree to a territorial compromise.¹²²

Allon's derision of the Functional Solution was shared by Galili. 'The main reason we favour a territorial compromise in the West Bank' is because 'we do not want to force the population to live under our control'.¹²³ Galili asked Peres whether he would consider putting the idea of a Functional Solution to a vote, in order to clarify the party's policies and position.¹²⁴ He questioned why the party would not publicly state its willingness to strive for peace with Jordan based on a territorial compromise.¹²⁵ These and other comments, prompted Ya'akobi to ask whether the party had rejected the possibility of negotiating with Jordan on the basis of a Functional Solution.¹²⁶

¹¹⁷ LPA/2-021-1977-133/Political Committee Meeting/31.12.1976/Page 14.

¹¹⁸ LPA/2-021-1977-133/Page 18.

¹¹⁹ LPA/2-021-1977-133/Political Committee Meeting/14.1.1977/Page 8.

¹²⁰ LPA/2-021-1977-133/Page 15.

¹²¹ LPA/2-021-1977-133/Page 14.

¹²² LPA/2-021-1977-133/Page 10.

¹²³ LPA/2-021-1977-133/Political Committee Meeting/21.1.1977/Page 12.

¹²⁴ LPA/2-021-1977-133/Page 4.

¹²⁵ LPA/2-021-1977-133/Page 9.

¹²⁶ LPA/2-021-1977-133/Page 16.

However, the need to placate Peres, and his large group of supporters, meant that the party could not afford to reject the Functional Solution altogether. Bar-Lev acknowledged that there were two options, and that, although he did not believe a Functional Solution was a realistic one, he argued that discounting it completely was unnecessary. He added that it would be good if Israel could reach an agreement with Jordan based on a territorial compromise. However, ‘if we can reach an agreement based on a Functional Solution, which, I think, is unlikely, that would be even better’.¹²⁷

This desire to avoid precise definitions and policies appeared preferable. Rabin stated that there was no reason to define the scope of any territorial compromise, ‘it is unnecessary in my opinion to draw maps’.¹²⁸ Zadok concluded the meeting by reminding the party that there was no need to include specific plans or proposals in the electoral platform. He stated that the decision on whether or not to accept a particular plan or not should be left to the government.¹²⁹ The proposed platform reiterated the party’s commitment to pursuing peace agreement based on territorial compromises. The main difference between the new platform and the Fourteen-Point document was in nuance. The new platform added that Israel was committed to territorial compromises with *each* of its neighbours,¹³⁰ but the paper was approved by only a small margin. Last minute amendments proposed by Dayan, including one that would have allowed for the creation of Jewish settlements across the West Bank, were narrowly defeated. Entering the 1977 elections, the Labour Party, unable to clearly define its long-term policies in regards to the Occupied Territories and unwilling to risk party disunity, decided in affect not to decide.

Summary

In the wake of Meir’s resignation, Rabin was hand-picked by Sapir to lead the Labour Party. As the head of a minority government, lacking a solid party base and without much political experience, he was at a disadvantage from day one. It is, therefore, not

¹²⁷ LPA/2-021-1977-133/Political Committee Meeting/7.1.1977/Pages 17-20.

¹²⁸ LPA/2-021-1977-133/Political Committee Meeting/31.12.1976/Page 5.

¹²⁹ LPA/2-021-1977-133/Political Committee Meeting/21.1.1977/Page 23.

¹³⁰ YTA/15Galili/60/3/2/Labour Party’s Electoral Platform/6.2.1977.

a surprise that the government was unable to articulate a clear and comprehensive long-term policy approach towards the Occupied Territories.

In its three years in power the Rabin government based its approach loosely on a strategic-military concept, i.e. the Allon Plan. Nevertheless, at no time was it able to define or agree on the exact parameters of the territories it regarded as essential for its national security. Moreover, the establishment of army bases, and the investment in infrastructure and settlement, in the Occupied Territories, did not correspond directly to the Allon Plan, or, for that matter, to any particular plan or concept. The clearest indication of this muddled approach was the West Bank. On the one hand, the government half-heartedly pursued a settlement with Jordan based on the Allon Plan. On the other hand, it was undermining Jordan's position in the West Bank by promoting Palestinian self-rule. The government's uncertain approach provided Peres with a blank cheque to implement a Functional Solution in the West Bank. In short, the government was arbitrarily pursuing and implementing three different policies.

