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Reporting on Contested Territory: Television News Coverage of the Israel-Palestine Conflict

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Abstract

This thesis is an examination of how British television news reported on the Peace Accords signed between Israeli and Palestinian negotiators at the Wye River Plantation, Maryland USA in October 1998. The research involves three elements. Firstly a review of the historiography of the conflict which sketches out the range of views on the history and origins of the dispute. Secondly a content analysis of the peace negotiations themselves. This examines how journalists drew on the range of views present in the historiography in order to contextualise coverage and provide explanations for the conflict. Thirdly the thesis looks at the various factors in production which influence the construction of news in this area, and links this to theoretical debates in the area.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

The former *Washington Post* publisher Philip Graham famously described journalism as the ‘first draft of history’. Recent research suggests that if anything Graham may actually be understating the true influence of the media. The important role played by television news in the formation of public knowledge means that for many members of the public this type of journalism represents not just the ‘first draft’ but the only draft of history. Studies have shown that approximately 80 percent of the public rely on television news as their source of information on world news (Committee on Standards in Public Life, 2004; Philo & Berry, 2004; ITC, 2003). Furthermore broadcast journalism retains a relatively high degree of public trust compared to other media and public institutions. A September 2004 survey found that television news is considered significantly more trustworthy than broadsheet journalism and seven times more so than the tabloid press. Partly this may be related to inherent veracity of the moving image embodied in the famous cliché that the ‘camera never lies’. Tom Burns, the historian of the BBC notes that:

because television news and current affairs programmes convey action, movement, facial expression and demeanour, scenes and actors, as well as verbal messages, they seem *more* complete, *more* satisfactory than any account provided by newspapers. ‘Viewability’ is easily construed as reliability because any intervention by broadcasters is largely invisible, and because the dramatic intensity of film and video recording carries conviction and guarantees authenticity in ways in which words cannot (Burns, 1977: 206, cited in Glasgow Media Group, 1993: 4)

However television is also likely to be trusted because of its claims to impartiality, neutrality and objectivity. News is under a statutory obligation to be balanced and impartial, and to refrain from editorialising in its broadcasts. As Schlesinger notes the notion of being non-partisan and ‘above the fray’ in matters of public controversy has been the defining ethos of the BBC:

Impartiality is the linchpin of the BBC's ideology: it is a notion saturated with political and philosophical implications. What the BBC claims, when it says it is 'impartial', is that it has achieved institutional detachment from the conflicts of British society, and that the Corporation is independent of all interests. The news is therefore held to represent all interests and points of view without an evaluative commitment to *any* (1978: 163).

What appears on television news under the banner of impartiality has attracted academic research (e.g. Glasgow Media Group, 1993, 1985, 1983, 1982, 1976; Miller, 1994; Schlesinger, 1978; Murdock, 1973; Morley, 1976). Much of this research has tended to conclude that in practice, impartiality has usually meant reporting on the spectrum of views present at the Palace of Westminster. This is not to say that oppositional or dissident voices are never heard, but that due to a variety of factors embedded in the news production process, they tend to be excluded. As Philo notes in the struggle to be heard the 'structural position of the state and its information managers is one of potential dominance' but it is a dominance 'contested by oppositional groups and through the interplay of the different organisational and commercial priorities of the media' (Philo 1995: 222).

This thesis is an examination of how television news approaches its obligations to neutrality and impartiality when reporting on the one of the most controversial of all foreign news stories, the long running conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians. This research will examine whether broadcasters achieve balance or if some perspectives predominate. It will also evaluate the various factors and constraints which impinge upon the reporting of the dispute, and relate them to the theoretical debates in the area. In order to examine the range of views on the origins and history of the conflict, I present in chapter two a historiography of the conflict indicating the areas of consensus, and the points where historians diverge. In Chapter three I present a content analysis of television news coverage of the peace talks between the Israelis and Palestinians which took place in America in October 1998. The research looks at how much context and background is present and whether certain perspectives and explanations predominate in reporting. In chapter four I look at the constraints and pressures that journalists face in reporting on the conflict. The final chapter pulls all the threads together and addresses some of the theoretical

debates around how the various political, economic, cultural and organisational contexts affect the production of television news.

However I want to start in this chapter by introducing the themes and debates which follow. This will involve a discussion of the uniquely controversial historiography of the conflict, together with a literature review of previous content analyses in the area, and an assessment of the theoretical arguments about the various factors effecting the production of news.

The Controversial Historiography of the Conflict

In chapter two I will examine various different perspectives on the history of the conflict. This is to lay out the competing narratives which journalists can draw upon in explaining the conflict to viewers. Although there are areas of consensus amongst historians there are also many areas over which there is still great disagreement. As the Princeton historian L. Carl Brown has noted 'Israel's crowded history has been matched by a massive historiography. Israelis and foreigners, friends and foes, participants and observers, professionals and amateurs -- all have entered the debate.' (*Foreign Affairs*, July/August 1998). Within this debate there has been much heat, as well as light, with accusations of academic dishonesty being unusually common. Indeed some have suggested that the historians are themselves directly involved as 'combatants' in the conflict. Writing in the *New Statesman* Stephen Howe comments that:

All wars, in a sense, are history wars. Their protagonists are driven by rival visions of the past, and people are willing to kill or die for those visions, at least as much as they are for ideas about the future. The unending violence between Israelis and Palestinians is a particularly extreme case. There, historians themselves are combatants, whether they are working to sustain the national myths that fuel the conflict, or trying to undermine them. (5 August 2002)

For more than thirty years after the 1948 war there existed within Israeli society what could be described as an official or canonical Zionist history of the

conflict. This narrative was accepted by the great bulk of the population and taught in all Israeli schools. According to the Israeli historian Avi Shlaim (2004) it fulfilled two objectives. Firstly, 'it instilled a sense of nationhood in Jews from various countries of origin' and secondly, 'it enlisted international sympathy and support for the fledgling State of Israel' However he also notes that 'the one cause it emphatically did not serve is that of mutual understanding and reconciliation between Jews and Arabs.' The traditional narrative maintained that the Jewish attempt to create a homeland in their ancestral lands in Palestine was a benign affair, which sought to develop the backward and sparsely populated country and bring the benefits of modernity to the Arab population. Under the British Mandate Jewish attempts to foster mutual understanding and cooperation were met with intransigence and outright hostility from the local Arab population. Avi Shlaim sketches out the traditional narrative from the pivotal year of 1948 onwards:

The conflict between Jews and Arabs in Palestine came to a head following the passage, on 29 November 1947, of the United Nations partition resolution which called for the establishment of two states, one Jewish and one Arab. The Jews accepted the UN plan despite the painful sacrifices it entailed but the Palestinians, the neighbouring Arab states, and the Arab League rejected it. Great Britain did everything in its power towards the end of the Palestine Mandate to frustrate the establishment of the Jewish state envisaged in the UN plan. With the expiry of the Mandate and the proclamation of the State of Israel, five Arab states sent their armies into Palestine with the firm intention of strangling the Jewish state at birth. The subsequent struggle was an unequal one between a Jewish David and an Arab Goliath. The infant Jewish state fought a desperate, heroic, and ultimately successful battle for survival against overwhelming odds. During the war, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians fled to the neighbouring Arab states, mainly in response to orders from their leaders and despite Jewish pleas to stay and demonstrate that peaceful co-existence was possible. After the war, the story continues, Israeli leaders sought peace with all their heart and all their might but there was no one to talk to on the other side. Arab intransigence alone was responsible for the political deadlock that was not broken until President Anwar Sadat's visit to Jerusalem thirty years later. (2004)

The Palestinian narrative of the conflict could hardly be more different. It regarded Jewish immigration into Palestine as a form of European colonialism and questioned the right of the British government to set up a Jewish homeland in an area where a settled population had been living for hundreds of years. They believed that the Jewish immigrants came to take their land and dominate them, rather than develop the country for the mutual benefit of both peoples. The 1948 war was as seen as national catastrophe in which most Palestinians were ethnically cleansed in line with long held plans to 'transfer' the indigenous population. After the war the Israeli state despite pressure from the UN refused to allow the return of the refugees it had expelled, strengthening the Palestinian view that the expulsions were premeditated. The 1956 and 1967 wars were seen as attempts at territorial expansion by Israel, and the 1982 invasion of Lebanon as well as the settlement program in the occupied territories were seen as attempts to crush Palestinian nationalism and prevent the emergence of a Palestinian state.

It is clear that there is little common ground in the official Israeli and Palestinian narratives. However from the late 1970s onwards the traditional Israeli narrative began to come under increasing pressure from dissident academics within Israel. Initially it was sociologists rather than historians who began to question the dominant perspective. Sociologists such as Shlomo Swirski and Deborah Bernstein questioned the dominant functionalist paradigm in Israeli sociology which stressed the integration and adaptation of Israel's diverse social groups. These sociologists saw Israeli society riven by inequality and schisms between Ashkenazi (of European origin) and Mizrahim (of Middle eastern origin) Jews, between secular and orthodox Jews, between the Arab and Jewish citizens of the state and between the Israeli occupying forces and the Palestinians living under military rule. The Israeli sociologist Lawrence Silberstein suggests that the controversial 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon placed further strain on the traditional Israeli version of history:

Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982, and the ensuing sense of shock, disillusionment and demoralization led to the emergence of peace groups previously unknown in Israel. In the wake of that war, many Israelis came to feel a previously unknown scepticism concerning Israel's officially stated commitment to fighting only defensive and to pursuing peace on all fronts. The trauma of Lebanon became the equivalent of the trauma of Vietnam in the

United States in the nineteen sixties and seventies. In the meantime the effects of the long years of occupying territories conquered in the 1967 War and controlling a hostile and restless population rendered problematic the dominant representations of Zionism as a humane, progressive movement. (Silberstein, 1999: 72)

In the aftermath of the Lebanon invasion the prime minister Menachem Begin gave a lecture to the IDF staff academy on wars of choice and wars of no choice in which he argued that the Lebanon war like the 1956 Suez War was a war of choice undertaken for political objectives. Shlaim suggests that with ‘this admission, unprecedented in the history of the Zionist movement, the national consensus round the notion of *ein breira* [no choice] began to crumble, creating political space for a critical re-examination of the country's earlier history’ (2004). The following year an Israeli sociologist Baruch Kimmerling published a study entitled *Zionism and Territory: The Socio-Territorial Dimension of Zionist Politics* which challenged the notion that pre-1948 Jewish settlement was undertaken to benefit both the both Jewish and Arab populations. Kimmerling, for the first time in the Israeli academy, utilized a European colonial model to analyse Jewish settlement policies, thus substantially narrowing the gap with the Palestinian perspective of this period. The following year Tom Segev, a journalist and historian published *1949: The First Israelis* which challenged other aspects of the official history. These included the claims that the Palestinian refugees of 1948 had left their homes willingly, that Israel did everything it could to bring about peace after 1948, and that the Middle Eastern Jews who arrived in Israel after 1948 were integrated into the collective without economic and social discrimination. Silberstein suggest that Segev’s book was a direct challenge to many aspects of how Israeli saw themselves and their relationship to the state:

Typifying the new scholarship emerging in the 1980s and 1990s, Segev argued that his book ‘shattered a firmly established self-image and exposed as mere myths a large number of long established truisms.’ These ‘myths’ grounded in Zionist discourse and produced and disseminated by the state apparatus, provided Israelis with the basic materials out of which they constructed their self understanding as a collective. Additionally they provided the state with its basic legitimation. Constituting the ‘common sense’ of Israeli culture, they

shaped the way in which most Israelis viewed social, cultural and political reality. (1999: 77).

However it wasn't until 1988 that the issues raised by the 'new historians' broke into the mainstream. In that year four works were released which challenged fundamental aspects of the traditional history: Avi Shlaim's *Collusion across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement, and the Partition of Palestine*; Simha Flapan's *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities*; Benny Morris's *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949*; and Ilan Pappé's *Britain and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1947-5*. All of these works took issue with the traditional Israeli narrative of 1948 and the notion that Israel had earnestly sought peace after the war. Benny Morris's book in particular provoked a furious backlash amongst some Israelis. The most ferocious criticism came from Shabtai Teveth, a journalist and biographer of David Ben-Gurion, who penned an article entitled 'Charging Israel with Original Sin' which appeared in the conservative American-Jewish monthly *Commentary* (September 1989). In the article Teveth accused Morris of producing a 'farrago of distortions, omissions, tendentious readings, and outright falsifications', whose political purpose was to generate sympathy for the Palestinians and de-legitimize the Israeli state (cited in Shlaim, 2004). As Silberstein notes the debate demonstrated that 'far more than scholarly methods and historical accuracy were at stake. Extending far beyond the walls of the academy, the questions raised by the young scholars had the effect of problematizing prevailing notions of Israeli collective identity as well as the trustworthiness of the authorities of the state' (1999: 84). Throughout the 1990s the new historians continued to question further aspects of the traditional Israeli history and in particular whether it was the Arab or Israeli intransigence which was to blame for the failure to conclude peace treaties. Shlaim suggests that this issue is:

particularly sensitive because it entails the allocating of responsibility for the persistence of the conflict. At the core of the old version is the image of the Arab world as a monolithic and implacably hostile enemy. According to this version, Israel's leaders strove indefatigably towards a peaceful settlement of the dispute but all their efforts foundered on the rocks of Arab intransigence. The revisionist version holds that Israel was more inflexible than the Arab states and that she consequently bears a larger share of the responsibility for

the diplomatic stalemate that remained in place long after the ending of military hostilities. (2004)

In 1999 the debate was re-ignited by the publication of two highly influential works, Avi Shlaim's *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* and Benny Morris's *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-1999*. Both drew plaudits from European and some Israelis critics but were also subject to significant criticism. In a *Ha'aretz* article Israeli novelist Ahron Meged accused Shlaim and Morris of leading the country towards collective suicide, whilst in a ten page review of the books in *The New Republic* Anita Shapira accused the authors of being 'heretical elements' who 'doubted the right of Israel to exist and stressed the wrongs that were perpetrated against the Arabs' (29 November 1999). Shlaim claimed that Shapira's review was inspired by the fear that the 'old historians' were 'losing the battle for the hearts and minds of their compatriots' and that the article was 'redolent of defeat on the intellectual battlefield'. The outbreak of the second intifada in late 2000 and the election of the hardline Sharon administration led to a move away from the 'new history' and a return to the traditional narrative. Six months before his election Ariel Sharon was asked what changes he would like to see to the Israeli education system and he replied that he 'would like them to study the history of the people of Israel and the land of Israel ... the children must be taught Jewish-Zionist values, and the 'new historians' must not be taught.' (cited in Shlaim, 2004). When the Sharon administration came to power, the new education minister Limor Livnat ordered the re-writing of all the history books for secondary school and the removal of all traces of the 'new history'.

During the 1980s and 1990s the new historians had considerably narrowed the gap between the Israel and Palestinian versions of the conflict. Pappe suggests that there is now enough common ground between the two versions to create what he describes as a 'bridging narrative' on the events of 1948. This he suggests is important in creating the conditions for a successful resolution to the conflict since it entails the recognition by Israel of 'the centrality of the refugee problem in the Palestinian historical narrative, collective memory and national ethos' (1999:59). Similarly another of the 'new historians' Avi Shlaim also sees a narrowing of the gap between the narratives as a necessary pre-condition for a resolution of the conflict:

In all these different ways, the new history helped to create a climate, on both sides of the Israeli-Arab divide, which was conducive to the continuation of the peace process. As Bishop Tutu pointed out in the South African context, it is difficult to know what to forgive unless we know what happened. In the Middle East, as in South Africa, it is necessary to understand the past in order to go forward...Xenophobic and self-righteous national narratives only fuel and prolong this tragic conflict. A more complex and fair-minded understanding of the past is therefore essential for preserving at least the prospect of reconciliation in the future (2004).

Both the Israeli and Palestinian positions, and justifications for their actions are intimately linked to their particular version of the past. Into this controversy journalists must select certain salient information to contextualise stories and explain events. I now want to review research which has looked at how journalists have tried to accomplish this.

Previous Research on Media Coverage of the Israel-Palestine Conflict

American Research

One approach adopted by researchers has been to examine how reporting on the conflict has changed over time. Zaharna examined the portrayal of Palestinians in *Time* magazine between 1947 and 1993. He suggests that because of the close relationship between Israel and the United States news from Israel has been treated like a domestic story, and that rather than balancing Israeli and Palestinian sources *Time* has tended to quote 'extensively from American politicians and Israelis' and that 'because American politicians tended to be supportive of Israeli views this practice [has] served to reinforce the Israeli perspective and negate the Palestinian message' (1995: 38-39). In the period around the creation of the Israeli state Zaharna claims that Jewish leaders were cited much more frequently than Arab leaders and that *Time* featured many personalised stories of Jews in Palestine. Personalised stories on Palestinians did not begin to appear in the magazine until the first intifada in 1988. In the period from 1950 until the Six Day War Zaharna found that descriptions of Arab

leaders corresponded closely with American foreign policy. Whilst the US ally King Hussein of Jordan was presented positively, Nasser was portrayed as a 'prominent Arab villain' (1995: 41). From this period until the outbreak of the first intifada Palestinians had a dual image of terrorist and refugee. Palestinians were portrayed as 'dedicated, vicious political fanatics' (*Time*, 21 September 1970) or 'unpredictable terrorists' (*Time*, 19 March 1973) and their behaviour described as 'insensible terror' (*Time*, 27 May 1974) or 'savage and irrational' (*Time*, 7 January 1974). Zaharna suggests that President Carter's call for a Palestinian homeland in 1977 and the Camp David agreements, which called for expanded Palestinian autonomy, increased the legitimacy of their cause whilst the Sabra and Shatilla killings maintained their image as victims. During the first intifada the author found that *Time* produced more positive images of Palestinians, sometimes highlighting their claims to independence and self-determination. He suggests that this may have been partly due to attacks on foreign journalists by members of the IDF. In the period leading up to the Oslo accords Zaharna found that positive images of Yasser Arafat became much more frequent. He suggests that Arafat's deal making with Israel led to him being recognised as a legitimate leader of the Palestinians nineteen years after he was officially recognised by the United Nations and that 'the irony was that the gap between the Palestinian leadership and people's media image was ultimately bridged through the PLO's ability not to align itself with its own people in 1974 but with Israel in 1993' (1995: 47).