The reasons for this lack of clear and comprehensive policies are rooted in Israel's domestic sphere. Rabin was a novice Prime Minister, constrained by the factional politics of the Labour Party, undermined by Peres and forced to include the NRP in the Coalition in order to broaden his narrow parliamentarian base. The need to operate on the basis of consensual politics forced him to resort to an incremental and ad-hoc strategy of decision-making based on improvisation. The government's political weakness and lack of clear policies were effortlessly exposed by Gush-Emunim. An examination of the Rabin period also reveals the extent of the transformation the Jewish state had undergone - characterised by the demographic changes, the rise of New Zionism, the growing importance of religion, and the change of political power from the founding generation to the 1948 generation - and the impact it had on the government's ability to formulate clear long-term policies. The sole exception to the government's lack of long-term planning was its second interim agreement with Egypt. This, however, had more to do with American diplomatic pressure and the commitment to extensive military and financial aid.

It can be argued that, had the Labour Party won the 1977 elections, it would have been pressurised by the Carter administration to commit to further interim agreements

with Syria and Egypt, and possibly Jordan or the PLO. Additionally, by winning the elections it would have received a public mandate to pursue these agreements. These would have been based on Israel's willingness to withdraw from most of the Sinai Peninsula, up to a third, but possibly more, of the Golan Heights, and from the populated areas of the West Bank with an option of turning the Gaza Strip into either a Jordanian or a Palestinian demilitarised area. However, the lack of clear policies was the party's downfall and one of the reasons it lost the elections.¹³¹

¹³¹ Lochery, The Israeli Labour Party Pages 60-61.

Conclusions

This thesis proposed to deal with the new and complex reality that dawned on the Middle East in the aftermath of the Six Day War. This reality was shaped principally by the capture of Arab territories by Israel during six days of fighting in June 1967, a summer which forever changed the landscape of the region. While a detailed account of the efforts to try and tackle some of the challenges faced by the Israeli decision makers included an extensive examination of Israel's political system, it also focused on the Jewish state's security, demographic and economic concerns. When considering the various approaches adopted by politicians and the different solutions proposed by the numerous committees, the research raised the question of whether successive Israeli governments, under the leadership of the Labour Party, had a coherent and comprehensive long-term policy with regard to the Occupied Territories; a policy that would take into account the challenges posed by the occupation of Arab land.

It is the central argument of this thesis that successive Israeli governments did not have, with the exception of East Jerusalem, such a policy towards the Occupied Territories. This is not to say that no decisions were ever taken or that the process of formulation, approval and implementation of short-term policies was completely non-existent. Indeed, actions taken by successive governments included establishing settlements and army bases, occasionally in contravention of their own laws and regulations, annexing areas unilaterally, integrating - to an extent - the economy of the territories with that of Israel, negotiating with Arab states over the territories as well as establishing a military administration in the Occupied Territories. However, at no time during the period researched did the government reach a formal, or for that matter an informal, decision on the long-term future of the Occupied Territories. Successive Israeli governments made decisions based on comprehensive long-term plans and approaches, such as the idea of annexation, the Allon Plan and the Functional Solution. However, these decisions, when put into context and viewed as a whole, did not amount to any coherent and comprehensive long-term policy - one that provided an answer to the challenges posed by the occupation of the territories. The

same argument is made for the Occupied Territories as a whole, and for each territory on a specific basis.

It can be argued that with regards to specific areas, i.e. the Golan Heights, Sharm El-Sheikh, the Rafah Plains, the Gaza Strip, the Jordan Valley and Gush Etzion, the government had made a clear decision to annex, or to continue to hold these areas indefinitely. However, having meticulously examined Israel's decisions regarding these areas, the suggestion that a clear decision had been taken does not seem to be valid. Despite domestic pressure, from within the Coalition, the Labour Party and the electorate, at no time did the government formulate or implement a coherent and comprehensive long-term policy for these areas. Moreover, during this research it became quite clear that the government's decisions regarding these areas did not usually correspond to its military, economic, demographic, political and diplomatic aims and objectives. There is therefore no basis for the claim that the government ever had a coherent and comprehensive policy for these areas.

More specifically, there is hardly any documented evidence to support the claims that successive Israeli governments had a comprehensive long-term policy, a specific long-term approach, a long-term economic plan, a settlement plan or a settlement map for the Occupied Territories. It is true that the Allon Plan was widely supported and promoted by ministers. However, at no time did it become an official policy, and it was only implemented in conjunction with other plans, e.g. the Functional Solution, or only partially implemented, e.g. in the case of the Jordan Valley. Furthermore, there were many instances in which the government, and even Allon, acted in ways that contradicted the plan, e.g. the establishment of Kiryat Arba, Kadom, Ofra and Elkana. In fact, successive governments employed a variety of different, and at times contradictory, approaches towards the territories.

The Golan Heights

The fact that Israel aspired to hold on to the Golan Heights indefinitely is indisputable, as seen in the actions taken by successive Israeli governments, which effectively demonstrated their intent to informally annex the territory. This was supported by the majority of the political parties (including Mapam) and by the

electorate. Staying on the Golan Heights provided Israel with several strategic advantages it did not wish to relinquish: protection of its main water sources, provision of strategic depth, security for the Upper Galilee Region, an elevated military position and a constant deterrence against Syrian aggression. Israel's stated position was against any agreement that would require it to withdraw from the Golan Heights. In practice, however, successive Israeli governments indicated their willingness to withdraw from the Golan Heights, or at least from parts of the territory, on numerous occasions, e.g. the 19th of June Decisions, Allon's secret peace plan, or the government's decision of March 1976. In fact, it had become part of the prevailing wisdom that Israel could withdraw from up to a third of the Golan Heights without losing any of its strategic advantages. However, Israel's settlement and economic decisions in regard to the Golan Heights appeared not to be linked to its stated strategic objectives. Its settlement activities and its investment in infrastructure did not correspond to the areas it required strategically, i.e. the central region of the Golan; Israel's development of the Golan Heights lagged far behind its stated objectives and its annexationist rhetoric. The thesis *does* acknowledge that this was partly the result of the territory's geographical and logistical features, which were significantly constraining elements; however, this was not as important as other factors.

Israel's policy approach towards the Golan Heights was governed not only by its strategic imperatives, but also by two important interlinking factors: the US' foreign policy and the pressure it exerted on Israel, and Syria's diplomatic stance. Syria's reluctance - prior to the Yom Kippur War - to negotiate with Israel, either directly or indirectly, and its refusal to adopt any resolution that conferred recognition of Israel, e.g. the Khartoum Summit and Resolution 242, resulted in it being treated as an international pariah. Consequently, the position adopted by the Israeli government that 'there was no one to talk to' on the Syrian front, reflected the diplomatic reality. As a result of Syria's diplomatic stance and its association with the USSR, no substantial American pressure was put on Israel to give up the Golan Heights; Israel's actions in the Golan continued with little American scrutiny. Nevertheless, American political pressure was enough to moderate Israel's position regarding the Golan Heights and to deter it from annexing the territory. In the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War, Syria seemed to relax its position towards Israel which, consequently,

prompted the US to apply moderate pressure on Israel to negotiate over the Golan Heights. Unable to resist American pressure, and perceiving Syria to be less of a military threat, Israel moved to adjust its own position accordingly. Arguably, had Syria accepted an additional interim agreement, or had the Labour Party won the 1977 general elections, it would be right to assume that Israel would have made further concessions in the Golan.

The Sinai Peninsula

In its 19th of June Decisions, Israel agreed to withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula to the international border, excluding the Gaza Strip. However, Nasser's perceived belligerency caused the Israeli government to rescind its decision. It became clear that Israel's attitude towards the territory was linked, for most parts, to its strategic imperatives - secure naval passage, strategic depth and secure borders - and its relationship with Egypt. In other words, the more bellicose Nasser became, and the longer the War of Attrition dragged on, the less likely Israel was to withdraw to the international border and the stronger the voices in Israel demanding changes to the border grew. This correlation, between Israel's position regarding the Sinai Peninsula and its relationship with Egypt, became more obvious with the coming to power of Sadat. The more Egypt became open and willing to negotiate, the more open Israeli governments became towards the idea of withdrawing from Sinai; it is important to note that this approach was only adopted in earnest under Rabin. Meir, despite objections from within the government, and against Israel's stated strategic and military objectives, stood steadfast against any territorial concessions in the Sinai Peninsula, viewing such acts as a prelude to an Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip.