Noakes and Wilkins (2002) examined a random sample of *Associated Press* and *New York Times* articles for the period 1984-1998 and assessed three variables: how much attention the conflict received; which sources were cited; and how Palestinian actions were framed. Noakes and Wilkins found that both the first intifada and the beginning of the Oslo peace process in 1993 led to a large increase in news coverage. They argue that the first intifada 'as a grassroots protest against an oppressive government...frame[d] the Palestinian cause in terms similar to those advanced by many movements in the US including the Civil Rights Movement' and that 'such frames resonate[d] with the producers of TV news and the American public' (2002: 659). However the authors offer no evidence in form of interviews or focus group studies with viewers or broadcasters to support these claims. Other research in this area, suggests that it can be dangerous to make assumptions about how the activities of Palestinians opposing the occupation will be read by audiences, as a crucial factor is whether viewers see the struggle as legitimate (Philo & Berry,

2004). Noakes and Wilkins did find that a consistent pattern in sourcing that official Israel spokespersons were consistently cited more than official Palestinian sources by a factor of two to one, although the use of official Palestinian sources increased markedly after the signing of the Oslo agreements. They also found that the framing of Palestinian resistance changed over time. Prior to the first intifada Palestinians were three times more likely to be portrayed as ‘terrorists’ rather than the ‘victims’ in the struggle, whilst during the uprising they were presented as terrorists only slightly more than victims. The authors claim that:

It was also during the intifada period that the Palestinian struggle was most likely to be presented as just. Fewer than one out of ten news articles framed the Palestinian struggle as justified prior to the intifada, but more than one quarter (27.5 percent) of the articles did so during the intifada. The appearance of this frame in US news media, however declines quickly in subsequent periods. In contrast, Palestinians were most likely to be seen to have a right to self-determination or national sovereignty after the Oslo Accords (2002: 664)

Although the researchers do not draw the conclusion, one possible explanation for the media choosing to portray the Palestinian demand for national self-determination more favourably after the Oslo Accords was that they were taking their cue from official American foreign policy. The signing of the accords on the White House lawn in 1993 may have indicated to news editors and journalists that the Palestinian claim to self-determination was now a legitimate perspective.

Other research has focused on how the media reported on specific events, such as the first Palestinian intifada. For instance, Daniel (1995) argues that images from the first intifada presented a challenge to the dominant representation of the conflict. She maintains that most news fits into standard storylines in which the ‘prevailing conventional wisdom is not challenged and the status quo interpretation of the world is preserved’ (1995: 64). However the 1987 uprising ‘presented a serious challenge to the predominant conception of Israel as a tiny democracy surrounded by hostile forces and constantly threatened by Palestinian terrorists’ (1995: 62). She suggests that the images of women and children facing faces tanks and armed with stones didn’t fit with previous images of ‘turban shrouded, almost exclusively male militants’ (1995: 67). Thus footage from the conflict ‘recontextualised the Palestinian population as one

composed not just of a few terrorist males but of families and community, a major base for identification' (1995: 68). Daniel suggests that the introduction of such complexities 'and grey areas into a situation that was previously a clear contest of good and evil, of victim and villain' served to open up discussion on issues such the occupation, and Palestinian demands for self-determination (1995: 67). She also cites American public opinion data to argue that public opinion of Palestinians became more positive during the intifada.

Wolfsfeld in an another study of American media coverage of the first intifada argues that the uprising provided 'an almost textbook case of how a seemingly weaker challenger can shatter the authorities' domination over the political environment and successfully promote their frames to the news media' (1997:127). Wolfsfeld argues that two frames vied for competition in the intifada, the 'law and order frame' which defined the uprising as composed of criminal acts and social disorder, and the 'injustice and defiance frame' which presented the uprising as a response to a 'brutal military occupation'. Echoing the claims made by Daniel above, Wolfsfeld argued that the 'injustice and defiance frame' was more successful because the 'confrontations in the streets and allies of the West Bank and Gaza provided more than just journalistic resonance, they also had a good fit with Palestinian claims concerning Israeli brutality' (1997:153). Also in line with the position taken by Noakes and Wilkins, Wolfsfeld argues that the 'information and images collected by American journalists resonated both professionally and politically with an injustice and defiance frame' a perspective which 'dominates the political culture of American television news' (1997:160). The author argues that the 'Palestinians were the clear winners in the cultural contest over the intifada' because they were successful in emphasising that the occupation was to blame. However in the absence of any audience research it is speculative to impose a priori categories of understanding on viewers, by assuming that they will employ an 'injustice and defiance frame' when interpreting the uprising. Also the same criticism applies to his assumption that the inequities of the occupation were the dominant theme in coverage. As a former member of the IDF the consequences of the intifada may be clear to the writer, but some audience research suggests that ordinary viewers are unlikely to understand its social ramifications unless they are properly explained (Philo & Berry, 2004).

Gilboa (1993) argues that the media coverage of the intifada was 'biased' against Israel, but despite this 'American chiefly blamed the PLO for the violence and

were divided on other important issues: whether the riots were acts of violence or acts of disobedience, whether the reason for the violence were legitimate or not' (1993: 98). Gilboa points to public opinion research which found that 63 percent of Americans thought the PLO a 'terrorist organisation' and only fourteen percent who saw it as a 'national liberation movement', and claimed that 'despite the forceful demands of the Palestinians to establish an independent Palestinian state, the US public did not support this solution' (1993 :102) However some may question the impartiality of Gilboa's methods. Much of the research he cites which purports to show an anti-Israel bias was produced by pro-Israel lobby groups like the Anti-Defamation League, whilst some of the opinion polling questions he cites are leading. For instance one question asked:

Which of the two opinions is closer to yours: The US shouldn't negotiate with the PLO because they are terrorists and they refuse to recognise the right of Israel to exist; or in order to bring about peace in the Middle East we should be willing to talk to all parties involved? (1993: 104)

More recent research on the al Aqsa intifada has argued that there is an imbalance in media coverage which favours Israel. For instance Lowstedt and Madhoun (2002) cite research which looked at a six month sample of American Public Radio (NPR) broadcasts which found that 81 per cent of Israeli deaths in the conflict were reported as opposed to only 34 percent of Palestinian deaths. The imbalance was even more marked in relation to the deaths of children, with 89 percent of Israeli child deaths reported compared to 20 percent of Palestinian child deaths. The researchers also found that whilst NPR was more likely to report the deaths of Israeli civilians than Israeli security personnel (84 percent to 69 percent) the opposite was true with regard to Palestinians where the deaths of Palestinian fighters was more likely to be reported than the deaths of Palestinian civilians (72 percent to 20 percent). They suggest that because of this imbalance 'consumers of US public media are likely to believe that nearly 50 percent of the people killed were Jews, and most of the children killed were Jews too' (2002: 48). Although the authors offer no audience research to back up these claims, audience research on British perceptions on the conflict did suggest that viewers tended to assume that Jewish casualties were at least as high as Palestinian ones and that this mirrored their relative prominence in news

broadcasts (Philo & Berry, 2004). Lowstedt & Madhoun also point to a six months study of NBC, CBS and ABC reports on al Aqsa intifada which found that Israelis were reported as 'responding' or 'retaliating' to Palestinian far more often than Palestinians were described as 'retaliating' (79 percent to 9 percent). They suggest that the 'impression was thus fostered that Israel acts violently in self defence, in response to violence initiated by their foes almost nine times more than Palestinians' (2002: 48). They also point to coverage which often presents attacks on Israelis as breaking a period of 'calm' despite the fact that the 'calm' had included the killing of many Palestinians:

When Israelis are killed by Palestinians the acts are often referred to by the US media as the end of a 'calm' period, as a 'flare-up in violence'. For example, on September 18 and 19, 2002, six Israelis were killed in the two Palestinian suicide bomb attacks in six weeks. All major US news outlets referred to the preceding six weeks as 'calm'. However during that time, 54 Palestinians were killed by the Israelis, most of them unarmed civilians, totally uninvolved in resistance activities (2002: 48)

Ackerman (2002) also argues that there is an imbalance in American media coverage, in that the Palestinian perspective that they are resisting a violent military occupation is presented infrequently. He argues that even the use of the words 'occupied' and 'occupied territories' has become rarer in recent years:

The word 'occupation' has become almost taboo for American reporters. Even the designation 'occupied territories' once routine has all but disappeared. In the early 1990s 'occupied territories' showed up in hundreds of AP articles every year- 699 in 1992 and 731 in 1993. Nearly a third of all articles mentioning Palestinians used the term. By the end of the decade the number of appearances had dwindled to a few dozen. During the first eleven months of 2000, barely one 1 percent of articles mentioned the dreaded phrase. On the three major networks' evening news broadcasts- 'ABC World News Tonight', 'NBC Nightly News,' and 'CBS Evening News'- the West Bank or Gaza were ninety nine news stories since the fighting began in late September. Of those

ninety nine stories, only four used the word ‘occupied,’ ‘occupation’ or any other variation. (2002: 62).

Ackerman argues that the upshot of this is that ‘instead of honest account of each sides’ grievances, journalists reporting on the clashes in the West Bank and Gaza offer what is, in effect, a daily catalogue of seemingly unprovoked Palestinian aggression’ (2002: 62). For instance, Ackerman points to a bulletin on NBC’s ‘World News Tonight’ (9 October 2000) presented by Jim Wooten which reported on skirmishes between the IDF and Palestinians in Nablus, in which Palestinians were presented as ‘looking for confrontation’ with Israel, wielding ‘rocks and bottles’, initiating a ‘gun battle’ yet ‘one more example’ of how their ‘anger is turning more violent and more deadly’ (2002: 62). However Ackerman argues that the Palestinian grievances are not difficult to locate or present, and that journalists also avoid reporting the perspective of the UN which has frequently criticised the occupation:

But what are the Palestinians’ grievances? Why did they choose to confront Israel’s soldiers? Like most of his colleagues, Wooten maintains a studious silence, not mentioning the Israeli army posts surrounding Nablus or the checkpoints controlling the entrances to the town- even before the current round of violence began. Nor does he mention the bypass roads for settlers only or the ongoing expropriations of Palestinian land for expansion of the four nearby settlements, which are populated by armed militants many of whom support extremist religious leaders like the late Rabbi Meir Kahane, who advocated the expulsion of Arabs from the West Bank. And finally, he makes no reference to the fact that the entire apparatus of military occupation is illegal under the Geneva Conventions or that the UN Security Council resolutions have repeatedly demanded Israel’s withdrawal. (2002: 63)

Ackerman also points to other instances where US newspapers have chosen not to report criticism of Israel by bodies such as the United Nations and Amnesty International. For instance when at the beginning of the intifada the UN security council passed a resolution condemning Israel’s ‘excessive use of force against Palestinians’ Ackerman claims that only three of the top thirty six US newspapers in the Nexis database devoted an article to the vote with none of the headlines

mentioning Israel by name. Shortly afterwards Amnesty International released a statement condemning Israel's 'pattern of gross human rights violations that may amount to war crimes'. Ackerman notes that this statement was briefly noted by the *Boston Globe* and *Washington Post* but ignored by most of the other major newspapers including the *New York Times*. Ackerman also suggests that the US media are far more likely to accept the Israeli version of events when Palestinian civilians are killed in controversial circumstances and points to US media coverage of the killing of Mohammed al-Dura. Whilst the Palestinians regarded the killing as perpetrated deliberately by the IDF, Israeli spokesmen argued that the boy had been 'killed in the crossfire'. Ackerman found that the phrase 'killed in the crossfire':

appeared in the US media with remarkable uniformity: 'NBC Nightly News' and 'CBS Evening News' (both 30 September 2000), along with the *Baltimore Sun*, *Boston Globe*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Washington Post* (all 1 October 2000) all used some variation of 'caught in the crossfire' to describe the boy's shooting, even though Israeli responsibility was fairly clear. Israel later acknowledged its soldiers had shot the boy with one of its spokesmen admitting that the initial denial had damaged the government's credibility. (2002:66)

Noam Chomsky (e.g. 2000, 1999, 1996, 1993, 1992, 1991, 1988) has written extensively on US media coverage of the conflict and accused the press of systematically misrepresenting fundamental aspects of the dispute. Chomsky's method has been to compare what appears in the American press, with a particular emphasis on major publications such as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Time* and *Newsweek* with reports from the Israeli, European and Arab media, the United Nations, human rights groups, as well as what has been published in official government documentation and historical texts. Chomsky then uses these alternative sources of information as a method for evaluating the veracity and accuracy of what is reported in the American press. Chomsky argues that the American press has consistently viewed the conflict from an Israeli perspective, and presents evidence to show that Israeli human rights abuses such as extra-judicial killings, torture, collective punishments and theft of land and water are largely ignored by the media, whilst Palestinian attacks on Israelis are highlighted and condemned. He argues that the long

history of Israel defying UN resolutions is ignored, whilst American diplomatic and financial support for policies which breach international law and the Geneva Conventions is rarely mentioned in the media. One of the most serious charges he makes is that journalists have consistently misrepresented the Palestinian and wider Arab position towards Israel, presenting it as intransigent and unwilling to come to any accommodation with Israel, whilst presenting the Israelis as the more accommodating partner. Chomsky presents evidence including UN resolutions, peace plans as well as official Arab and Israeli statements which suggest the obverse, that it was the Palestinians and Arab states who have strived for a negotiated settlement since the 1970s, and that this has been consistently rejected by Israel and the United States. Such evidence he suggests has been dispatched to 'Orwell's useful memory hole' (1999: 71):

American commentators are still more extreme in their rejection of the historical record, as in the sample of cases cited. In the early years the PLO was no less rejectionist than Israel, and its call for a 'democratic secular state' was not what it appeared on the surface. But it simply cannot be denied that from the mid 1970s, the PLO has moved increasingly towards an accommodationist position. Whilst concealing this record, propagandists search desperately for statements by PLO spokesmen that reveal their unremitting hostility to Israel and unwillingness to accept it. Israeli doves have regarded such efforts with contempt, pointing out that the same logic would lead to the conclusions that no one should have any dealings with the Zionist movement or the State of Israel, since its leaders have consistently rejected any Palestinian rights and have repeatedly indicated that they regard any political settlement as a temporary stage leading to further expansion. What is more they have acted on these principles. We return to the record which is not without interest and is generally concealed here. That outright propagandists should resort to these practices is not very surprising; that, after all, is their vocation. It is interesting that the practice is common across a broad spectrum of western opinion, particularly in the US as one aspect of the ideological support for Israel. (1999: 76-77)

In an analysis of the 'Oslo II' peace agreement struck in 1995 and the assassination of Yitzak Rabin soon after, Chomsky claims that American and British journalists misrepresented what had been agreed. In particular he points to claims that Israel had agreed to relinquish the West Bank and Gaza, despite the fact that that Israeli leaders had made clear public statements that they would not allow the Palestinians full statehood, and what autonomy they would be granted would be confined to less than half of the West Bank:

The signing of Oslo II and the Rabin assassination shortly afterwards received enormous attention and coverage. Typical headlines after the signing give the flavour. 'Israel agrees to quit the West Bank.' 'Israel Ends Jews' Biblical Claim on the West Bank.' In 'Rabin's historic trade with Arabs,' a 'historical compromise.' 'Israelis, Palestinians find a painful peace,' establishing an 'undeniable reality: The Palestinians are on their way to an independent state; the Jews are bidding farewell to portions of the Holy Land to which they have historically felt most linked.' 'Score one for Clinton.' 'At White House, symbols of a day of awe' ... The *New York Times* lead story after the assassination reported that Rabin had 'conquered the ancient lands on the West Bank of the Jordan' and then 'negotiated the accord to eventually cede Israeli control of them to the Palestinians' ... The former Jerusalem bureau chief of the *Washington Post* reported that 'when Rabin Israelis the possibility of 'separation' of walling off the Gaza Strip and West Bank and getting the Palestinians out of sight and mind- the majority responded with enthusiasm'. 'Those who murdered Rabin, and those who incited them, didn't do so because they opposed to create a Palestinian Bantustan' the *New Statesman* correspondent reported from Jerusalem, chiding Edward Said for thinking otherwise. 'No: they knew that the course Rabin was charting would lead, unless stopped, to a Palestinian state' ... One intriguing feature is that the factual assertions are not even close to true. Israel did not 'agree to quit the West Bank' or 'Ends Jews' Biblical Claim on the West Bank.' It signed no 'agreement extending Palestinian rule to most of the West Bank' or 'to eventually cede Israeli control of West bank lands to the Palestinians.' Rabin never so much as hinted at an offer of 'walling off the Gaza Strip and West

Bank'; quite the contrary, he was adamant, clear and consistent that in stressing that nothing of the sort was even a remote possibility. (1999: 553-4)

Chomsky claims that there are at least three clearly identifiable reasons why the American media is more sympathetic to the Israeli position.. Partly, he claims, it is because of the influence of the pro-Israel lobby, but he suggests that this extends beyond the American Jewish community to incorporate 'major segments of liberal opinion, the leadership of the labour unions, religious fundamentalists' as well as 'conservatives' who support high military spending and 'adventurism abroad' (1999: 13). Secondly, Chomsky claims that Israel serves as a strategic ally of the United States in an area of the world which holds the bulk of the planet's energy reserves¹ Thirdly he notes that Israel had proved useful as a conduit for military aid and training to repressive regimes who could not be directly supported because of adverse publicity or congressional bans imposed because of major human rights abuses.²

British Research

In Britain very little academic research on media coverage of the conflict has been undertaken, reflecting the general paucity of empirical media research in universities (Philo & Miller, 2001). However Christopher Mayhew, an MP and the journalist Michael Adams produced a book in 1975 accusing the press and broadcast media of favouring the Israeli over the Palestinian perspective. The authors accused the press of failing to report Israeli contraventions of international law in the occupied territories such as land expropriations, the bulldozing of houses, and the use of torture and collective punishments. They also argued that the press provided little historical context and didn't feature the Arab point of view:

Editors were curiously reluctant to criticise Israeli policies and actions, even when those conflicted with United Nations resolutions, as over Jerusalem, for instance, where Israel's annexation of the Arab sector of the city and the subsequent expropriation of hundreds of acres of Palestinian land were carried out in defiance of specific rulings by both the Security Council and the General Assembly...On the other hand, these same editors fastened with relief on the mistakes of the Arabs, and were especially severe in their denunciations

of terrorism on the part of a desperate minority of Palestinians, who now began to resort to force in an effort to break the hold of the Israelis on the occupied territories...In short, it was very rare, in those years after 1967, to find in the British press any coherent statement of the Arab point of view over the Palestine question or any explanation of the origins of the Arab-Israeli conflict. (Mayhew & Adams, 1975: 80-81)

The authors maintained that this was partly as a consequence of the existence of a number of 'highly articulate supporters of Israel' employed as correspondents and editors. They pointed to reporters such as David Spanier of *The Times*, John Kimiche of the *Evening Standard*, Eric Silver and Terence Prittie at the *Guardian*, as well as editors of the *New Statesman* and *The Economist*. Mayhew and Adams argue that this influence was reinforced by broader public relations involving a 'wide variety of individuals and organisations' (1975:71):

[The Israeli case] was made openly and the whole ineffectively, through such organisations as the Zionist Federation and the Jewish National Fund, with their research bureaux and their press officers. It was made more discreetly through the influential Board of Deputies of British Jews and the powerful Zionist members of the Jewish community in Britain, men like Lord Janner, Lord Shinwell, Sir Marcus Sieff, as well of many Jewish MPs, who can claim the ear of the Editor of *The Times* or the Director-General of the BBC where lesser mortals would be turned away. It was made more crudely through Jewish advertisers. And it was perhaps most effectively made, in the long run, by the many Zionist sympathisers, both Jewish and gentile, who were actually employed in the press or who, as freelance commentators, enjoyed a wider reader access to the columns of our leading newspapers than did comparable writers whose views were critical of Israel. Among these last, we must note the truly extraordinary phenomenon of the Jewish correspondents employed in Israel by almost every newspaper and the BBC...nor should one forget the Israeli Embassy in London, whose staff were diligent, as they had every right to be, in cultivating the press and in inviting them for highly organised tours of Israel. (1975: 71-72)

The authors spoke of the problems they had getting articles which were critical of Israeli actions published in the *Guardian*, *Times* or *Observer* and the controversy that ensued when articles were published. For instance Adams recalls the pressure that was brought to bear on the editor of the *Guardian* after the journalist had reported on Israeli violations of the Geneva Conventions in the Gaza Strip:

The editor of the *Guardian*, who published the despatches I sent, found himself the target for much criticism and even abuse as a result. A campaign was orchestrated in which the British Embassy, the Jewish press in Britain and a number of individuals tried to discredit me, and through me the paper. The *Jewish Observer* published an 'Open Letter to the *Guardian*' criticising the editor's irresponsibility and suggesting that somehow he was in league with what the writer called 'your Arab friends'...A paper called *Israel Today*...openly accused me of publishing anti-Semitic material. The Israeli press attaché wrote a very long letter denying the precise accusations that I had made about breaches of the Geneva Conventions by the Israelis in Gaza...These were the outward and visible signs of the pressure being exerted to silence me, and while they were not difficult to answer, I could not be surprised if the editor was disturbed by them and the personal interventions which were being made to him. (1975:78)

On television and radio the authors suggested that the situation was little different because a 'natural pro-Israel bias was built into our broadcasting simply because our society includes a talented and influential Jewish minority.'(1975: 95). The authors pointed to a study showing that during the 1973 October War, Israeli sources interviewed on the radio programme *World at One* outnumbered Arab sources by a factor of four to one. There were also claims that organised lobby groups were able to exert pressure on television broadcasters if material was considered critical of Israel. Brian Magee, the former Labour MP for Waltham Forest argued that television presented reality through an Israeli prism:

Unfortunately we in this country tended to look at the conflict very much from one side, the Israeli side, until quite recently. And when we were infected by the one-sidedness, the fanaticism almost. For instance, our television and

newspapers reported the Six Day War of 1967 almost entirely from the Israeli point of view, without much audible protest from anyone, so far as I can remember. Yet when it was all over I presented a programme on ITV which raised the questions, how did the Arabs feel now, what are their reactions to defeat, how do they see their immediate future, and before the program had even finished the switchboard at Television House was jammed with telephone calls protesting about British television being given over to the Arab point of view. There were shoals of letters afterwards, the Directors of the Company received personal complaints, there was a reference to the program in the House of Commons. (*The Listener*, 19 March 1970, cited in Mayhew and Adams, 1975:104)

Such pressure appeared to effect the approach taken by the BBC towards impartiality. When questioned by a member of the Council for Arab British Understanding about perceived pro-Israel bias in programming, the BBC Secretariat appeared to argue, in a quite remarkable letter, that the Corporation should not seek to provide equal coverage of the Israeli and Palestinian viewpoints, but instead should reflect in its coverage the greater power of the pro-Israel lobby:

One must acknowledge that journalists doing an honest job in this country have to take an account of the Israeli or Zionist public relations activities are conducted with a degree of sophistication which those on the other side have rarely matched, and that supporters of Israel in this country represent a much more vocal and powerful minority than supporters of the Arab cause. In other words, an accurate reflection of publicly expressed attitudes on the issue will inevitably reveal at times a preponderance of sympathy for the Israeli side. If it exists it will be reflected no matter how hard one tries to be neutral and fair. Indeed we would be open to justified censure if we, so to speak cooked the books and pretended that situation was different. (Jim Norris, BBC Secretariat to Mr Michael Adams, 23 January 1974, cited in Mayhew and Adams, 1975: 98).

I want to finish this literature review by noting studies which have examined how Arabs and Palestinians have been represented in popular culture. Although these

depictions are fictional, there is a danger that they can reinforce representations present in news and current affairs programming.

Representations in Popular Culture

A number of studies have examined how Palestinians and Arabs more generally have been depicted within popular culture (Shaheen, 2003; Al-Quazzaz, 1983; Said, 1981; Suleiman, 1983; Campbell 1995, Fuller 1995). For instance Campbell examined depictions of Iranians in US motion pictures and argued that ‘theoretically these films represent sheer entertainment, but because the images duplicate those presented on television and in newspapers they underscore ‘factual portrayal’’ (1995: 185). Campbell concluded that the movie depictions of Iranians fostered ‘stereotypes of irrationality, terrorism, cruelty and barbarism’ (1995:185) and that these films ‘contextualised within a political climate not only celebrate hostility towards Iranians, they foster enmity and promote military aggression’ (1995:186). Similarly Fuller in another study of US films found that depictions of Arabs centred on ‘predominant terrorist themes of kidnapping, actual violence, bombs, hijacking, political terrorism’ and were imbued with an ‘underlying US overzealous brand of patriotism’ (1995: 195). Shaheen in a study of more than 900 Hollywood films found that Arabs were primarily presented as ‘heartless, brutal, uncivilised religious fanatics’ with a love for great wealth and lascivious fondness for white women. Palestinians he found were never presented positively as ‘normal folk’ and no American films showed ‘Palestinian families struggling to survive under occupation’ (2003: 187). Instead Palestinians were frequently portrayed as ‘ruthless terrorists’ particularly during the 1980s:

Films from the 1980s such as *The Delta Force* (1986) and *Wanted: Dead or Alive* (1987) present Lee Marvin, Chuck Norris and Rutger Hauer blasting Palestinians in the Mideast and in Los Angeles. In the 1990s, Charlie Sheen and Kurt Russell obliterate Palestinians in Lebanon and aboard a passenger jet, in *Navy Seals* (1990) and *Executive Decision* (1996)...Seven films, including *True Lies* (1994) and *Wanted: Dead or Alive* (1987) project the Palestinian as a nerve gassing nuclear terrorist. In more than eleven movies including *Half Moon Street* (1986), *Terror in Beverly Hills* (1988), and *Appointment with*

Death (1988), Palestinian evildoers injure and physically threaten Western women and children... The reader should pay special attention to *Black Sunday* (1977), Hollywood's first major movie showing Palestinians terrorising and killing Americans on US soil. Telecast annually the week of Super Bowl Sunday the movie presents Dahlia, a Palestinian terrorist, and her cohort Fasil. They aim to massacre 80,000 Superbowl spectators, including the American President, a Jimmy Carter lookalike. (2003: 187)

Clearly researchers have employed very different methodologies in assessing how the Israel-Palestine conflict has been portrayed in the media. However some areas of consensus can be located. Most of the research appears to suggest that the Israeli perspective tends to be more heavily featured than the Palestinian and that Palestinians have been portrayed in a worse light generally than Israelis, with their grievances rarely explained. Some American commentators have suggested that the fact that Israel is a US ally partly explains the preference in coverage. Others have suggested that the imbalance is a result of Israel's more developed system of public relations. The research into popular culture representations suggests that many motion pictures reinforce the most negative image of Palestinians as 'ruthless terrorists'.

Factors Affecting the Production of News

In chapter four I discuss the various constraints and forces which shape the contours of news reporting of the conflict. However before that I want to review the literature in this area. Researchers have approached the subject from a number of different perspectives. Some have adopted a political economy approach focusing on the impact of commercial pressures on the production of news. Others have examined the relationship between journalists and sources, questioning who gets to speak and who is denied the opportunity to air their perspective. Within this tradition can also be added research which examines how public relations and political advertising has affected the interaction of journalists and sources. Another approach has been to look at the professional and institutional values that journalists profess to uphold and how these affect reporting, chiefly among these the BBC and its ethos of 'impartiality'. Other researchers have examined how news coverage can be constrained by a nation's

foreign policy and how state and corporate actors can place pressure on media organisations to curtail critical coverage. Another strand of research has examined how lack of specialist knowledge and the formalised nature of journalism training can affect news coverage, whilst another approach, which looks at cultural contexts and value systems, has examined how journalists are influenced by society's particular cultural mores and traditions in determining what is newsworthy and how to frame issues. I will begin this review by examining the effects of commercial pressures to maximize audiences.

Commercial Imperatives

A number of commentators have stressed the pressures and constraints placed on media organisations by their need to maximise audiences and ensure profitability (e.g. Miliband, 1973; Golding & Elliot, 1980; Curran & Seaton, 2004; Philo, 1995; Barnett, 1998; Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Sparks, 1999). Curran and Seaton note how the need to deliver mass audiences to advertisers serves to skew programmes towards:

...a preference for 'entertainment' as opposed to 'serious' programmes...Commercial pressures have also led programme makers to emphasize the personal and human interest aspects of documentary stories. Thus structural social problems are treated in the form of individual case studies. This kind of audience reaches a wider audience, particularly amongst young women, than other documentary styles. The prominence given to certain types of programmes on commercial television is a direct consequence of the pressures generated by the advertising for the production of certain types of audiences. (Curran & Seaton, 2004: 188-189)

What are sometimes referred to as 'news values' can be seen partly as a consequence of commercial pressures to produce bulletins which grab audiences. In *Making the News* Golding and Elliot suggest that two of the most important 'news values' are visual attractiveness and entertainment. They cite comments from a former head of ITN news who argued that the 'key to putting more hard news on the air effectively lies, I am sure in putting more pictures and less talk into news

programs...the challenge is to turn hard factual important news into pictures' (cited in Golding & Elliot, 1980: 87). The authors also noted pressures towards 'softer' coverage. They found that journalists regarded the 'human interest angle as an important way of making events palatable or comprehensible to audiences of broadcast news', and that this sometimes created a tension between those journalists who regarded news as a serious weighty issue and those who saw it primarily as a product to be packaged and sold.

However partly tempering commercial pressures in British journalism has been both the public service tradition of the BBC and a framework of public regulation. The Independent Broadcasting Authority, which was created at the outset of commercial broadcasting, had a strong public service ethos and insisted that quotas of news and current affairs programming be shown in prime time. Such expectations were made conditions of franchise renewals despite pressure from broadcasters and advertisers. 'Advertisers understand that current affairs and news programming is a condition of the survival of the commercial television companies, there is no use complaining about it' remarked an advertising executive in the trade journal *Campaign* in 1979 (cited in Curran & Seaton, 2004: 181). However the 1980s and 1990s saw moves towards the de-regulation of broadcasting in Britain and subsequently the creation of a more market orientated system. Following the 1990 Broadcasting Act the Independent Broadcasting Authority was replaced by the 'lighter touch' Independent Television Commission (ITC) whose remit was more geared to preventing abuses than setting aspirational standards. The ITC had no role in fostering quality and could not insist that news or current affairs is broadcast in peak time. Stephen Barnett notes that even before the new body came into being television executives were threatening to axe documentaries like *World in Action* unless they achieved very high ratings:

Even before the new regime was implemented Carlton's then director of programmes, Paul Jackson, insisted that current affairs programmes could only keep their peak time place through consistently high ratings. He told the *Daily Telegraph* in 1992: 'If *World in Action* were in 1993 to uncover three more serious miscarriages of justice while delivering an audience of three, four or five million, I would cut it. It isn't my job to get people out of prison' (Barnett, 1998: 82)

Deregulation also led to a further concentration in the broadcast industry with an acceleration of the trend towards corporate oligopoly. Curan and Seaton note that the competition amongst a small bands of giant conglomerates led to further pressures to cut costs and ‘an almost inevitable lowering of standards, it is [for instance] cheaper to buy in agency news than send a reporter to the scene’ (2004: 184). Barnett suggests that this increase in competition together with a relaxation of regulation has inevitably led to programming becoming more consumerist. This process he argues has been ‘accelerated massively’ by the new market research techniques underpinned by increases in the power of statistical analysis:

The result is a focus group mentality which has seeped from the media into business and of course into politics. If focus groups tell us that one Brit carries the weight of ten Americans, a hundred Germans or a thousand Algerians, we steer our news bulletins and current affairs in that direction and adopt the same attitude as the Sun columnist Richard Littlejohn: ‘Does anyone really give a monkey’s about what happens in Rwanda? If the Mbongo tribe wants to wipe out the Mbingo tribe then as far as I’m concerned that’s a matter for them (Barnett, 1999: 84)

Barnett suggests at its most extreme this approach can mean that broadcasters avoid programming which might challenge viewers’ conventional wisdom in case such material is alienating and cites comments from the Discovery Channel as to why they rejected the documentary *Living Islam*: ‘For us Islam means terrorism, fundamentalism and the mistreatment of women. If you can’t major on that then we don’t want to know.’ (cited in Barnett, 1999: 85). Colin Sparks suggests that the trends towards deregulation and privatisation are eroding the space for public debate and collective action:

The destruction or at least erosion of the constitutive public life of society throws the private sphere into even greater prominence. The disparate pursuits of the individual come to occupy the space once filled by the citizen. The growing number and importance of the fragmentary and specialised media of leisure pursuits are the concomitant of this economic process...As the public

sphere disappears its characteristic organs atrophy or transform themselves . Those that survive and the newly created replacements for the casualties are and more and more concerned with the narrow private world defined within a pre-given framework of politics, economy and society. (1991: 71)

Philo (1995) notes that the 1990 Broadcasting Act also changed the structure of the BBC, forcing the Corporation to commission a quarter of its original programming from outside companies. This introduction of market forces led to pressures to cut costs and hence quality in news and current affairs. High quality news and current affairs programming require continuity in staff, in-depth knowledge and expertise, as well as the ability to develop projects over long periods. However as Philo notes the ‘new pressures mean that the trend for television production as whole is now towards working on a short time scale, often with independent companies on low budgets’ (1995: 227) The free market then can act as a significant impediment to a critical and informed journalism:

To develop television which is critical and which explains required in-depth study and commitment. These are not the priorities of the commercial market which in its most unregulated form will be concerned only with grabbing the attention of audiences and delivering them to advertisers at the lowest possible cost (1995: 229)

Sourcing

Herman and Chomsky (1988) note that the mass media are drawn into a symbiotic relationship with a powerful institutional sources by economic necessity and reciprocity of interest. The requirements to produce a set number of news bulletins every day requires a constant flow of information. Fishman (1980) describes this as the ‘principle of bureaucratic affinity’ whereby only a large institution can cater to the information needs of a media outlet. In practice this is achieved through stationing reporters on ‘beats’ and anticipating future events through the use of the ‘news diary’ (Golding and Elliot, 1980). Journalistic ‘beats’ serve to place institutional sources, often state bureaucrats in a powerful structural position as suppliers of official information and statistics. Many studies have suggested that news generation mainly

involves the interaction of journalists and government bureaucrats and is essentially 'passive'. For instance, Hess (1981) in his study of Washington correspondents found that journalists used no documents in approximately three quarters of their stories. Official sources tend to be perceived as credible and trustworthy due to their status and prestige. Fishman suggests that this is because journalists uphold a 'normative order of knowers' in society, which can mean that officials' claims to knowledge are sometimes taken as factual (1980: 144). This he claims can lead to a 'moral division of labour: officials have and get the facts, reporters merely get them.' (1980: 145). Herman and Chomsky (1988) suggest that such practices also have other advantages, since if journalists want to utilise unofficial sources they have to check material carefully to avoid possible libel suits. This, of course, serves to increase the costs of such journalism.

In Britain the relationship between the state's information managers and journalists is formalised and controlled through the 'lobby system'. Here journalists are granted particular 'informational privileges' such as special access to official documents and briefings from officials:

The largest group of 'lobby correspondents' are the 140 political journalists based at Westminster, who have their own rules and 'officers' to supervise the system. There are also smaller lobby groups covering areas such as education, industry and defence. Lobby correspondents have other privileges such as access to White Papers and Government documents before they are released to the general public. Any who break the rules may have their lobby privileges withdrawn. The system has been attacked by some journalists, especially American, since instead of encouraging investigation it produces a reliance on the government to provide pre-packaged information. (Glasgow Media Group, 1985: 1)

The lobby system illustrates at least three key features of British journalism. Firstly that 'political authorities can assume a consensus amongst most journalists on the range of views that are to be featured in any 'serious' fashion' (Glasgow Media Group, 1985: 3). The reliance on political sources ensures that debates then become framed and bounded by the political consensus at Westminster. Secondly that a hierarchy of authority and credibility exists, reflecting the class divisions within

society, whereby official views are considered inherently more authoritative than those offered by oppositional sources. In replying to this charge Richard Francis, the former Director of News and Current Affairs at the BBC only served to confirm its validity:

The BBC's journalists do indeed find it natural to ask 'an important person' - a senior civil servant or government minister, for instance- for they are the people whose decisions largely determine how things will be run in our democracy (*New Statesman*, 20 April 1979, cited in Glasgow Media Group, 1985: 2-3)

Thirdly the structural position of the state's public relations professionals and their monopoly on the dissemination of public policy information hinders the ability of journalists to report critically on issues of public concern. As David Leigh notes:

Deprived, in theory at least, of independent right of access to information about public affairs, the journalists depends on what he is told as a favour. The frequent reason for claiming secrecy on power-holders' operations is to allow them to present their own unchallenged version of reality: the obverse of the secrecy coin is always propaganda. From the point of view of a politician, the ideal journalist is one who will accept misleading statements and disguise their source. (Leigh, 1980: 33, cited in Glasgow Media Group 1995: 5)

The close professional and personal relationships linking journalists and official sources also gives those sources leverage through the use of threats and rewards in ensuring journalistic compliance. They may encourage reporters to carry dubious stories or threaten to cut off information if other sources are consulted.