Throughout the period researched, Israel's stated aims regarding the Sinai Peninsula were of a military-strategic nature. At no time did the government express any desire to hold on to parts of the Sinai Peninsula for other reasons than military-strategic. Israel's settlement activity in Sinai, in particular under Meir and Rabin, corresponded almost entirely to its perceived military-strategic needs. However, it is important to remember that Israel had established several settlements that did not correspond to its strategic aims and that were outside of the Rafah Plains and the Sharm El-Sheikh-

Eilat area, among them At-Tur, Nahal Yam and Nahal Sinai. Moreover, it is important to note that the government never established clear settlement guidelines and parameters for Sinai.

In the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War, and as Israeli leaders became convinced of Sadat's intentions, they were more willing to accommodate Egypt and moderate their demands regarding the Sinai Peninsula. This was evident during the Labour Party's conference in January 1977, where Rabin suggested that Israel might not require (and therefore would not insist on) having presence along the Sharm El-Sheikh-Eilat strip. Arguably, given the time, Israel's position regarding the Rafah Plains might have also changed. In short, Israel did not have a clear long-term policy in regard to the Sinai Peninsula. Its flexible and short-term decisions regarding the region were, with some exceptions - most notably the Rafah Plains and Nahal Sinai - in response to the perceived threat emanating from Egypt.

The Gaza Strip and the Rafah Plains

Successive Israeli government were unable to produce either a coherent short-term or long-term policy towards the Gaza Strip; it is apparent from their actions that Gaza was like a thorn in Israel's plans. When asked about it, Hillel, Shem-Tov and Yadin were unable to explain what was Israel's policy regarding the Gaza Strip.¹ Successive Israeli governments, unable to annex Gaza because of the demographic problem and unwilling to withdraw because of military-strategic considerations, appeared clueless as to what to do with the Gaza Strip. Initially, the government planned to relocate the Arab population and annex the territory. Once it became convinced that this was not feasible, the government sought to reach an understanding with Jordan in exchange for concessions in the West Bank; this idea was dropped under Meir. Nonetheless, the strategic-military concern from the possible consequences of allowing a foreign army into the territory was so prevalent, that the government decided to hold on to the territory, despite not having a viable long-term plan for it.

In this respect, Israel's decision to establish settlements in the Gaza Strip, and later in

¹ Interview with Hillel, interview with Shem-Tov, interview with Yadin.

the Rafah Plains, was a direct result of its perceived need to control the territory. It was thought that the settlement activity in the Gaza Strip would ease the burden of controlling the territory.² Nevertheless, the marginal settlement activity was a testament to the fact that successive Israeli governments were unwilling to invest heavily in this endeavour. However, Israel's desire to control the Gaza Strip led to the establishment of a strong military and civilian presence in the Rafah Plains. In fact, of all the Occupied Territories, Israel's proposed military and civilian plans for the Rafah Plains were its most ambitious. Israel had established settlements in the Rafah Plains and around the Gaza Strip in order to control Gaza. Yet, at no time did it provide an account of its intentions for the future status of the Gaza Strip and its population, and the Rafah Plains. Moreover, Israel's approach regarding the Rafah Plains was dependent on its continued presence in the Gaza Strip. Additionally, Israel's settlement and military activities in the Rafah Plains undermined its negotiations with Egypt. To use a Hebrew metaphor, the Gaza Strip had become a bone in Israel's throat, one that Israel could neither swallow nor cough out.

The West Bank

The story of the West Bank provides the clearest example that Israel did not have a coherent and comprehensive long-term policy. From the onset of the territorial debate, the government was unable to reach a consensus over the future of the West Bank; the government was unable to either define its main objectives or reach an agreement over its preferred approach - Palestinian or Jordanian. In the absence of a guiding policy, Israeli governments decided not to decide over the long-term future of the West Bank. The need to reach a consensus on such a controversial issue proved to be a difficult task within the confines of the National Unity Government. The main problem faced by decision makers was their inability to define their approach, debating on whether it should be Instrumental or Normative. On the one hand, they felt a historic-religious attachment towards the West Bank, as part of the biblical Jewish homeland; this is particularly true in regard to Hebron. On the other hand, decision-makers viewed certain areas of the West Bank as strategically important, e.g. the Jordan River and the Jerusalem Passage.

² See Page 173.