Hall et. al. (1978) have described the position of official sources as 'primary definers' due to both their institutional legitimacy as elected representatives, and the routine practices and values of journalists. Hall et. al. argue that 'primary definers' are routinely 'over-accessed' by the media and are able to establish the definition of the topic in question and map out the terms of debate. It is argued that this definition of the scope and terms of an issue then comes to pre-structure any further discussions within the media, and future commentators must work within this framework of

debate. However this theory has been criticised on a number of grounds. Some have argued that it fails to take account of the effects of commercial imperatives and journalistic cultures. Others have attacked it for presenting a model of source access that is 'structurally over-determined' and unable to deal with situations where 'primary definers' lose control of the agenda (Schlesinger, 1990; Dalghren, 1995; Schlesinger & Tumbler, 1994; Davis, 2000).

Public Relations

Although institutional elites may, due to their structural position, have privileged access as sources, they also heavily utilise the services of public relations professionals (PRPs) to manage their messages. The UK public relations industry has been grown at an unprecedented rate since the 1980s, with annual growth rates of 20-25 percent during most of that decade (Davis, 2000). Although the recession at the end of the 1980s signaled a slowdown, the period from 1993 onwards has again witnessed a rapid expansion in fee income for consultancies (Davis, 2000). The primary users of the PR sector have been corporate and governmental clients. As a number of commentators have noted the fortunes of the PR sector and the Conservative Party in the 1980s were closely linked (Miller & Dinan, 2000; Franklin, 1994; Philo, 1995). The Conservative Party became reliant on PR firms for both the selling of privatisation policies and election support, as well as for legitimation and the management of public opinion in the face of a number of crises. These included the decline in the manufacturing sector and rises in unemployment (Philo, 1995), the Falklands conflict (Glasgow Media Group, 1985), counter-insurgency campaigns in Northern Ireland (Miller, 1994), and the 1984/5 Miner's Strike (Jones, 1986). Research commissioned by the Institute of Public Relations (IPR) in 1994 showed that professional public relations continues to be dominated by corporate and governmental clients. Only 9 percent of PRPs work for non-profit organisations (more than half of which are business trade bodies). No Unions and oppositional political groups featured in the IPR survey. Of consultancy work which comprises 47 percent of the total, the vast majority (over 90 percent) is commissioned by corporate clients seeking to improve their consumer, corporate, financial, trade and government relations. Oppositional groups who wish to contest the agenda with powerful

government or corporate sources are likely to find themselves out-resourced in the PR battle both in terms of manpower and financial clout. As Davis (2000) notes this confers significant advantages to the better resourced side:

More PR resources mean more PR contacts, greater output of information subsidies, multiple modes of communication, and continuous media operations. Even though smaller organisations are increasingly drawn to using PR consultancies and employing PRPs most continue to be effectively excluded by the high costs...In effect the 'costs of market entry' into the professional PR world once again restrict full participation by smaller opposition organisations. These extreme differences in economic resources mean well-resourced organisations can inundate the media and set the agenda while the attempts of resource-poor organisations become quickly marginalised. (Davis, 2000: 48)

In Northern Ireland Miller (1994) notes the disparity in PR resources between Sinn Fein, with five voluntary press staff and a budget of £7000, competing against a government information service employing 145 PR staff and equipped with a budget of £20 million. Davis (1998) noted that public service trade unions striving to prevent government cuts and privatisations were comprehensively and consistently out-resourced by both corporations and government departments during the 1980s. For instance, Jones (1986) in his study of press coverage of the 1984/5 Miner's strike noted that during the conflict the National Coal Board spent £4.5 million on advertising and increased its press staff from 6 to 25.

It has been suggested that recent changes in the economic structure of the media industry are making journalists more dependent on the output of professional PR. The deregulation of media industries in the 1980s together with the introduction of new technologies and the introduction of competition into public service broadcasting have all contributed to a media environment under tremendous pressure to cut costs. Tunstall (1996) argues that such pressures have led to a fall in the level of investigative journalism and an increased dependency on news sources. Tunstall cites evidence that journalists now have to produce three times as much copy as in the 1960s, with no equivalent increase in resources. Such strictures, he maintains, have led journalists to become less investigative and increasingly reliant on PRPs to

provide them with 'information subsidies' (Sigal, 1973; Gandy, 1980; Fishman, 1980; Herman & Chomsky, 1988). Institutional sources are keen to subsidise the costs of news gathering by employing PRPs to manage the flow and presentation of information because this serves to reinforce their position as primary sources and makes it more difficult for under-resourced oppositional sources to compete:

In effect, the large bureaucracies of the powerful *subsidise* the mass media and gain special access by their contribution to reducing the media's costs of acquiring the raw materials of, and producing news. The large entities that provide this subsidy become 'routine' news sources and have privileged access to the gates. Non-routine sources must struggle for access, and may be ignored by the arbitrary actions of the gatekeepers. (Herman & Chomsky, 1988: 22)

Changes in the relationship between journalists and sources are difficult to estimate not least because it is in the interests of both parties, that the terms of relationship remain as veiled as possible. However according to Davis 'it is evident that both sources and journalists have become transformed in their relations by what, in effect, amounts to a massive transfer of news-gathering resources, away from 'independent' journalists and towards partisan sources' (2000: 44). Although this can clearly be seen in the rise to prominence of a certain type of PRP the 'spin doctor', these are 'just one aspect of a general transition that has seen the erosion of the lines that traditionally separated the participants in the media production process' (2000: 45).

Despite the advantages enjoyed by powerful institutional sources oppositional sources have also sought to use PR strategies to get their message across. Environmental organisations and NGOs have invested in PR facilities (Lowe & Goyder, 1983; Anderson, 1991; Hansen, 1993) as have pressure groups and trade associations involved in the criminal justice area (Ericson et. al., 1991; Schlesinger & Tumbler, 1994), gay and lesbian advocacy groups (Miller & Williams, 1993), and paramilitaries in Northern Ireland (Miller, 1994). Charities and the voluntary sector have also increased their use of PR. Deacon (1996) in a survey of voluntary sector found that 31 percent of organisations employed press officers, 43 percent used the services of external PR agencies and 56 percent monitored the media. In organisations with annual budgets in excess of £250,000 the figures increased to 57 percent, 81

percent, and 78 percent. Research by Davis (1998) found that two-thirds of unions had at least one part-time press officer, a quarter used PR consultancies and 57 percent used other agencies to monitor the media. A number of charities including the National Children's Home, St. John's Ambulance and the Royal British Legion have all won IPR awards in the 1990s for the strength of their PR campaigns (Davis, 2000). Other organisations such as the Terence Higgins Trust (Miller & Williams, 1993), and Friends of the Earth (Anderson, 1993) have through careful and skilful use of PR techniques improved their credibility and accessibility as news sources. Whilst powerful institutional sources do possess privileged access, there may be times when oppositional groups are able to contest and even overturn elite dominance. For instance, this may be possible when the political centre is divided.

Pressure, Intimidation, Censorship and the Law

If the use of public relations, with its attendant benefits for compliant journalists, can be seen as the 'sweet stuff' then the obverse, the 'fear stuff' is the application of pressure or 'flak' to journalists and news organisations. Chomsky & Herman (1988) point to the use of letters, petitions, lawsuits, legislation, speeches and threats by state and corporate actors to try to pressurise and intimidate media outlets. This pressure can be applied directly by, for instance, threatening not to renew a broadcaster's franchise, or can be more indirect by appeals to constituents such as stockholders, directors and advertisers. The funding and use of think tanks is another method for creating pressure. In America right-wing pressure groups such as Freedom House, and Accuracy in Media (AIM), have been consistent in their criticism of the media for its 'persistent liberal bias' and failure to represent the interests of business favourably. Chomsky & Herman suggest that the function of such groups are 'to harass the media and put pressure on them to follow the corporate agenda and a hard-line, right-wing foreign policy' (1988: 27). For instance, when the Reagan administration was criticised in the media for supporting the 'dirty wars' in Central America in 1980s, Freedom House produced a report denouncing the imbalance of coverage in the media.

In the UK Philo has noted that during the 1980s the Conservative party frequently pressurised the BBC because of what it considered unfavourable coverage. Criticism of government policy by the Corporation and the prominence given to the

problems of unemployment, poverty and Northern Ireland angered the Tory party who strongly criticised the institution. The party with the help of Lord Chalfont, set up its own Media Monitoring Unit which in its reports echoed the complaints of AIM in the US, that the BBC was 'persistently biased in favour of the Left' (cited in Philo 1995: 202). The reports rated every programme viewed with classification of possible bias. Programmes such as *Panorama* and *World in Action* were singled out for particular criticism. An episode of *World in Action* examining the impact of unemployment was classified as 'attacking the Right and promoting the Left' (cited in Philo, 1995; 202).

During the Falklands war the Conservative party was also very critical of the BBC. A *Panorama* programme which featured Labour and Conservative opposition to the war was branded by one Tory MP as an 'odious subversive travesty', and the Corporation was forced to admit that 'it was not neutral' in the conflict (Glasgow Media Group, 1985: 127). At the time of the Gulf War the BBC also adopted a cautious approach. In a report on the allied bombing of the Al-Amiraya bunker in which hundreds of civilians were killed it was repeatedly stressed that the casualties could well have been Iraqi propaganda. Philo and McLaughlin commenting on this noted that:

In the period of the war both the BBC and ITN were afraid of being accused by British politicians of showing 'Iraqi propaganda'. Such propaganda might include anything that gained sympathy for the Iraqi population. Consequently in the early days of the war, pictures of civilian casualties provided by the Iraqis were accompanied by heavy qualifications suggesting that they might not be authentic. These qualifications reduced the emotional impact of the pictures and protected the broadcasters against future criticism. (1995: 152)

Broadcasting was also attacked repeatedly over its coverage of Northern Ireland. The documentary *Death on the Rock* which dealt with the killing of three unarmed IRA personnel in Gibraltar and the disinformation campaign intended to justify the action, greatly angered the Tory Party, and it was widely suspected that the decision by Thames TV to show the documentary was an important factor in its franchise not being renewed. As Miller notes in his examination of government information control during the conflict, intimidation was often backed by the full use of the State's legal powers:

To support the PR effort there have been official attempts to impose tight controls on media practice. This is done, both by the use of the law and by the routine use of government intimidation of the media. In the former case, the number and severity of powers available to circumscribe the media have steadily increased since the 1970s. they include the Prevention of Terrorism act, the Emergency Provisions Act, The Official Secrets Act and the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, which have all been passed and/or tightened since the 1970s (O Maolain 1989). In particular the 1989 revision of the PTA allows the police to demand access to any journalistic material should they believe it is likely to have 'substantial value' in a terrorist investigation. The 1989 official secrets Act further narrowed the sphere of debate by making it illegal for anyone associated with intelligence or security matters to speak or be reported in the media. No public-interest defence is permissible. (1994 :47)

The Conservative government also resorted to direct censorship in the conflict, with the introduction of the broadcasting ban in October 1988, which prevented the transmission of statements from the members or supporters of eleven Irish political and military organisations. Miller notes that this was 'the first, and so far, the only use of this power since the beginning of British broadcasting history directly and overtly to rule out a whole class of political viewpoints' (1994: 48)

Media executives have stated that the struggle between broadcasters and the Conservative government during the 1980s did take its toll. The former Assistant Director-General of the BBC Alan Protheroe commenting on the atmosphere created by government pressure referred to fortnightly 'ritual crucifixions' when he would be dragged across the coals by the Board of Governors (*World in Action*; 28 February 1988, cited in Philo, 1995: 206). A producer who had spent more than twenty years in the BBC claimed that:

The Conservatives used a kind of salami-cutting technique by attacking the BBC day after day and constantly put the management into a defensive posture....We were self-censoring as a result of our superiors constantly saying 'can you rest it for a while?' (cited in Philo, 1995; 206)

The Conservative Party also strengthened its position vis-à-vis the BBC by appointing members of the Board of Governors who were sympathetic to their position. These included Malcolm McAlpine whose company had donated more than £300,000 to the Conservative party, and Stuart Young brother of the David Young, a cabinet minister. However these attempts to intimidate the Corporation were contested. When the Conservative Home Secretary asked the BBC to ban a programme in its *Real Lives* series dealing with a Loyalist and Republican representative in Northern Ireland the ban was confirmed by the Board of Governors. However this led to strikes at the BBC and ITN and the programme was eventually shown.

New Technology

The last two decades have seen the emergence of host of new communicative technologies such as mobile phones, satellite and digital television, and the internet. All of these have affected the practices of journalism in different ways. The emergence of cable and satellite channels devoted to news, together with pressures to cut costs have meant that journalists are having to service more media outlets. This inevitably means that they are likely to have less time available to research background and provide context. The arrival of the global 24 hour rolling news channels at the beginning of the 1990s also coincided with the arrival of satellite technology allowing correspondents to report in real time from any part of the globe. Barnett suggests that the ability to 'be there' instantaneously in breaking news events can push coverage towards the dramatic at the expense of a deeper understanding:

In foreign reporting mobile satellite technology guarantees that no part of the world is inaccessible to TV cameras, but that reporting is instantaneous. The result can often be dramatic, live pictures which provide little hard news and obscure the absence of any informed or critical reflection, as in the Gulf War (Barnett, 1998: 80).

As Eldridge noted the emergence of CNN during the Gulf War and in particular the live reports on the Scud missile attacks on Israel on the first night of the war pushed drama in news to new levels:

These CNN reports had a raw quality about them. They were unfiltered happenings. We can see one reporter know another over as the sirens wail out in Dhahan and they instinctively duck to avoid the anticipated missile. At times, because of the noise or because their voices are muffled by gas masks we can barely hear what they say. But what kind of knowledge is this? It was fairly described by one critic on BBC2's *Late Show* as 'immediacy without understanding, drama without information' (22 January 1991). And Jonathon Alter, media critic for Newsweek said that it had come to be regarded as 'good television' in that it had the quality of *cinema-verite*- something real that's going on. (Glasgow University Media Group, 1993:11)

The last decade has also seen a huge increase in the amount of agency news available instantly to news rooms via live feeds. The former head of news gathering at the BBC executive Chris Cramer noted back in 1995 that the amount of agency material pumped into the Corporation's newsroom was enormous:

The sheer volume of news pictures flooding in through our front doors these days is almost impossible to handle. 110 feeds a day at the BBC, six or seven hundred a week and growing all the time. The choice of agencies and other picture sources is already a headache for most of our newsroom and news managers...the picture flood as I call it is a real tribute to the three international news agencies...but it can cloud our judgement. (Address to Montreaux International Television Symposium, 13 June 1995, cited in Patterson, 1996: 147)

In recent years the news agencies have moved from the provision of raw footage to providing news packages involving full narration as well as pictures. These are an increasingly attractive option to broadcasters under pressure to cut costs, and there is a danger that such pressures are forcing newsrooms to become increasingly reliant on agency material. The BBC's Chris Cramer has denied that the Corporation is moving in this direction and argued that major broadcasters such as the BBC only 'buy agency material as fire insurance' (*Broadcast*, 30/6/1994). However others have suggested that having so many easily accessible news feeds is encouraging bad habits

in journalism. For instance Williams points to how much journalism training is structured around accessing such news services and suggests that this encourages a passive and uncritical approach:

New technology has made the process of finding out a more sedentary affair. Rather than telling journalists to get out there and 'find out about the patch' by talking to people, the teaching newsrooms of today are wired up to an array of information services that pump in material; while being linked to local media of one kind or another that put across their own news and information services. The result is that passivity and spoon-feeding are almost built into the process of education. (1999: 274)

Cultural Contexts/ Value Systems

Another approach to studying how news production has been to focus on how journalists select what is newsworthy based on the cultural context of a society. This is particularly noticeable in the work of news agencies who have to cater to many different markets and require an in-depth knowledge of what is popular in each. The former head of Worldwide Television News has commented that:

A lot of the news stories are of interest to regions. The world breaks down into the same kind of news affiliations as a country or city...In a town like New York you've got all the different newspapers appealing to different agendas. The same thing happens in global terms. The Scandinavians like certain kinds of stories and the Italians go for certain others which are based on their history and culture and the things that are topical in their own societies. (cited in Patterson, 1996: 352)

Hoggart in his introduction to *Bad News* talked of the 'cultural air we breathe, the whole ideological atmosphere of society' which delineates what can and cannot be said. This can be thought of as a kind of para-idology, the unquestioned and unnoticed background assumptions through which news is gathered and framed. Gans (1979) has put forward a list for American journalism which include ethnocentrism, altruistic

democracy, responsible capitalism, small town pastoralism, individualism and moderation as core unquestioned values. Golding and Murdock suggest that journalists have a conception of 'what is acceptable in their society' and that this is influenced by both class and organisational factors:

Other policies current in different newsrooms, some explicit, others more covert but generally recognised could similarly be traced to journalists' sense of what was acceptable in their society. Not that this sense was based on a sampling of national opinion. The sample such as it was, came filtered both through the journalists' personal experiences as members of a particular educated elite and through their occupational experience of working in broadcasting organisations whose major constituencies, government, politicians, and interest groups had clear ideas not so much of what public opinion was as what it ought to be (Golding & Elliot, 1980: 69)

This approach also helps to explain the use of generalised images and stereotypes such as 'predatory stockbrokers' or 'hard drinking factory workers' which transcend structures of ownership or patterns of work relationships. Journalists are drawing on a set of stereotypes and culturally given assumptions which they have in part created. However this can be a problem especially in relation to foreign news where sometimes such reporting can reinforce stereotypes. Golding and Elliot point out broadcasters draw on clichés and stereotypes from their own culture when reporting on the developing world:

In European media, stereotypes of life and customs in foreign parts play a large part in the treatment of stories from the Third World. Excitable mobs of Latin Americans, exotic primitives in Africa, incomprehensible mystics in the East continue to populate news bulletins not because of any malicious intent to perpetrate pernicious myths but in an innocent attempt to render usable and comprehensible the range of data which is the raw material of news (1980: 74).

'Innocent' or not the consequences of using stereotypes because they are culturally recognisable can be damaging. Philo in a discussion of research examining

public attitudes to the developing world pointed to television coverage of the 1994 Rwandan genocide where rather than sketching out the complex social and political factors behind the atrocities journalists fell back on clichés like ‘tribal passions’, interspersing such comments, with ‘shots of Africans dancing in grass skirts at a border post’ (2002: 176). As the Channel Four correspondent Lindsey Hilsum pointed out journalists found it difficult to understand the political roots of the genocide because of their own preconceptions about Africa, and so fell back on stereotypes. However as Philo notes this is likely to raise audience understanding of the developing world. When the author explained to a focus group that Hutu military regime had also killed foreigners and university staff, one viewer commented that ‘oh you don’t think of them as having universities’ (cited in Philo, 2002: 176). By drawing on culturally recognisable stereotypes journalists risk reinforcing viewers’ ignorance and prejudices rather than actually helping the public understand the world better.