The debate on what was required from a strategic-military perspective and what was desirable from an ideological-religious perspective was further clouded by the demographic problem posed by the West Bank. Israel's approach towards the West Bank was based on the realisation that it could ill afford to annex the heavily populated Palestinian urban centres. In fact, the two main plans proposed by ministers, i.e. the Functional Solution and the Allon Plan, were designed to provide a solution to this very problem. These plans, while acknowledging both a Palestinian and a Jordanian element, depended on two distinct approaches. The Allon Plan was based on the principle of static defences, control over strategic areas, agricultural settlements and withdrawal from the heavily populated areas, while the Functional Solution advocated mobile defences, urban settlements, economic integration and an administrative solution; it is important to note that both plans shared similar short-term goals. Unfortunately, despite the fact that neither of these plans was officially adopted, significant parts of both were still executed. The implementation of the Allon Plan and the Functional Solution simultaneously undermined both plans, as well as the Palestinian and Jordanian approaches, and left the demographic problem unresolved.

Israel's settlement activities in the West Bank compounded the problem by deviating from both these plans. It is true that the majority of Israel's settlements in the West Bank were established in accordance with the Allon Plan. However, especially during the Rabin period, settlements were established in areas outside the scope of the plan. The establishment of settlements outside the scope of the Allon Plan, e.g. in Hebron and Kiryat Arba as well as in the heavily populated region of Samaria, was in contradiction to Israel's stated strategic and demographic objectives. Moreover, Israel's settlement activities contradicted its professed aim of reaching a negotiated settlement with Jordan over the future of the West Bank. Arguably, Israel's unwillingness to withdraw completely from the West Bank, the annexation of East Jerusalem, the lack of a suitable Palestinian partner and the lack of any meaningful American diplomatic pressure, contributed to Israel's lack of clear and comprehensive settlement policy regarding the West Bank.

It was not only Israel's settlement policy that made little sense. Israel's political and

economic decisions regarding the West Bank did not correspond to its stated objectives; this was also true in regard to the Gaza Strip. Israel sought, in accordance with the Functional Solution, to empower local officials and implement Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. This went hand-in-hand with Dayan's objectives of raising living standards and integrating the economies of the Occupied Territories with Israel's. However, Dayan's, and later Peres' political and economic decisions stood in contrast to the Labour Party's desire to avoid economic integration and de-facto annexation. Additionally, the economic integration and empowerment of local officials undermined Jordan's position and was in contrast to Israel's professed aim of reaching a negotiated settlement with Jordan over the West Bank, and potentially over the Gaza Strip. In other words, successive governments appeared to act against Israel's perceived aims and objectives regarding the West Bank.

The Lack of a Clear and Comprehensive Long-Term Policy

There are many factors that govern and affect the decision-making process and Israel's territorial decision-making process was no exception. Arguably, it is an almost impossible task to chart the exact events, and pinpoint the precise factors, which lead to Israel's lack of a coherent and comprehensive long-term policy. Moreover, to provide an accurate analysis that would encapsulate all of the factors behind this phenomenon experienced by successive governments is an even bigger task. In trying to explain why successive governments failed to put forward a coherent and comprehensive long-term policy, four major contributing factors have been identified: the faction-based politics of the Labour Party; the US position vis-à-vis Israel; New Zionism (i.e. the resurgence of nationalist and religious fervour); and the intention of successive Prime Ministers to avoid formulating a clear long-term policy. The thesis acknowledges that there were many other factors involved, and that these might have played an important role in regard to a particular government but do not apply to all three governments. These factors include the lack of suitable peace partners; the relative ease by which Israel's administered the territories, the weakness of the dovish elements in the government; the lack of international pressure; the role played by the IDF; the actions of individual ministers; the fragmentation of the

decision-making process; and the nature of Israel's parliamentary democracy.

The Faction-Based Politics of the Labour Party

The unification of the Israeli Labour parties (Mapai, Rafi, Ahdut-Ha'avoda and Mapam) was the lifelong ambition of many Labour leaders. The Labour parties, with the exception of Mapam, did not exhibit major political differences in terms of their economic and social platforms. The main points of contention between them surrounded the role of Ben-Gurion, and the young guard (*tze'irim*), as well as Mapai's nomination system and its abuse of political patronage. There were major differences between the parties, and between party members, in regard to the territorial issue and on the nature of Israel's polity. It is important to note that the territorial issue was of little importance prior to the Six Day War. The acquisition of the territories brought to the fore a political debate, which focused on the future borders of Israel and the nature of its polity, and which had been left dormant since the War of Independence. This debate crossed party and faction lines and threatened to derail the success of the unification process.³

Successive Labour governments failed to produce a substantive and coherent territorial policy; they postponed making crucial decisions regarding the future of the territories and decided 'not to decide' because of the improbability of reaching a consensus within governments which were divided by party and factional loyalties. Politicians regularly displayed their inability, or unwillingness to overcome factional differences and inter-factional competition for power and influence. Beilin attributes the party's, and subsequently the governments', policy immobilisation to the 'price of unity'.⁴ The need to maintain party unity, and avoid a split amongst the factions, ensured that the unified party was unable and unwilling to take a clear and unequivocal stand on the issue of the Occupied Territories. The examples of the Oral Law and the Galili Document clearly illustrate this point. In response to Dayan's demands for clear policies, the party tried to find a formula that would fulfil most of Dayan's demands, while not committing the party or alienating its dovish members. In fact, the Oral Law was described as a non-binding 'optional-unwritten

³ See Pages 15-19 and 87-90.

⁴ Interview with Beilin.

understanding' that would only serve as a guideline for future negotiations,⁵ while the Galili Document was a patched-up compromise that was never binding on party members - Mapam members were allowed, as part of the Alignment, to vote against the document.⁶ In other words, the party's need to formulate a coherent and comprehensive territorial policy became secondary to the need to maintain unity.

The US Position.

The Israeli government was certain, in the aftermath of the Six Day War, that it would be required to relinquish control over most of the territories it occupied. It is therefore not a surprise that the government had agreed, in its 19th of June Decisions, to withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights to the international border in exchange for peace. However, and as explained earlier, this decision was taken, first and foremost, for the purpose of pacifying the American administration.⁷ Early on, decision makers understood the prominent role played by the American administration and the need to co-ordinate its actions with Israel's. The American administration became, in the aftermath of the Six Day War, Israel's most important diplomatic, financial and military supporter. Subsequently, its influence on the Israeli decision-making process was such that Israel could ill afford to take a decision that went against US interests without some trepidation. However, the US, in its own interests and for its own reasons, chose, for most of the period, not to put pressure on Israel on the matter of settlements and the territorial concessions.

The lack of a clear long-term territorial policy did not come directly as a result of the lack of US pressure; nevertheless, the lack of US pressure exacerbated the problem. On the one hand, the ability of Israeli decision makers to formulate a long-term policy was restricted by the stated position of the American administration, i.e. the Rogers Plan and Johnson's Five Principles. On the other hand, Israeli indecisiveness was compounded by the mixed messages it received from the US; this was true in regards to both the Johnson and Nixon administrations.

⁵ See Pages 138-139.

⁶ See Pages 194-195.

⁷ See Pages 44-45.

One of the main reasons articulated by Israeli decision-makers for pursuing certain policies was the position of the American administration. There are many examples for this behaviour, e.g. Israel's decision against annexing and implementing a vigorous settlement plan in the Golan Heights; Israel's timid settlement activities during the Eshkol and Meir governments; as well as the governments' insistence, even if it meant only as lip-service, that it had accepted the notion of a territorial compromise. Furthermore, the extent of Israel's settlement activities and territorial ambitions were directly linked to the limits set out by the Rogers Plan and Johnson's Five Principles, i.e. the recognition that Israel could annex certain areas in order to fulfil its military-strategic needs. It is true that Israel continuously tried to push these boundaries, but had the American administration rebuked Israel publicly, the Israeli government would have probably come into line with the US position. Israeli decision-makers remarked on many occasions that, as long as the US had not put its foot down on the matter of the Occupied Territories, Israel was free to continue with its actions. In short, the US position, i.e. constraining decision-makers, sending mixed messages, counter-balancing the hawkish elements and not putting pressure on Israel, helped to exacerbate existing divisions, while strengthening the hands of those who argued in favour of avoiding taking clear decisions on the Occupied Territories.

New Zionism

The rise of New Zionism and the growing importance attached to religious matters did not contribute directly to Israel's lack of a clear and long-term policy. The main impact was on the activities of individuals, Tabenkin's followers, the NRP, Gush-Emunim and the Land of Israel Movement, and it was the activities of these individuals and groups that contributed indirectly to the government's policy immobilisation. Additionally, it can be argued that the views of several prominent decision makers were modified by New Zionism ideology, i.e. a gradual shift from an Instrumental towards a Normative approach (examples of these include, among others, the views of Galili and Peres, which may help to explain their flirtations with Gush-Emonim).