Journalism Training and Critical Skills

In a review of the development of journalism education in Britain, Williams notes the enduring tension between the need to impart the vocational skills of the profession and the pressure to conform to the ‘traditional groves of academe’ (1999: 274). When the first journalism courses were introduced in the early 1970s established journalists were suspicious of the idea that universities could provide an alternative education comparable to what they would learn ‘on the job’. As the author notes this was still the era of the ‘dirty overcoat and the nose for news’ (1999: 273). Academics were also suspicious of the new discipline doubting whether it had the necessary academic credentials. Since the 1970s Williams observes that journalism training has become more specialised and more tied into the use of new technology and the ‘mechanics of production’. The author also notes that the orientation of many would-be journalists has shifted from a socially conscious focus towards one geared more to seeking ‘fame and fortune’. He argues that this is partly a consequence of the increasing insecurity and casualisation of the profession together with the move towards a more consumerist culture where being famous carries an especially high premium, but also because the content of journalism studies courses is ‘unlikely to stimulate critical awareness of key social issues’ (1999: 274).

Williams also claims that journalism studies courses are unable to provide aspiring reporters with the necessary critical skills required to evaluate the veracity of information. This he suggests is a function of the two dominant epistemological approaches inherent in contemporary journalism studies courses, the journalistic and the postmodern. Since the 1980s courses have moved away from teaching the traditional sociology of the media and moved over to teaching a cultural studies approach informed increasingly by a postmodern perspective. However the postmodern approach which eschews the use of empirical evidence and advocates a relativist and subjective attitude towards truth claims, is unable to critically evaluate the information that journalists encounter when researching stories or talking to sources. Williams maintains that the traditional journalistic approach with its largely uncritical reliance on information provided by sources is little better suited to the task. Journalists, Williams suggests, are 'encouraged to replicate the opinions and interpretations of their informers, without the means or methods to verify the truth of what they have been told', and since this is 'done in the name of objectivity the central totem of the profession, they cannot be told to scrutinise the sources to the degree they should be scrutinised' (1999: 276). The upshot of this is that journalists tend to end up providing a 'highly selective reproduction of the dominant view' without critical reflection or evaluation (1999: 277). To foster a more critical and informed journalism Williams suggests that the journalism studies curriculum needs to be greatly expanded:

It is clear that journalists need to know about how society works in order to report on and make sense of events. Thus they require knowledge of crime, work and employment, the global economy, agri-business, ecology and the environment, migration and race, contemporary politics, war and conflict, the developing world and many other elements of 'social studies'. In order to understand, contextualise and make sense of the range of claims and interpretations in the nitty-gritty daily routines of journalism, knowledge and understanding of key social issues are essential (1999: 278)

Others have put forward a different set of disciplines that could be integrated into journalism studies courses. For instance Brian Winston (1966) has suggested that media law, history and ethics together with political theory, should be core elements

of journalism training. Boulding (1966) has stressed the importance of journalists being trained to understand and evaluate information in databases and libraries and other reference sources which can then be utilised in developing stories, whilst Medsger (1996) in line with Williams has stressed that the 'unique public service ethos' of journalism should be an integral aspect of training.

This review has illustrated the complex matrix of factors which shape the contours of news coverage. I now want to move on in the next chapter to a review of the various perspectives on the history of the conflict.

Chapter 2 Histories of the Conflict

A nation is a group of people united by a mistaken view about the past and a hatred of their neighbours

Ernest Renan (cited in Shlaim, 2004)

Zionist Roots and the First Wave of Jewish Immigration into Palestine

The American historian Howard Sachar (1977) traces the contemporary emergence of Zionist thought to the European Rabbis, Judah Alkalai and Zvi Hirsh Kalischer, who from the 1830s onwards stressed the need for Jews to return to the Holy Land as a necessary prelude to the Redemption and the second coming of the Messiah. Sachar argues that such messianic exhortations did not immediately or widely take root amongst European Jews. However he suggests that by the 1870s societies generally known as *Chovevei Zion*- 'Lovers of Zion' had formed across Russia, which viewed Palestine as a site for national renewal and a refuge from anti-Semitism.

In 1881 following the assassination of Tsar Alexander II large numbers of Jews were killed in a series of Russian pogroms. By 1914 up to two million Jews had fled Russia to escape persecution. The vast majority sought sanctuary in the United States but 25,000 arrived in Palestine in two waves of immigration in 1882-4 and 1890-1. At the time the Jewish population in Palestine was small. The official Ottoman census of 1878 had put the total at 15,011 living amongst a combined Muslim/Christian population of 447,454 (McCarthy, 1990). Relations between the new Jewish immigrants and the native population were mixed. Jewish settlements were built on land that was purchased from absentee *effendi* landlords. Often the locals who had tended the land were evicted with the help of Turkish police and this led to resentment and violence. Some Zionists such as Ahad Aham were very critical of the way the settlers gained control of the land and treated the local population. In 1891 he argued that the settlers 'treat the Arabs with hostility and cruelty and, unscrupulously deprive them of their rights, insult them without cause and even boast of such deeds; and none opposes this despicable and dangerous inclination.' (1923: 107, cited in Hirst, 1977: 24). There was also evidence that the two groups were able to accommodate each other because the settlers also brought benefits. They provided employment opportunities, access to medical care, the loan of modern equipment, and

a market for produce. Sachar reports that in the 1890s the agricultural settlement of Zichron Ya'akov employed more than a thousand Arabs working for 200 Jews. The former *Guardian* Middle East correspondent David Hirst (1977) argues that the beginning of the twentieth century brought a new more militant type of settler to Palestine, inspired by the ideas of Theodor Herzl and determined to 'redeem the land' and 'conquer labour'. The Jewish National Fund, set up to manage Jewish land purchases, decreed in 1901 that all land it purchased could never be resold or leased to gentiles, and settlers began to boycott Arab labour (Hirst, 1977; Shafir, 1999).

Theodor Herzl and the Emergence of Political Zionism

Theodor Herzl, who is commonly regarded as the father of political Zionism, was a Jewish Austro-Hungarian journalist and playwright. He had been deeply affected by the virulent anti-Semitism sweeping across Europe, and as a journalist for the Vienna newspaper *Neue Freie Presse* had covered the notorious Dreyfus trial in Paris, where a Jewish officer was falsely charged with passing secrets to the Germans. Herzl felt that a central issue for Jews was their dispersal across the Diaspora and their existence as a minority in each country they inhabited. This, Herzl argued, led to a dependence on the host culture and a suppression of self-determination. Furthermore Herzl believed that widespread anti-Semitism meant that complete assimilation into European society was an impossibility for most Jews. His solution as laid out in 1896's *Der Judenstaat* or *The Jewish State* was for Jews to create their own state, in which they would constitute a majority and be able to exercise national self-determination. In contrast to the 'practical Zionism' of the Jewish settlers who began to arrive in Palestine from 1882, Herzl adopted a political orientation, cultivating links with prominent Imperial statesmen in an attempt to gain a charter for Jewish land settlement.

Herzl had two potential locations in mind for the prospective Jewish state, Argentina and Palestine. His diaries show that he was greatly influenced by the British imperialist Cecil Rhodes, and in particular the manner in which Rhodes had gained control of Mashonaland and Matabeleland from its inhabitants (Hirst, 1977). In his diaries he suggests that the settlers should follow Rhodes' example and 'gently' expropriate the native population's land and 'try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while

denying it any employment in our own country' but that 'the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly' (1960: 88, cited in Hirst, 1977: 18). In order to further this aim Herzl sought out an imperial sponsor prepared to grant a settlement charter. He canvassed Germany's Kaiser, the Ottoman Sultan and Britain's Joseph Chamberlain stressing to each the benefits that a Jewish state and Jewish capital could bring. In 1901 Herzl travelled to Constantinople and met the Sultan. Herzl offered Jewish capital to re-finance the Ottoman public debt in a failed attempt to gain a charter for the establishment of a Jewish Ottoman Colonisation Association in Palestine. Bohm (1935) claims that the third article of the proposed charter would have given the Jewish administration the right to deport the native population from Palestine. Herzl then switched his attention to lobbying British politicians. Hirst (1977) suggests that Herzl linked Zionist ambitions to British imperial interests, and tried to play on the anti-Semitism of certain British politicians by arguing that a Jewish homeland would lessen the flow of Jewish refugees fleeing pogroms, into Britain. Herzl lobbied Lord Rothschild for the creation of Jewish colonies in Cyprus, the Sinai Peninsula and Egyptian Palestine, but the plans met with resistance from the Egyptian authorities. In April 1903 Joseph Chamberlain suggested to Herzl that the Zionists should consider Uganda as a homeland. The proposal received a mixed reception from Zionists and was firmly rejected by the Zionist Congress in 1905 which ruled that colonisation should be confined to Palestine and its immediate vicinity. Herzl died in 1904, and the task of forwarding political Zionism passed to Chaim Weizmann.

The Second Wave of Jewish Immigration into Palestine

1904 saw the beginning of another wave of Jewish immigration into Palestine, again in response to Russian pogroms. The Israeli historian Ahron Bregman estimates 35,000 arrived, and argues that these settlers were different from the previous immigrants in that they sought to exclude Arab labour and were 'driven by a fierce sense of mission and bent on redeeming the land' (2003: 11). The Israeli sociologist Gershon Shafir argues that the struggle for the 'conquest of labour' transformed Jewish workers into 'militant nationalists' who 'sought to establish a homogenous Jewish society' (1999: 88) Some Zionists began to stress the importance of armed force in creating the Jewish homeland. Israel Zangwill, who had coined the Zionist

slogan ‘a land without people for a people without land’, informed a meeting of Zionists in Manchester in 1905 that ‘[We] must be prepared either to drive out by the sword the [Arab] tribes in possession as our forefathers did or to grapple with the problem of a large alien population’ (Zwangill cited in Morris, 2001: 140).

The Palestinians, as a subject population under Ottoman rule, were initially deferential in their protests. Repeatedly during the 1890s members of the Palestinian elite unsuccessfully petitioned their imperial overlords in Constantinople to limit Jewish immigration. The late nineteenth century was a period of growing pan-Arab awareness which had seen a renaissance, in the appreciation of Arab literature and culture. Ovendale argues that both the Ottoman Empire and the spread of Zionism were seen as a threat to Arab development. He suggests that ‘between 1909 and 1914 nationalist opposition in Palestine to Zionism grew: there were fears that if the Jews conquered Palestine the territorial unity of the Arab world would be shattered and the Arab cause weakened.’ (1999: 12). By 1914 the Muslim intellectual Rashid Rida argued that the Palestinians had a choice. They could either come to an accommodation with the Zionists in which the Zionists, in return for concessions, would put a limit on their ambitions or they could oppose them with arms:

It is incumbent upon the leaders of the Arabs- the local population –to do one of two things. Either they must reach an agreement with the leaders of the Zionists to settle the differences between the interests of both parties...or they must gather all their forces to oppose the Zionists in every way, first by forming societies and companies, and finally by forming armed gangs which oppose them by force. (Rida cited in Hirst, 1977: 32-33)

The Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate

During the First World War the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire was widely anticipated and the Entente Powers began negotiating over contending territorial ambitions. In 1916 negotiations between Britain, France and Russia (later to include Italy) led to the secretive Sykes-Picot agreement which sought to establish ‘spheres of influence’ for the European Powers within the region. However the agreement also accepted the realities of emergent Arab nationalism, and specified the recognition of

‘an independent Arab State’ or ‘confederation of Arab States’ within the region. British assurances of Arab independence after the defeat of the Axis Powers (which had been pledged as a reward for Arab support during the First World War) can be found in the correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon, British High Commissioner in Egypt and Sharif Husain, Emir of Mecca, who was recognised as the Keeper of Islam’s most holy places.³ However these pledges by European Powers to strive for the recognition of Arab independence conflicted with British assurances given, at the time, to Zionist leaders that Britain would seek the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Zionist leaders established close links with prominent British politicians including Lloyd George, Arthur Balfour, Herbert Samuel and Mark Sykes. In 1915 Samuel in a memorandum entitled the Future of Palestine proposed ‘the British annexation of Palestine [where] we might plant three or four million European Jews’ (Weisgal, 1944: 131, cited in United Nations, 1990). British support for a Jewish homeland was made explicit in the Balfour Declaration of November 1917:

His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country

The ‘non-Jewish communities’, which comprised the 89 per cent of the population who were Muslim and Christian, were angered by the declaration.⁴ They noted that it only spoke of their ‘civil and religious rights’ making no mention of political rights. Conversely for the Zionists the declaration was regarded as a triumph. The Israeli historian Avi Shlaim, paraphrasing Chaim Weizmann, argues that it ‘handed the Jews a golden key to unlock the doors of Palestine and make themselves the masters of the country’ (2000: 7). The legality of the Balfour Declaration has since been questioned by some legal experts (Linowitz, 1957; Cattar, 1973).

After the First World War Britain, Great Britain was assigned control of Palestine, through the Mandates system governing the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire. In 1921 the British divided the area in two with the sector east of

the Jordan River becoming Transjordan and the area west of the river the Palestinian mandate.

The indigenous population of mandated Palestine feared mass Jewish immigration would lead to the further colonisation of their country followed by their own subjugation. This view was shared by some prominent British politicians such as Lord Curzon who on 26 January 1919, commented to Lord Balfour: ‘I feel tolerably sure therefore that while Weizmann may say one thing to you, or while you may mean one thing by a national home, he is out for something quite different. He contemplates a Jewish State, a Jewish nation, a subordinate population of Arabs, etc. ruled by Jews; the Jews in possession of the fat of the land, and directing the Administration...He is trying to effect this behind the screen and under the shelter of British trusteeship.’ (British Government, Foreign Office, 1919a, cited in Ingrams, 1972: 58). Some members of the British establishment believed that by supporting the Jewish National home they were directly violating the terms of the mandate.⁵ Others seemed less concerned about the opinions of the Arab population. Chaim Weizmann claimed that a British official had told him that in Palestine ‘there are a few hundred thousand negroes but that is a matter of no significance’ (Heller, 1985 cited in Chomsky, 1992: 435)

Between 1919 and 1926 the Jewish presence in Palestine swelled with the arrival of a further 90,000 immigrants (Bregman, 2003). The community also became increasingly militarised, with the creation of what Shlaim describes as an ‘iron wall’ of impregnable strength designed to protect Jewish settlements from Arab attacks. The concept of the ‘iron wall’ had first been deployed by Vladimir Jabotinsky, the leader of the Revisionist movement.⁶ Jabotinsky was convinced that the indigenous Arabs would not accept the Zionist project voluntarily and advocated the creation of an ‘iron wall’ that the local population would be unable to breach:

If you wish to colonise a land in which people are already living, you must provide a garrison for the land, or find a benefactor who will maintain the garrison on your behalf. Zionism is a colonising adventure and therefore it stands or falls by the question of armed forces. (Jabotinsky cited in Masalha, 1992: 45)

The Zionists also substantially increased their land holdings. Agricultural land was purchased from absentee Arab landlords and the peasants who tended and lived on them, were evicted. The 1919 American King-Crane Commission, which had been sent to Palestine to assess local opinion, reported in their discussions with Jewish representatives, that ‘the Zionists looked forward to a practically complete dispossession of the present non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine, by various forms of purchase’ (British Government, 1947: 3, cited in Laqueur & Rubin, 1984:29) The Zionists also increasingly boycotted Arab labour. The British Hope Simpson Commission had criticized the Zionist Keren ha-Yesod employment agreements as discriminatory and pointed to Article seven which stipulated that ‘The settler hereby undertakes that ... if and whenever he may be obliged to hire help, he will hire Jewish workmen only’ and Article eleven which stated that ‘the settler undertakes ... not to hire any outside labour except Jewish labourers’ (British Government, Cmd. 3686: 52-3, cited in United Nations, 1990). The tensions created by this labour exclusivism the Commission reported, constituted ‘a constant and increasing source of danger to the country.’ (British Government, Cmd. 3686: 55, cited in United Nations, 1990).

Throughout the 1920s Arab hostility to the Zionist project manifested itself in increasingly prolonged outbreaks of violence. In 1921 Arabs attacked Jews at Jaffa during a May Day parade and the violence spread to other towns and the countryside. By the time the British army brought the situation under control nearly 200 Jews and 120 Arabs were dead or wounded. Britain set up a commission of inquiry to investigate the violence. The Haycraft Commission reported that the violence was spontaneous and anti-Zionist rather than anti-Jewish. The report blamed the Arabs for the violence, but also pointed to Arab fears that the mass influx of Jewish immigrants would lead to their subjugation. General William Congreve, the commander of British forces in the Middle East criticized Herbert Samuel’s policy of trying to establish a Jewish National home in Palestine in the face of the opposition from most of the population (Ovendale, 1999). Shortly afterwards the Arabs sent a petition to the League of Nations asking for democratic elections and independence for Palestine (Segev, 2001). In 1922 the British government published a White Paper which was intended to mollify Arab fears. It denied that the Balfour Declaration paved the way for a Jewish State, and that the Arab population, culture and language would be subordinated. It also proposed a legislative council made up of Jewish, Muslim and Christian representatives, a suggestion that was rejected by the Arabs. Hirst (1977)

alleges that a large proportion (likely to give Jewish representatives a majority) of the council would have been directly appointed by Britain, and that the Palestinians feared that Zionist policies might be legitimized under a constitutional façade.

The 1920s and 1930s saw more violent disturbances followed on each occasion by Commissions of Enquiry dispatched by Britain to examine causes. After 1921 there was a period of relative calm before the next major outbreak of violence in 1929. The flashpoint for the 1929 violence was a dispute over sovereignty of an area containing important Jewish and Muslim religious sites. Tension had been brewing for some months over this issue, fermented by inflammatory rhetoric in the Arab and Hebrew press. In late August 1929 a group of armed Arabs attacked Jewish worshippers in Jerusalem and in a week of rioting and violence 113 Jews and 116 Arabs were killed. In Hebron more than sixty members of a long standing community of non-Zionist religious Jews were killed. In response the British set up the Shaw Commission of Enquiry, which concluded that the trigger for the violence was Jewish demonstrations at the Wailing Wall but that the underlying causes were economic and political grievances against the Mandate. An Arab delegation including the Mufti of Jerusalem met with British officials in London requesting a prohibition on the sale of lands from Arabs to non-Arabs, an end to Jewish immigration and the formation of a national parliament. The Hope Simpson Commission dispatched by Britain shortly afterwards highlighted the problem of a growing population of landless Arabs and recommended controls on Jewish immigration and land purchase. These recommendations were carried through in the 1930 Passfield white paper. However, these developments were regarded as a serious setback by Zionists who managed through lobbying to reverse the terms of the white paper.