The early attempts by groups associated with Tabenkin and the Land of Israel

Movement to settle in the Occupied Territories, e.g. Merom-Golan, Gush-Etzion and Hebron, exposed and weakened the fragile National Unity Government. The wall-to-wall Coalition was unable to take a firm stand against these settlement attempts, precisely because certain factions and individuals within the Labour Party, as well as Gahal and the NRP, supported these attempts. These parties and individuals identified with and espoused the Normative motives and objectives associated with New Zionism. More importantly, because of the rise of its young guard, which was associated with New Zionism, the NRP was unable to provide its traditional support to the Coalition led by the Labour Party. In fact, because of its faction-based politics, the NRP was unable, until the 1973 elections, to clearly articulate its own position regarding the Occupied Territories. In other words, the rise of New Zionism and the growing importance attached to religious matters changed the dynamics of the Israeli political system in a way that weakened Mapai's, and later the Labour Party's, parliamentary base and ability to dictate policy.

The effect of the internal changes within the NRP came to a head in the 1973 general elections. Buoyed by its relative success in the elections, the NRP made several specific demands during the Coalition negotiation process. The NRP made it clear that it would not join the government unless it agreed to either hold a referendum, or call for new elections before any decision regarding the future status of the West Bank was taken. This demand, in addition to the Labour's weak parliamentary base, ensured that the Rabin-led government was constrained in its ability to form a clear long-term policy regarding the West Bank. Rabin, subsequently, preferred to concentrate on the Syrian and Egyptian fronts, leaving the negotiations on the future of the West Bank for a later date.

Lastly, Gush-Emunim obstructed and hindered the government's decisions and actions in regard to the Occupied Territories, in particular the West Bank. Gush-Emunim - supported by the young guard of the NRP, by Tabenkin's followers, by members of the Opposition and by Peres - directly challenged the government's territorial approach, thus contributing to the government's inability to formulate a clear long-term policy.

The Prime Ministers

There is no doubt that Eshkol, Meir and Rabin led very different governments in their time in office. These governments were led by prime ministers who brought with them different sets of experiences, skills and images. For instance, Eshkol and Rabin were seen as weak prime ministers, who struggled to control their party and were undermined by their respective defence ministers. In contrast, Meir was regarded as a dominant prime minister who influenced and dictated Israel's foreign affairs and security decision-making processes. Moreover, these three governments faced different sets of international and domestic circumstances. Nevertheless, it is very clear that each prime minister, for his or her own reasons, favoured a non-committing approach towards the Occupied Territories, while all three Prime Ministers made a clear choice of advocating against the formulation of a coherent and comprehensive long-term policy; this choice was made, at times, against the advice of ministers and advisory committees. There are, of course, many mitigating circumstances but, ultimately, it was the responsibility and imperative of each prime minister to rise up to the challenges that faced him/her. Unfortunately, successive prime ministers chose, for reasons of self-preservation and political convenience, not to pursue a coherent and comprehensive long-term policy.

The Eshkol-led National Unity Government had a wall-to-wall Coalition that contained the Right, the Left and the NRP. The government was under no international pressure and, with the exception of Hussein - who, it was thought, could not act without Nasser - had no suitable peace partners with whom to negotiate. Under these circumstances, the government, exhibiting a fragmented decision-making process, undermined by ministers, unable to define its main objectives and unable to find common ground, chose not to pursue a comprehensive long-term policy. In other words, any attempt by Eshkol to pursue such a policy had the potential to cause a split in the Labour Party and bring down the Coalition.

Eshkol's position within the Labour Party and within the National Unity Coalition was severely weakened in the aftermath of the Six Day War. Eshkol was actively undermined by Dayan and his margins for political manoeuvring were constrained by the National Unity Coalition and the Labour Party's unification process. Eshkol

initially favoured a practical approach towards the Occupied Territories, one that took into account Israel's strategic-military and demographic needs. However, due to the lack of suitable peace partners, Eshkol's stance changed and he voted in favour of establishing settlements, even though he did not put a clear long-term policy in place. Owing to his weakened political standing and his dithering and indecisive character, combined with domestic and international factors, Eshkol opted for a muddled and ad-hoc approach.