Sporadic violence ignited into a full scale Arab rebellion in the years between 1936 and 1939. Part of the revolt involved peaceful resistance, including a nationwide six month strike and widespread non payment of taxes. It also involved extensive violence in which Palestinians, formed into bands and destroyed crops and trees, mined roads and sabotaged infrastructure and oil pipelines. They attacked and killed Jews, and also targeted Arabs who failed to offer support or who were suspected of collaboration. The British historian Martin Gilbert claims that during this period 'most acts of Arab terror were met with, often within a few hours, by equally savage acts of reprisal by the Revisionists' military arm, the Irgun' (1999: 92). The Arabs demanded democratic elections and an end to immigration. The British dispatched another

commission of enquiry which in 1937 stated that the Mandate was unworkable and recommended partition. The Peel Commission proposed that the north-west part of Palestine accounting for 20% of the country though containing its most fertile land would become a Jewish state, the remaining 80% would become an Arab state linked to Transjordan. Jerusalem, Bethlehem and a corridor to the sea would remain under British control. The proposal received a mixed reception amongst Jews. One group centred around Jabotinsky's revisionists argued that a Jewish State should only be set up in the whole of Palestine and Transjordan. Another which included Weizmann and David Ben-Gurion, argued that this was a historic opportunity to create the Jewish state. The Israeli historian Simha Flapan suggests that Ben-Gurion accepted the plan as a stepping stone to Zionist control of all of Palestine, and points to comments he made before the Zionist executive in 1937 that : 'after the formation of a large army in the wake of the establishment of the [Jewish] state, we shall abolish partition and expand to the whole of the Palestine' (Ben-Gurion cited in Flapan, 1987: 22) The Israeli historian and *Ha'aretz* columnist Tom Segev (2001) suggests for Ben-Gurion the proposal (inherent in the Peel recommendations) for the 'forced transfer' of the Arab inhabitants out of the proposed Jewish state, and the creation therefore of a 'really Jewish' state outweighed all the drawbacks of the proposal.

The Arabs categorically rejected the Partition scheme arguing that all of Palestine was part of the Arabian homeland and it should not be broken up. The partition plans were never carried through and the rebellion continued until the British finally quelled it. The rudimentary weapons of the Arab guerillas, were overwhelmed by vastly superior British military power. Hirst (1977) claims that during this period British forces took part in extensive acts of revenge and 'collective punishment'. In retaliation for attacks they descended on Arab villages undertook summary executions and destroyed possessions and dwellings. Segev (2001) claims that torture was also employed by the British authorities. The rebellion had cost the lives of 101 Britons and 463 Jews (*The Times*, 21 July 1938, cited in Hirst, 1977: 93). Palestinian losses were harder to gauge but Palestinian historian Walid Khalidi estimates upwards of 5,000 killed and approximately 14,000 injured. (Hirst, 1977).

The reasons for these increasingly serious outbreak of hostility between the communities are contested. Some Israelis argue that the Zionist project was essentially beneficial to the Arabs of Palestine, and it was only Arab intransigence and xenophobia which prevented mutual accommodation. Cohn-Sherbok (2001), for

instance, stresses the legal basis for settlement in the Balfour Declaration which was incorporated into the Mandate, and points to the Arab rejection of partition in 1937. He argues that Arab violence directed against the Jews was 'incomprehensible' and that the Arabs were never prepared to compromise: 'Throughout this period the Arab community was unwilling to negotiate over any of the issues facing those living in the Holy Land. Jews, on the other hand, continually sought to find a solution to the problems confronting the native population while retaining their conviction that a Jewish national home must be established.' (2001: 179). Sachar (1977) argues that the Zionist enterprise developed the country, improved the material living standards of the Arab population and provided employment opportunities. The attacks on Jews, Sachar argues were the result of incitement by xenophobic leaders such as the Mufti of Jerusalem and agitation by fascist infiltration from Italy and Germany. Joan Peters (1984) has claimed that the Zionist project was so beneficial to the Arab population that large numbers were drawn in from outside Palestine. She attributes the large rise in the Arab population during the Mandatory period to illegal immigration from other Arab countries and argues that because of this the Jewish population in 1948 had at least as much right to the land as the Arab 'newcomers'. However a number of British and Israeli reviewers have denounced Peters thesis as an academic fraud, and most demographers attribute the Arab population rise to decreased mortality rates, due to improvements in sanitation and infrastructure.⁷ Others provide different explanations for the revolt. Hirst points to economic resentment generated by peasant land evictions and the boycott of Arab labour:

Driven from the land the peasants flocked to the rapidly growing cities in search of work. Many of them ended up as labourers building houses for the immigrants they loathed and feared. They lived in squalor. In old Haifa there were 11,000 crammed into hovels built of petrol-tins, which had neither water-supply or rudimentary sanitation. Other, without families, slept in the open. Such conditions contrasted humiliatingly with the handsome dwellings the peasants were putting up for the well-to-do newcomers, or even with the Jewish working men's quarters furnished by Jewish building societies. They earned half or just a quarter the wage of their Jewish counterparts and Hebrew Labour exclusivism was gradually depriving them of even that. (1977: 75)

Some Israelis academics such as Gershon Shafir (1999) have characterized twentieth century Zionist settlement as similar to a form of European colonialism- the 'pure settlement colony' model which was imposed on societies in North America and Australia. This model 'established an economy based on white labour which together with the forced removal or the destruction of the native population allowed the settlers to regain the sense of cultural and ethnic homogeneity that is identified with a European concept of nationality' (Shafir, 1999: 84). Segev argues that "disappearing" the Arabs lay at the heart of the Zionist dream and was also a necessary condition of its realization' (2001: 405). He also maintains that prominent Zionists such as David Ben-Gurion believed that the Arab revolt was a nationalist struggle designed to prevent their dispossession:

The rebellion cast the Arabs in a new light. Instead of a 'wild and fractured mob, aspiring to robbery and looting,' Ben-Gurion said, they emerged as an organized and disciplined community, demonstrating its national will with political maturity and a capacity for self-evaluation.' Were he an Arab he wrote, he would also rebel, with even greater intensity and with greater bitterness and despair. Few Zionist understood the Arab feeling, and Ben-Gurion found it necessary to warn them: the rebellion was not just terror he said, he said; terror was a means to an end. Nor was it just politics, Nashashibi against the Mufti. The Arabs had launched a national war. They were battling the expropriation of their homeland. While their movement may have been primitive, Ben Gurion said, it did not lack devotion, idealism and self-sacrifice. (2001: 370-1)

In the wake of the revolt the British dispatched a further commission of enquiry, the result of which was the 1939 MacDonal White Paper. It proposed that 75,000 Jewish immigrants be admitted over the next five years, after which any further immigration would require Arab consent. The White Paper also proposed that lands sales be strictly regulated and that an independent Palestine state should come about within ten years. The Zionists saw the white paper as a betrayal that seriously threatened the creation of the Jewish state, especially in light of the increased persecution of Jews throughout Europe. The response was three pronged. One element involved maintaining a flow of illegal Jewish immigration into Palestine.

Gilbert (1999) claims that many of these Jews were trying to escape persecution in Nazi Germany, and other parts of Europe. Another which gathered pace from 1945 onwards, saw Zionist paramilitary groups launch attacks on the British using sabotage, bombings and assassinations. The third involved switching imperial sponsors from Britain to the United States. Zionists forged close links with American political leaders and used the Jewish vote to pressurize for policies that supported the continuation of immigration and the establishment of the Jewish state in Palestine.

American Politics and the Settlement of the Holocaust Survivors

In May 1942 Zionists meeting in New York, for the American Zionist Conference issued the Biltmore Resolution demanding the creation of a 'Jewish commonwealth' in mandatory Palestine and began to pressurize American political leaders to support its terms. In 1941 Zionists had formed the American Palestine Committee. It included within its membership two thirds of the Senate, 200 members of the House of Representatives and the leaders of the two main political parties and labour organizations (Ovendale, 1999). Unsuccessful resolutions were put before the House of Representatives and the Senate demanding free Jewish entry into Palestine and its reconstitution as a Jewish commonwealth. Zionist representatives also directly lobbied the two major political parties. The 1944 presidential election was a very close contest and because of this, Ovendale (1999) suggests Zionist political leverage was considerable. America's 4,500,000 Jews were concentrated in three key states (New York, Pennsylvania and Illinois) which could swing the election. The Republican Party adopted a platform calling for unrestricted Jewish immigration into Palestine, no restrictions on land ownership and the conversion of Palestine into a free and independent Jewish commonwealth. Roosevelt was under pressure to match this and in a private letter to Zionist leaders promised if re-elected to seek the 'establishment of Palestine as a free and democratic Jewish commonwealth' (Ovendale, 1999: 87).

The politics surrounding the settlement of Jewish refugees at the end of the Second World War, are still highly contentious. The debate concerns whether the Holocaust survivors wished to settle in Palestine voluntarily, or were left with little option because other potential refuges such as the United States were closed to them, with at least the tacit support of Zionist leaders. The debate remains emotive because

tens of thousands of Holocaust survivors died in displaced persons camps in Europe at the end of the war, whilst US congressional legislation gave priority to accepting refugees from the Russian occupied states including many Nazi sympathizers and SS troopers (Chomsky, 1999) At the time Zionist leaders stressed the vital importance of Palestine as a sanctuary for the Jewish refugees in Europe who had survived the Nazi Holocaust. It was argued that only Palestine could provide a haven where Jewish refugees could rebuild their lives and avoid future anti-Semitism:

They (the Holocaust survivors) want to regain their human dignity, their homeland, they want a reunion with their kin in Palestine after having lost their dearest relations. To them the countries of their birth are a graveyard of their people. They do not wish to return and they cannot. They want to go back to their national home, and they use Dunkirk boats. (Ben-Gurion, cited in Gilbert, 1999: 147)

Gilbert points to attempts by Holocaust survivors aboard ships such as the *Exodus* to reach Palestine as proof that most of the refugees were desperate to get there. The Israeli historian Yehuda Bauer (1970) agrees that most refugees were keen to settle in Palestine, citing a 1946 Hebrew investigative commission that reported that 96.8 per cent of Jewish refugees languishing in European displaced person camps at the end of the war wanted to settle in Palestine. Avi Shlaim argues that 'few people disputed the right of the Jews to a home after the trauma' of the Holocaust and that the moral case for it became 'unassailable' (2000: 23-4). Other Israeli historians suggest a different picture. Segev argues that:

There is... no basis for the frequent assertion that the state was established as a result of the Holocaust. Clearly the shock, horror and sense of guilt felt by many generated profound sympathy for the Jews in general and the Zionist movement in particular. The sympathy helped the Zionists advance their diplomatic campaign and their propaganda, and shaped their strategy to focus effort on the survivors, those Jews in displaced-persons camps demanding they be sent to Palestine. All the survivors were Zionists, the Jewish agency claimed, and they all wanted to come to Palestine. The assertion was not true. The displaced were given the choice of returning to their homes in Eastern

Europe or settling in Palestine. Few were able or willing to return to countries then in the grip of various degrees of hunger, anti-Semitism or communism, and they were never given the option of choosing between Palestine and, say the United States. In effect their options were narrowed to Palestine or the DP camps (2001: 491)

Others such as Feingold, (1970) and Shonfeld (1977) have been very critical of the conduct of the Zionist movement in Palestine and America at the end of the Second World War. They argue that the Zionist movement should have mobilized to pressure the US administration to take in the Holocaust survivors, which would have saved the lives of many Jews who died in displaced persons camps in Europe. Segev argues that the Ben-Gurion and the Labour leadership in Palestine saw the Nazi ascension in the 1930s as potentially 'a fertile force for Zionism' because it created the potential for mass Jewish immigration into Palestine (1993:18). He alleges that during the 1930s and 1940s the Labour leadership entered into *haavara* agreements with the Nazis whereby Jews were permitted to emigrate to Palestine with limited quantities of capital. He claims that Ben-Gurion's political rivals in the Revisionist movement opposed these agreements, and argued that rather than negotiate with Germany it should be boycotted. Segev also suggests that after the *Kristallnacht* pogroms Ben-Gurion was concerned that the 'human conscience' might cause others countries to open their doors to Jewish refugees, a move which he saw as a threat to Zionism.

If I knew that it was possible to save all the children of Germany by transporting them to England, but only half of them by transporting them to Palestine, I would choose the second - because we face not only the reckoning of those children, but the historical reckoning of the Jewish people (Ben-Gurion, cited in Segev, 1993: 28)

The view that Jewish refugees were used as political leverage to create the Jewish state in Palestine, was also shared by some prominent British and US State Department officials⁸, who feared the effects on stability in Palestine and potential Russian penetration.⁹ Roosevelt's successor, Harry Truman decided to press on with a policy supporting the settlement of Jewish refugees in Palestine. Ovendale (1999)

suggests that this was primarily because of the 1945 New York election, in which the Jewish vote might be decisive. The American State Department official William Eddy claims that Truman had informed American ambassadors to the Arab world that 'I am sorry, gentlemen, but I have to answer to hundreds of thousands who are anxious for the success of Zionism; I do not have hundreds of thousands of Arabs among my constituents' (1954: 36).

The End of the Mandate

In Palestine Zionist paramilitary groups were gradually wearing down British morale. Towards the end of the Arab revolt the Jewish community had launched attacks against the Arabs. In July 1938 more than 100 Arabs were killed when six bombs were planted in Arab public places. The last of these, detonated in the Arab Melon market in Haifa, killed 53 Arabs and a Jew (*Palestine Post*, 26 July 1938, cited in Hirst, 1977:). Towards the end of the Second World War such tactics were turned on the British mandatory authority. Roads, bridges, trains and patrol boats were destroyed. British army barracks were attacked and banks and armouries were looted. On a single day in 1946 Zionist paramilitary forces launched 16 separate attacks on the British army destroying many armoured vehicles and leaving 80 dead and wounded (Hirst 1977). Lord Moyne was assassinated by the Stern Gang, British officers were captured, flogged and killed and in the most spectacular attack of all, the centre of British mandatory power in Palestine the King David Hotel was destroyed by 500 lbs of explosives leaving 88 dead including 15 Jews. Funding for the attacks was provided by sympathetic sources in the United States. The Hollywood scriptwriter Ben Hecht produced an article for the *New York Herald Tribune* entitled 'Letter to the Terrorists of Palestine' in which he wrote 'every time you blow up a British arsenal, or wreck a British jail, or send a British railway train sky high, or rob a British bank, or let go with your guns and bombs at the British betrayers and invaders of your homeland, the Jews of America make a little holiday in their hearts... Brave friends we are working to help you. We are raising funds for you.' (15 May 1947, cited in Hirst, 1977: 119). The violence became so widespread that that by early 1947 all non-essential British civilians and military families were evacuated from Palestine. Weakened by the Second World War, and demoralized by the

attritional warfare, the British were unwilling to sacrifice more lives and money in Palestine. Gilbert (1999) suggests they were also wary of alienating Arab opinion because they were concerned to protect their oil interests in the region. In February 1947 the British decided to end the Mandate and hand the question of Palestine to the United Nations.

The United Nations Debates The Future of Palestine

The UN dispatched a Special Committee to the region which recommended partition. Attention then switched to the diplomatic manoeuvring at the United Nations in New York. Arab representatives, called before the UN, questioned whether the Mandate was ever legal and whether the UN had the legal right to decide on the sovereignty of Palestine. They wished to see the issue referred to the International Court of Justice, and ultimately they argued it was the people of Palestine who should decide on the fate of the country rather than an outside body.¹⁰ Zionist representatives were sympathetic to the partition plan being debated by member states and lobbied to maximise the area that might be allotted to a Jewish State. On the 29 November 1947 the Partition Plan was carried by a single vote after a last minute change of policy by several nations, with a number complaining over the political and economic pressure that had been exerted on them.¹¹ Resolution 181 recommended the division of Palestine, with the Jewish State allotted 5,700 square miles including the fertile coastal areas, whilst the Arabs State was allotted 4,300 square miles comprised mostly of the hilly areas. The proposed settlement would mean that each state would have a majority of its own population although many Jews would fall into the Arab state and vice-versa. Jerusalem and Bethlehem were to become a separate area under UN control.

For the Arabs the partition plan was a major blow. They believed that it was unfair that the Jewish immigrants, most of whom had been in Palestine less than thirty years, and who owned less than 10% of the land should be given more than half of Palestine including the best arable land. The reaction of Zionists is disputed. Some historians such as Bregman (2003) argue that the partition resolution was seen as a triumph because it allowed for the creation of a Jewish State in an area three times that recommended by the Peel plan ten years earlier. Shlaim claims that the reaction

was more ambivalent. He suggests that it was accepted by most Zionist leaders with a 'heavy heart' because they 'did not like the idea of an independent Palestinian state, they were disappointed with the exclusion of Jerusalem, and they had grave doubts about the viability of the State within the UN borders' (2000: 25). He notes that it was dismissed out of hand by Jewish paramilitary groups who demanded all of Palestine for the Jewish state. Gilbert suggests that the Zionist leadership realised that war was inevitable and that Ben-Gurion 'contemplated the possibility of fighting to extend the area allotted to the Jews' (1999: 149). Gilbert cites orders from Ben Gurion that Jewish forces should 'safeguard the entire Yishuv [Jewish community in Palestine] and settlements (wherever they may be), to conquer the whole country or most of it, and to maintain its occupation until the attainment of an authoritative political settlement' (Ben-Gurion cited in Gilbert, 1999: 149). Hirst (1977) suggests that the partition plan was accepted by the Zionists because they anticipated they would quickly be able to militarily overwhelm the Arabs, and unilaterally expand the borders of the Jewish state. He points to comments made at the time by the commander of British forces in Palestine, General J.C. Darcy who stated that 'if you were to withdraw British troops, the Haganah [Jewish fighting forces] would take over all Palestine tomorrow' and 'could hold it against the entire Arab world.' (Crum, 1947: 220, cited in Hirst, 1977: 134)

The Unofficial War

The UN partition plan did not solve the problems in Palestine. The Arab Higher Committee rejected it outright and called a three day strike. The Mufti of Jerusalem announced a jihad or holy war for Jerusalem. Fighting between the two communities broke out in early December 1947 and the situation quickly deteriorated into a civil war. The British, unwilling and unable to restore order, announced they would terminate the Mandate on May 15 1948. In the first stage of the conflict lasting up until Israel's declaration of Independence on May 14 1948, Jewish forces fought against Arab forces marshalled by three commanders. Fawzi el-Kawakji led the Arab League, Sir John Bagot Glubb and his 45 British officers the Transjordan Arab Legion, and Abdul Qader al-Husseini the Mufti's Arab forces in Jerusalem (Bregman, 2003). In the early part of this 'unofficial war' the Arab forces won some minor

victories and for a time al-Husseini's forces cut the road between Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv. In early April Zionist forces launched a major offensive codenamed Plan Dalet. According to Avi Shlaim the aim of Plan Dalet was 'to secure all the areas allocated to the Israeli state under the UN partition resolution as well as Jewish settlements outside these areas and corridors leading to them' (2000: 31). Arab towns and cities were captured and their populations removed so as 'to clear the interior of the country of hostile and potentially hostile Arab elements' in anticipation of an attack by the combined armies of the neighbouring Arab states (2000: 31). The operation involved the application of military and psychological pressure on the Arab population, who were reluctant to leave their homes. The Haganah together with paramilitary forces sprung surprise attacks on towns and villages launching rockets, mortars and the Davidka, a device which lobbed 60lb of TNT 300 yards into densely populated areas (Hirst, 1977). Psychological pressure was also exerted by spreading rumours via clandestine Zionist radio stations and loudspeakers mounted on army vehicles, that Jewish forces were planning to burn villages and kill Arabs. An Israeli reserve officer recounts that:

An uncontrolled panic spread through the all the Arab quarters, the Israelis brought up jeeps with loudspeakers which broadcast recorded 'horror sounds'. These included shrieks, wails and the anguished moans of Arab women, the wail of sirens and the clang of fire-alarm bells, interrupted by a sepulchral voice crying out in Arabic: 'Save your souls, all ye faithful: The Jews are using poison gas and atomic weapons. Run for your lives in the name of Allah (Childers, 1976: 252, cited in Hirst, 1977: 141)

In April and early May 1948 a number Arab towns and cities fell before the Zionist offensive creating many refugees. The aims of Plan Dalet remain highly contested amongst historians. Some such as Ilan Pappé, Norman Finkelstein, Nur Masalha, Walid Khalidi and David Hirst place the operation in the context of long held Zionist plans to 'transfer' the native population out of Palestine.¹² They argue that the notion of transfer had been inherent in Theodore Herzl's plans for Palestine some fifty years earlier (see p.45-46) and had remained an integral element of Labor and Revisionist strategy. Proponents of this perspective also point to the writings of Joseph Weitz, who was appointed by the Jewish Agency to head 'transfer

committees' which encouraged the 1948 exodus by various forms of intimidation. In 1940 he confided in his diary that:

Between ourselves it must be clear that there is no room for both peoples together in this country ... We shall not achieve our goal of being an independent people with the Arabs in this small country. The only solution is a Palestine, at least western Palestine [west of the Jordan river] without Arabs ... And there is no other way than to transfer the Arabs from here to the neighbouring countries, to transfer all of them; not one village, not one tribe, should be left ... Only after this transfer will the country be able to absorb the millions of our own brethren. There is no other way out (*Davar*, 29 September 1967, cited in Hirst 1977: 130)

This perspective, is contested by Israeli historians such as Benny Morris and Avi Shlaim who contend that the expulsions were 'born of war not design', being part of military expediency rather than political planning. For these historians the expulsions were carried out as part of a military strategy that was spontaneous and instigated on an ad hoc basis by local commanders. Morris's conclusions, have been subjected to a detailed critique by Finkelstein (2000) who argues that the evidence that Morris presents show the expulsions to be more systematic and pre-meditated than his conclusions suggest. A third explanation, that the Palestinians left voluntarily in response to radio broadcasts from their leaders was propagated by some Israeli historians after the 1948 war. However although this version of events still has some currency across Israel's political spectrum (Pappe, 1999), it has become discredited amongst many historians.¹³

The First Arab-Israeli War

On May 14 1948 as the United Nations debated a truce and trusteeship arrangement for Palestine, and the British were evacuating their troops, David Ben-Gurion declared the birth of the State of Israel in Tel-Aviv, under a portrait of Theodor Herzl. Eleven minutes later, despite objections from the State Department and US Diplomatic staff, America became the first country to recognize the new Israeli state. The following day the armies of five Arab nations entered Palestine and

engaged Israeli forces. The motives of the various Arab armies and the military balance of power between Jewish and Arab forces are contested. The ex-Israeli prime minister Netanyahu (2000) argues that the conflict was an unequal one involving a small Jewish force pitted against a larger and better armed monolithic Arab entity determined to destroy the Jewish State at the moment of its creation. Others such as Shlaim (2000) dispute this and argue that Jewish forces significantly outnumbered the Arabs during all stages of the conflict, and during the final decisive phase by a ratio of nearly two to one. The picture of a monolithic Arab force determined to destroy Israel is also disputed. Flapan (1987) suggests that the primary objective of King Abdullah of Transjordan, (who had nominal control of all the Arab forces) was not to prevent the emergence of a Jewish State but to take control of the Arab part of Palestine, as part of a secret pact that he had made with Golda Meir in November 1947. Ovendale (1999) further suggests that the other Arab States involved were riven by competing territorial and political ambitions, in contrast to the Jewish forces who mostly fought with a united front.

In the first stage of fighting leading up to the truce on June 11 Israeli forces consolidated their hold on a number of mixed Arab-Jewish towns, the Eastern and western Galilee and parts of the Negev. Jerusalem saw fierce fighting between Israeli and Transjordanian forces. During the first truce the Israelis took the opportunity to recruit more fighters and substantially re-arm. The U.N. appointed a mediator, the Swedish Count Bernadotte, who put forward a proposal for ending the conflict. It suggested a union between an Arab state linked to Transjordan and a Jewish state. Jerusalem would be part of the Arab state. The proposal was rejected by all sides. The Arabs rejected plans to prolong the truce and on July 9 battle recommenced. In nine days of fighting leading up to a second truce the Israelis took the initiative capturing the Arab towns of Nazareth, Lydda and Ramleh. During this second truce Israel mobilized and trained more fighters, many of whom were newly arrived immigrants, and arranged the shipment of more weapons. They also consolidated their hold on the occupied territories and according to Bregman razed 'Arab villages to the ground so that their previous inhabitants who took what they believed to be a temporary refuge elsewhere would have nowhere to return to.' (2003: 57). During the second truce Count Bernadotte put forward another proposal for settling the conflict. Territorially it was similar to his previous proposal, although Jerusalem would fall under United Nations control, and the Palestinians would decide their own political fate in

consultation with other Arab states. The proposal was due to be debated by the United Nations General Assembly on 21 September, but on 17 September Count Bernadotte was assassinated in Jerusalem, by members of the Stern gang under orders from a triumvirate that included Yitzhak Shamir, who later became Prime Minister of Israel (Bregman, 2003). During this second truce Ben-Gurion proposed to the Israeli cabinet launching a major offensive to capture much of the West Bank, but failed to gain majority approval and switched his attention to a plan to push Egyptian forces back across the Negev into Egypt. At this time Shlaim (1999) claims that Israel received a peace proposal from the Egyptian government offering de facto recognition of Israel in exchange for Egypt's annexation of a portion of land in the Negev. He argues that Ben-Gurion ignored Egypt's proposals, and persuaded the cabinet to authorize a series of military offensives designed to capture the Negev. These were highly successful with the Israeli army driving the Egyptians out of the Negev and following it into Egypt proper. Eventually Britain intervened on the Egyptian side under the terms of the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, and after forceful pressure from President Truman Ben-Gurion agreed to withdraw his troops from the Sinai and accept a new truce.

Post-War Negotiations: Peace Treaties, Borders and Refugees

The war ended on January 7 1949. It had extracted a high price on all parties. Israel had lost more than 6,000 lives or one percent of its population. It had however made huge territorial gains. UN resolution 181 had recommended the Jewish state be established in 57% of mandatory Palestine. By the end of 1948 the Israeli state had control of 78%.

After the war the Israelis engaged in immediate nation building. Elections were held in January 1949 based on a system of proportional party lists. The Mapai party won the most seats with its leader Ben-Gurion becoming the nation's first Prime Minister, whilst Chaim Weizmann was installed as President. The Palestinian view the events of 1948 as so traumatic they are simply known as Al Nakba or 'The Catastrophe'. The refugees created prior to the start of the 'official war' on May 15 swelled during the conflict. The Israeli historian Ilan Pappé, claims that towards the end of the war 'several massacres were committed adding an incentive to the flight of

the population' and in the final stages of the conflict 'expulsion was even more systematic' (1999: 51-2). The war ended with 520,000 Palestinian refugees according to Israel, 726,000 as estimated by the UN, and 810,000 as estimated by the British government (Gilbert, 1999). The 150,000 Palestinians who were left in the new Israeli state, were according to Bregman regarded by Israel as a 'dangerous and not-to-be-trusted potential fifth column' and were therefore placed under military rule:

The military government operated in areas where Arabs were concentrated and its main task was to exercise governmental policies in these areas. It was a most powerful body hated by the Arabs, for it effectively controlled all spheres of their lives imposing on them severe restrictions: it banned the Arabs from leaving their villages and travel to other parts of the country without obtaining special permission; it detained suspects without trial and it also, frequently, in the name of security, closed whole areas, thus preventing Arab peasants access to their fields and plantations which was devastating for them for they were dependant on their crops for their livelihood. The military government also imposed curfews on whole villages and on one occasion, when the village of Kfar Qassem, unaware of the curfew, returned to their homes, the Israelis opened fire killing 47. (2003: 74)

During 1949 Israel, under the auspices of the UN negotiated separate armistice agreements with all Arab States involved in the conflict. Jordan moved to annex the West Bank whilst Egypt moved to occupy the Gaza Strip but unlike Jordan it made no effort to annex the territory. The name Palestine had disappeared from the map, its territory having been absorbed into the Israeli and Jordanian States. In late April 1949 Israel met with delegations from Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and the Arab Higher Committee in Lausanne to try and hammer out a peace deal. The two central sticking points were borders and refugees. The Arab delegation wanted to see borders based on the 1947 UN partition resolution, that they had previously rejected. The Israelis argued the permanent borders should be based on the ceasefire lines with only minor modifications. No agreement was reached. On December 11 1948 the United Nations General Assembly had passed Resolution 194 which resolved 'that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation

should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property' This position on the repatriation of refugees Pappé (1999) argues, was shared by the UN, Europe and the US. Israel rejected the return of refugees and the payment of compensation, arguing that the Arab states had created the refugee problem by attacking Israel and they should therefore settle the refugees in their own countries:

'We did not want the war. Tel Aviv did not attack Jaffa. It was Jaffa which attacked Tel Aviv and this will not occur again. Jaffa will be a Jewish town. The repatriation of the Arabs is not justice, but folly. Those who declared war against us will have to bear the result after they have been defeated.' (David Ben-Gurion cited in Gabbay, 1959: 109)

From June 1949 onwards Pappé argues that Israeli leaders were committed to 'creating a fait accompli that would render repatriation impossible' (1999: 52). In that month Joseph Weitz wrote in a memorandum that there was a consensus among Israeli leaders that the best way to deal with the abandoned Palestinian villages was by 'destruction, renovation and settlement by Jews' (Weitz cited in Pappé, 1999: 52). This plan which Pappé claims Israel carried out 'to the letter' required the State 'to demolish what was left of abandoned Palestinian villages, almost 350 in all, so that the term repatriation itself, would become meaningless' (1999: 52). Pappé suggests that for Israelis the subject of the Palestinian refugees raises difficult questions about the nature of the Israeli State:

Israelis - leaders and people alike - have a genuine psychological problem when faced with the refugee issue. This is indeed for them the 'original sin'. It puts a huge question mark over the Israeli self-image of moral superiority and human sensitivity. It ridicules Israel's oxymorons, such as the 'purity of arms' or misnomers, such as the 'Israeli Defence Forces', and raises doubts over the religious notion of the 'chosen people' and the political pretension of being the only democracy in the Middle East which should be wholeheartedly supported by the West. In the past it has produced a series of repressions and self denials as well as the promotion of unrealistic political solutions...It was accompanied

by an intellectual struggle against the Palestinians, epitomised by the official Israeli fabrication of the history of the land and the conflict (1999: 58)

Although the Armistice agreements had ended the military conflict, there were no formal peace treaties signed between Israel and its Arab neighbours, setting the scene for further sporadic clashes. This failure to negotiate comprehensive peace treaties is a contentious issue. Sachar for instance, blames Arab intransigence, claiming that Israel repeatedly attempted to make peace but its efforts were rebuffed by Arab States: '[The] Arab purpose was single minded and all-absorptive. It was flatly committed to the destruction of Israel as an independent state' (1977: 430) Some historians claim the opposite. Shlaim argues that 'the files of the Israeli Foreign Ministry...burst at the seams with evidence of Arab peace feelers and Arab readiness to negotiate with Israel from September 1948 on' (2000: 49).

In the years after 1948 the Arab world instituted an economic boycott against Israel, shut its borders and refused its aircraft permission to use their airspace. This period also saw a radical demographic shift in the Jewish population throughout the Middle East. In the nine years following the 1948 war 567,000 Jews left Muslim countries and most settled in Israel, so that the population swelled from 1,174,000 in 1949 to 1,873,000 in 1956 (Ovendale, 1999). Sachar (1977) claims that in many of these societies, particularly Iraq and Egypt the Jewish population had 'prospered mightily', but argues that in the 1940s they were subject to increasing levels of harassment and persecution. He claims that in Libya anti-Jewish riots in 1945 had left several hundred dead or wounded, and in Syria the Jewish population saw its property and employment rights curtailed. Gilbert (1999) maintains that Israeli officials were instrumental in facilitating these population transfers from Muslim countries, known in Israel as 'the ingathering of the exiles', because there was a shortage of manpower in Israel after 1948. It has been claimed that the methods employed were controversial. Gilbert (1999) and Hirst (1977) write that in Iraq, Jewish agents planted bombs in synagogues and Jewish businesses in an attempt to stimulate immigration to Israel.

Despite the stabilization of the political and military situation following the 1948 war clashes along the armistice lines were a constant source of friction between Israel and its Arab neighbours. Displaced Palestinians in Arab states began to engage in what was known as 'infiltration'. Shlaim alleges that '90 per cent or more of all

infiltrations were motivated by social and economic concerns' involving persons crossing the ceasefire lines to retrieve property, see relatives or tend their land' (2000: 82). Many of refugees had been separated from their homes and land and so had no employment and went hungry. The other ten percent involved acts of sabotage and violence directed against Israelis. Shlaim claims that the Israelis adopted a 'free fire' policy towards infiltrators which encouraged the Arabs to organise into groups and respond in kind. The British Major John Glubb argued that 'the original infiltrator were harmless and unarmed seeking lost property or relatives. Yet Jewish terrorism [i.e. shoot to kill and reprisals raids] made the infiltrator into a gunman (cited in Morris, 1997: 51). Between the end of the 1948 war and the 1956 Suez war, the Israeli authorities estimated that 294 civilians had been killed by infiltrators from Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt (Morris, 1997: 97-8). Shlaim claims that in this period between 2,700 and 5,000 infiltrators were killed by 'trigger happy' Israeli soldiers 'the great majority of them unarmed' (2000: 82). Some Israeli historians argue that Arab leaders encouraged infiltration as an attempt to weaken and destroy the Israeli State. In contrast Shlaim claims that 'there is strong evidence from Arab, British, American, UN and even Israeli sources to suggest that for the first six years after the war, the Arab governments were opposed to infiltration and tried to curb it'. (2000: 84). Israel adopted a policy of reprisals directed against villages in Gaza and Jordan . Shlaim claims that 'all of these raids were aimed at civilian targets' and 'greatly inflamed Arab hatred of Israel and met with mounting criticism from the international community' (2000: 83). A specialist reprisal brigade, unit 101 was created, under the command of Ariel Sharon. Its first major operation involved an attack on the village of Quibya in 1953, following the killing of an Israeli mother and two children by a hand grenade in Yahuda. Unit 101 reduced Quibya 'to a pile of rubble: forty five houses had been blown up and sixty-nine civilians, two-thirds of them women and children' were killed (2000: 91). A UN report found that 'the inhabitants had been forced by heavy fire to stay inside, until their homes were blown up over them.' (2000: 91) Shlaim also claims that such acts were also carried out against Arab villages within the State of Israel:

Periodic search operations were also mounted in Arab villages inside Israel to weed out infiltrators. From time to time the soldiers who carried out these operations committed atrocities, among them gang rape, murder and on one

occasion, the dumping of 120 infiltrators in the Arava desert without water. The atrocities were committed not in the heat of battle but for the most part against innocent civilians, including women and children. Coping with day to day security had a brutalising effect on the IDF. Soldiers in an army which prided itself on the precept of “the purity of arms” showed growing disregard for human lives and carried out some barbaric acts that can only be described as war crimes. (2000: 83)

It was against this backdrop of border tensions that Israel became involved in a broader struggle between Britain, France and Egypt over control of the Suez Canal.

1956: The Suez Conflict

In Egypt following a bloodless coup in 1952, Gamal Abd al-Nassar and his ‘free officers’ took power and turned the state into a Republic. In 1954 Nasser became President and began a leftist programme of poverty reduction and agrarian reform. He also attempted to make himself the champion of a pan-Arabic renaissance, and the leader of the de-colonisation movement across the Middle East and Africa. Owendale (1999) suggests that the European colonial powers feared the effects of Nasser’s Arab nationalism on their oil interests and geo-strategic control of the Middle East and Africa. France was also hostile because his support for Algerians fighting for independence. In July 1956 Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal after the US and Britain refused to fund the Aswan Dam Project, which Nasser saw as a means to develop Egypt as a modern nation. Britain and France who were shareholders in the Canal decided Nasser had to be removed from power. Israel also wanted to see Nasser deposed and on 23 October 1956 British, French and Israeli representatives met in Paris to devise a military plan (Shlaim, 2000).