In contrast to Eshkol, Meir monopolised and dominated the decision-making process through her kitchenette. Unlike Eshkol, Meir, especially after Gahal left the Coalition in 1970, enjoyed an unprecedented strong parliamentary base. With Meir, it was not the ministers or Coalition partners that undermined her; on the contrary, it was Meir herself who undermined efforts to reach a clear long-term policy, either by interfering with the formulation process or by avoiding taking important decisions. Meir's distrust of the Arab side, her belief that time was on Israel's side and her determination to maintain party unity, led her to favour a non-committing approach to the Occupied Territories. Meir appeared to be more preoccupied with maintaining Labour Party unity than with defining Israel's long-term approach towards the territories.

Meir, who aligned herself with Galili, Dayan and the hawkish elements in the Labour Party and the Coalition, chose to overlook the demographic and social costs of the ongoing occupation in pursuit of 'secure and recognised borders' - a term she never tried to define. Meir refused to consider Israel's long-term relationship with the Occupied Territories and the Palestinian people. In fact, under Meir, Israel established settlements in the Rafah Plains and the Gaza Strip without ever taking into account the long-term implications of such acts.

Of the three prime ministers, Rabin's political situation was the most precarious; he did not have the unqualified support of the Labour Party, or for that matter of any of its factions. Rabin's position was further weakened by the Labour Party's weak parliamentary base and its increase reliance on the NRP in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War. Similarly to Eshkol, Rabin was actively undermined by his Defence Minister. Peres' support within the Labour Party was such that Rabin could not afford

to dismiss him. Rabin's position and his government's political base were further weakened by the actions of Gush-Emunim and the Coalition promises made to the NRP. Furthermore, the active role taken by the US, in the post-war negotiations, ensured that the Rabin government was under pressure from both domestic and international sources. Rabin could have pursued a coherent and comprehensive long-term policy but, partly because of his weak position, the political risks were greater than his chances for success.

Summary

In conclusion, in the ten years following the Six Day War, successive Israeli governments, under the leadership of the Labour Party, did not have a coherent and comprehensive long-term policy in regard to the Occupied Territories. There were many factors that contributed to this lack of clear long-term policy. The Occupied Territories posed demographic, military, economic, diplomatic and political problems for the state of Israel. They also brought to the fore an unresolved Normative debate regarding the nature of Israel's polity. This was epitomised by the inability of successive governments to define whether the problems required an Instrumental or Normative approach. Moreover, the Occupied Territories became entangled in a growing debate regarding the role of religion within the Israeli society.⁸ The increasing religious awareness had a direct impact on the Israeli political system, i.e. on the NRP, and its approach towards the Occupied Territories. The Labour Party undermined internally by its faction-based politics, grappled with the issue and was ultimately unable to provide a long-term solution to the problem. The failure to find a solution, either by the party or by the government, was further complicated by the lack of American pressure on Israel. Under no substantial American pressure, being distrustful of the Arab world and unable to clearly define the nature of the problem and its solutions, decision makers were in no hurry to pursue a long-term policy. This situation was welcomed by several ministers, in particular Dayan, Allon and, to a lesser extent, Galili. These ministers publicly stated their demands for clear long-term policies, while using the policy vacuum to implement their own designs for the

⁸ See Pages 225-226.

Occupied Territories.

Successive Israeli governments, unable to navigate the treacherous diplomatic and political waters, were against the adoption of a clear long-term policy. Nevertheless, while advocating a non-committing approach, so as to leave all the options open, they acted in an incoherent manner that undermined their own interests and efforts to achieve peace in the region. Israel's actions, in particular, in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were in direct contradiction to its stated strategic and demographic objectives. These actions threatened to put Israel on a trajectory towards a one-state solution without providing Palestinians with equal rights; a solution all political parties were against. The establishment of settlements outside the parameters of the Allon Plan did not only undermine the position of Jordan but, more importantly, it contradicted Israel's stated desire to avoid a de-facto annexation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. By its own actions, Israel was bringing itself closer to a one-state solution.

This was a period of time in which Israel was gifted a unique opportunity to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. Through the various committees it had established, the government was well aware of the need to find a long-term solution for the Occupied Territories; a solution that encompassed the many challenges posed by the territories. Instead, by acting against their declared aims and stated objectives, successive Israeli governments squandered this opportunity.

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