On 29 October 1956 the IDF launched an attack on Egyptian force in the Sinai peninsula. The next day Britain and France issued an ultimatum to Egypt and Israel to withdraw their force to a distance of ten miles from the Suez Canal. Israel complied, Egypt refused and the following day Britain and France began an aerial bombardment of the Egyptian airfields. Israel quickly secured an overwhelming military victory capturing Gaza on the 2 November and the whole Sinai peninsula

three days later. On November 7 Ben-Gurion delivered a speech to the Knesset where 'he hinted that Israel planned to annex the entire Sinai peninsula as well as the Straits of Tiran' (Shlaim 2000: 179). However under strong pressure from the USA and USSR and threats of United Nations sanctions Israel was eventually forced to withdraw from all of the Sinai after six months. Some aspects of the war remain controversial. A report in Israeli daily *Ma'ariv* claimed that during the war, 273 Egyptian prisoners of war had been killed by Israel's 890 Paratrooper Battalion commanded by Rafael Eitan, who was one of the architects of Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon (8 August 1995). Israel's motivations have been the subject of much controversy. One version maintains that Israel was driven to attack Egypt for three main reasons. Firstly it is argued the Egyptian leader Nasser was planning to lead a combined Arab force (Egypt, Jordan, Syria) in an attempt to destroy Israel, and the Suez conflict was necessary as a pre-emptive military strike to prevent this. Sachar (1977) points to belligerent speeches made by Arab leaders in the months preceding the war, which he argues were proof of imminent Arab plans to destroy Israel. He also suggests that Egypt's acquisition of large shipment of arms from Czechoslovakia in 1955 had shifted the balance of power against Israel. Sachar also claims that Israel wanted to break Egypt's blockade of the Suez Canal, and stop Palestinian guerrilla attacks on Israel. This perspective on Israeli motivations sees the attack on Egypt as defensive in orientation and concerned only with strengthening the country's security situation.

Other historians have pointed to other reasons for the attack. Shlaim (2000) argues that Israel's military establishment led by Ben-Gurion and Moeshe Dayan were determined to goad Nasser into a war by carrying out provocative raids against Egyptian forces, despite Egyptian attempts to curb infiltration. The most serious of these raids occurred in February 1955 when an Israeli unit led by Ariel Sharon attacked the Egyptian army headquarters on the outskirts of Gaza killing 37 Egyptian soldiers. Hirst claims that Egypt had consistently tried to avoid military confrontation with Israel, and had only 'unleashed the *fedayeen* [Palestinian guerrillas] under pressure from his own public opinion in the wake of further provocations from Israel' (1977: 200). Both Hirst (1977) and Shlaim argue that there was no credible evidence that Nasser was planning a war with Israel, nor that that the balance of power had shifted in Egypt favour. They suggest that the war was undertaken to expand the borders of Israel and overthrow Nasser's regime. Shlaim maintains that Israel hoped

to absorb the whole of the Sinai peninsula, the West Bank and part of the Lebanon. He argues that Ben-Gurion 'exposed an appetite for territorial expansion at the expense of the Arabs and expansion in every possible direction: north, east and south' as well as 'a cavalier attitude toward the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the neighbouring Arab states' (2000: 178)

1967: The Six-Day War

During the 1960s the Middle East became a site of cold war rivalry between America and the Soviet Union, both of whom were supplying the region's states with weapons. In spring 1967 the Soviet Union misinformed the Syrian government that Israel was massing troops on its northern border in preparation for an attack on Syria. No such troop movements had actually taken place. However the previous year had seen a number of border clashes between the two nations and tensions had been running high. Israel had threatened publicly to overthrow the Syrian regime unless it stopped Palestinian guerrilla attacks launched from Syrian territory. Syria alarmed by the Soviet reports, turned to Egypt with whom it had a mutual defence pact. Egypt then sent a number of troops into the Sinai, bordering Israel and asked the United Nations troops who formed a buffer between the two countries to evacuate their positions. The Egyptians troops then moved into Sharm al-Shaykh and proclaimed a blockade of the Israeli port of Eliat, which was accessible only through Egyptian waters. Two weeks later at 7:45 a.m. on 5 June 1967 Israel launched an aerial attack on Egyptian airfields destroying 298 warplanes, the bulk of the Egyptian airforce, in a single day. Israeli ground forces also launched an almost simultaneous land invasion of Egyptian territory, forcing their way to the Suez Canal and capturing the Sinai peninsula in two days. At noon on 5 June, as part of a defence pact with Egypt, Syrian, Jordanian and Iraqi forces attacked targets inside Israel. Within two hours the air forces of all three were destroyed by the Israeli airforce, as well as an Iraqi military base near the Jordanian border. Jordanian land forces also intervened in support of Egypt. Jordanian artillery shelled Israeli towns and its troops entered Arab East Jerusalem and occupied Government House. Israel then drove the Jordanian army out of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, occupying them both by 7 June. The following day Israeli warplanes attacked the American spy ship, the USS Liberty, with cannon, missiles and napalm,

killing 34 US service personnel and injuring 171.¹⁴ On 9 June Israel attacked Syria, despite strong UN pressure, and occupied the Golan Heights. There have been allegations in the Israeli press that about a thousand unresisting Egyptian soldiers, as well as many Palestinian refugees were killed by the Israeli army (*Ha'aretz*, 17 August 1995). The war was an overwhelming military success for Israel. In six days it destroyed three Arab armies and made large territorial gains, capturing the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights, the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Arab East Jerusalem.

The reasons behind Israel's decision to launch the six day war are disputed. The official Israeli cabinet documents stated that the 'Government [of Israel] ascertained that the armies of Egypt, Syria and Jordan are deployed for immediate multi-front aggression, threatening the very existence of the state' (cited in Finkelstein, 1995: 130). Sachar points to Nasser's decision to replace United Nations peacekeeping troops in the Sinai with Egyptian troops, and military preparations by other Arab nations as evidence that 'the garrot...was rapidly tightening around Israel' (1977: 632). He also points to Israeli motivations to stop Syrian shelling of Israeli settlements in the DMZ (demilitarised zone) between Israel and Syria, and guerrilla raids into Israeli territory. Another justification given for Israel's attack was that Egypt's decision to blockade of the Straits of Tiran which prevented access to the Israeli port of Eliat, was according to the Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban, an 'attempt at strangulation' which constituted an 'act of war' (Eban, 1992 :334, cited in Finkelstein, 1995: 137).

Some other historians have questioned these explanations and pointed to an alternative set of motivations. The twin assertions that the Arab states were planning an imminent attack and that they had the military strength to threaten Israel's existence are disputed. Finkelstein claims that an 'exhaustive US intelligence at the end of the month [May 1967] could find no evidence that Egypt was planning to attack' (1999: 134). Menachem Begin and Yitzak Rabin later argued that the Arab states had not been planning an attack and that the Israeli government had been well aware of this at the time.¹⁵ The claim that the combined Arab armies posed a mortal threat to the state of Israel is also disputed. The CIA produced a report in May 1967 predicting (British intelligence had reached the identical conclusion), that Israel would win a war against one or all of the Arab states combined, whoever attacked first, in about a week (Finkelstein, 1999). Menachem Begin and Ezer Weizmann have also argued that Israel's existence was never threatened.¹⁶ Five years after the war, in

an Israeli newspaper article, one of the chief military planners of the campaign General Matitياهو Peled, was dismissive of the Arab threat in 1967:

There is no reason to hide the fact that since 1949 no one dared, or more precisely, no one was able to threaten the very existence of Israel. In spite of that, we have continued to foster a sense of our own inferiority, as if we were a weak and insignificant people, which, in the midst of an anguished struggle for its existence, could be exterminated at any moment...it is notorious that the Arab leaders themselves, thoroughly aware of their own impotence, did not believe in their own threats...I am sure that our General Staff never told the government that the Egyptian military threat represented any threat to Israel or that we were unable to crush Nasser's army, which with unheard of foolishness, had exposed itself to the devastating might of our army...To claim that the Egyptian forces concentrated on our borders were capable of threatening Israel's existence not only insults the intelligence of anyone capable of analysing this kind of situation, but is an insult to the Zahal [the Israeli army] (*Ma'ariv*, 24 March 1972, cited in Hirst, 1977: 211)

Other posited explanations for Israel's decision to attack its Arab neighbours include a desire to safeguard the deterrent image of the IDF. Shlaim (2000) suggests that the Egyptian blockade represented a threat to Israel's 'iron wall' of militarised strength. Others suggest different motivations. Neff claims that on the eve of the 1967 War the CIA had identified three Israeli objectives: 'the destruction of the centre of power of the radical Arab socialist movements' [i.e. Nasser's regime], 'the destruction of the arms of the radical Arabs', and the 'destruction of both Jordan and Syria as modern States' (Neff, 1984: 230, cited in Finkelstein, 1999: 143). Hirst (1977) argues that Israeli military planners had been preparing the attack since they were forced to leave the Sinai in 1956, and cites comments from General Burns, the chief of staff of UNTSO in the early 1960s that Israel would probably seek to go to war again soon to break the Arab economic blockade and overcome its economic difficulties. Another explanation that has been cited as a motivation for Israel's decision to go to war involved a desire to expand the boundaries of Israel. Proponents of this view, point to comments made by the Israeli commander Yigal Allon shortly before the 1967 war that 'in the case of a new war' Israel must seek as a central aim 'the territorial

fulfilment of the land of Israel.’ (cited in Finkelstein, 1999: 143). There is evidence since the 1950s in the writings of David Ben-Gurion and other Israeli leaders that there had been a desire to expand Israel to incorporate all of Jerusalem and the West Bank. The Israeli historian Benny Morris notes:

A strong expansionist current ran through both Zionist ideology and Israeli society. There was a general feeling shared by prominent figures as Dayan and Ben-Gurion, that the territorial gains of the 1948 war had fallen short of the envisioned promised land. *Bechiya Le Dorot*- literally a cause for lamentation for future generations- was how Ben-Gurion described the failure to conquer Arab East Jerusalem; leading groups in Israeli society regarded the Jordanian controlled West Bank with the same feeling. (Morris, 1989: 410-411, cited in Finkelstein, 1999: 221)

The conflict triggered a second mass exodus of Palestinians, many of whom became refugees for a second time, as they had sought refuge in the West Bank and Gaza after having to abandon their homes in 1948-9. Nur Masalha, senior lecturer at the Holy Land Research Project at the University of Surrey, argues that ‘there is no evidence to suggest that there were wholesale or blanket expulsion orders adopted or carried out by the Israeli army in June 1967, although the policy of selective eviction, demolition and encouragement of ‘transfer’ continued for several weeks after the Israeli army occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip.’ (Masalha, 1999: 100). Masalha maintains that in 1967 ‘evictions and demolitions were evident in numerous geographical locations in the West Bank’ and that ‘young men from several cities and refugee camps were also targeted for deportation’ (1999: 101). Peter Dodd and Halim Barakat in their study of the 1967 exodus, *River without Bridges* provide similar explanations for the exodus:

The exodus was a response to the severe situational pressures existing at the time. The situational pressures were generated by the aerial attacks upon a defenceless country, including the extensive use of napalm, the occupation of the West Bank villages by the Israeli army, and the actions of the occupying forces. Certainly the most dramatic of these was the eviction of civilians, and the deliberate destruction of a number of villages [Imwas, Yalu, Bayt Nuba,

Bayt Marsam, Bayt Awa, Habla, al-Burj and Jiftlik]. Other action, such as threats and the mass detention of male civilians, also created situational pressures (Dodd & Barakat, 1969: 54 cited in Masalha, 1999: 96)

William Wilson Harris (1980), who reached similar conclusions himself in his analysis of the exodus, estimates that 250,000 residents of the West Bank, 70,000 residents of the Gaza strip and 90,000 residents of the Golan Heights were forced to flee their homes during 1967. The displaced residents of the West Bank were prevented from returning to the area by harsh measures. Testimony in the Israeli press, from a unnamed soldier serving in the 5th Reserve Division on the Jordan River, details the fate of displaced Palestinians attempting to return to their homes:

We fired such shots every night on men, women and children. Even during moonlit nights when we could identify the people, that is distinguish between men, women and children. In the mornings we searched the area and, by explicit order from the officer on the spot, shot the living, including those who hid or were wounded, again including the women and children” (*Haolam Haze* 10 October 1967 cited in Masalha, 1999: 99)

There were reports that after the war Israel began destroying Palestinian homes in the newly occupied territories. The American historian Alfred Lilienthal claims that ‘according to UN figures, the Israelis destroyed during the period between 11 June 1967 and 15 November 1969 some 7,554 Palestinian Arab homes in the territories seized during that war; this figure excluded 35 villages in the occupied Golan Heights that were razed to the ground. In the two years between September 1969 and 1971 the figure was estimated to have reached 16,312 homes.’ (1978: 160)

On 19 June 1967 Israeli leaders formulated an offer to hand back the Golan Heights, the Sinai and the Gaza Strip in return for demilitarisation agreements, peace treaties and assurance of navigation rights from Egypt, Syria and Jordan. Bergman (2003) suggests that the decision, taken two months later, by Arab leaders meeting in Khartoum to issue the famous ‘three noes’ to peace, recognition and negotiations with Israel led to the Israeli decision taken on October 30 to officially withdraw the offer, and harden its attitude. Shlaim (2000) disagrees arguing that there was no evidence that the conditional offer of withdrawal was ever presented to the Arab states, and that

the offer was almost immediately killed by political and military leaders who wanted to retain a large part of the captured territories, and began in mid-July to approve plans for constructing settlements on the occupied Golan Heights. He maintains that the 'three noes' at Khartoum referred to 'no formal peace *treaty*, but not a rejection of a state of peace; no *direct* negotiations, but not a refusal to talk through third parties; and no *de jure* recognition of Israel, but acceptance of its existence as a state' (2000: 258). He argues the conference was 'a victory for Arab moderates who argued for trying to obtain the withdrawal of Israeli forces by political rather than military means' (2000: 258). There have also been claims that Israel turned down a peace treaty with Egypt and Jordan at the conference.¹⁷

Shlaim claims that there was no Israeli debate about handing back East Jerusalem, but that Israeli leaders were split on how much of the West Bank they wanted to retain. He suggests outright annexation was favoured by only a few, because it would mean absorbing large numbers of Arabs into the Jewish state. Most favoured one of two options. The 'Allon Plan' proposed limited autonomy for Palestinians in part the West Bank (Israel would still own the land and control security in the autonomy area), with Israel taking control of a large strip of the Jordan Valley, much of the area around Jerusalem and the Judean desert. These parts of the West Bank would then be colonised with Jewish settlements and army bases. The second option involved handing back to Jordan part of the West Bank with Israel keeping approximately a third of the area. Neither proposal was acceptable to King Hussein or the Palestinians.

Resolution 242 and the War of Attrition

The 1967 war was followed by UN Security Council unanimously adopting resolution 242, which has become the framework document for successive attempts to resolve the conflict. The resolution called for the 'withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict' in line with the principle 'emphasise[d]' in the preambular paragraph of the 'inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war'. It also 'emphasised' the 'need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every State in the area can live in security' as well as a 'just settlement of the refugee problem' and the establishment of navigation rights. Egypt and Jordan agreed to

resolution 242 whilst Syria rejected it. The Palestinians also rejected it on the grounds that it only spoke of their plight as a refugee problem, making no mention of their rights to self-determination and national sovereignty. Israel accepted the resolution in 1970. The meaning of the withdrawal clause has been contested. Israel has argued that because the definite article 'the' was not included in the English version of the resolution ('from territories occupied' rather than 'from the territories occupied') it means that the scope of withdrawal was left vague and that Israel did not have to withdraw from all the territories it occupied in the conflict. Israel has also argued that many of the nations who endorsed the resolution including the United States, United Kingdom, USSR and Brazil agreed that Israel did not have to withdraw from all the territories (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1999). Finkelstein (2001) disputes this. He points to statements made by the United Nations General Assembly President that 'there is virtual unanimity in upholding the principle that conquest of territory by war is inadmissible in our time under the Charter' (U.N. General Assembly 1967a, cited in Finkelstein, 2001: 145). This affirmation, the President continued was 'made in virtually all statements' and that 'virtually all speakers laid down the corollary that withdrawal of forces to their original position is expected.' (U.N. General Assembly 1967a, cited in Finkelstein, 2001: 145). The debates at the UN Security Council, Finkelstein argues, were similarly unambiguous with virtually all representatives stressing both the inadmissibility clause and the need for a complete Israeli withdrawal.¹⁸ He also argues that the American position was for a full Israeli withdrawal.¹⁹

Having failed to secure an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories Egypt fought the 'war of attrition' against Israel between 1967 and 1970. Shlaim argues President Nasser's immediate purpose was to 'prevent the conversion of the Suez Canal into a de facto border, while his ultimate goal was to force Israel to withdraw to the prewar border' (2000: 289). Egypt bombed Israeli troop concentrations in the occupied Sinai and Palestinian guerrillas launched cross border attacks against Israel. Israel then attacked military and civilian targets within Egypt and Jordan. Numerous Egyptian coastal towns and cities were heavily damaged by Israeli air attacks. The Israeli commander Ezer Weizman recalled the fate of an Egyptian border city Ismailia which the Israeli army bombarded 'incessantly, devastating it from the air as well as with land-based artillery' so that aerial photographs 'showed its western portions resembling the cities at the end of World

War II' (Weizman cited in Gilbert, 1999: 410). Moeshe Dayan was later to claim that Israeli attacks during the war of attrition had created one and a half million Egyptian refugees as well as emptying the entire Jordan Valley of its inhabitants (*Al Hamishar*, 10 May 1978). The war was finally brought to a halt in August 1970 when both sides agreed to a US sponsored ceasefire. Morris (1992) estimates that in the three years of conflict, 367 Israeli soldiers and more than 10,000 Egyptian soldiers and civilians were killed.

Settlement Building, Economic Integration and the Occupation

In the aftermath of the 1967 war Israel established settlements on the newly captured territories and placed the Palestinian residents under military rule. Two major reasons were given for the creation of settlements. One stressed their security value:

There was also a strategic justification for not wanting to give up the occupied West Bank and that was that it turned Israel's 'narrow waist' into something wider. Before seizing the West Bank Israel's width at some parts measured scarcely nine miles from the Jordan bulge to the Mediterranean, and by clinging to the occupied territories west of the Jordan river Israel made it more difficult for a potential Arab invasion force coming from the east to cut in two. (Bregman, 2003: 126-7)

Some Israelis were dismissive of the security argument alleging it was a pretext to satisfy international public opinion. One official writing in the Israeli press claimed that 'we have to use the pretext of security needs and the authority of the military governor as there is no way of driving out the Arabs from their land so long as they refuse to go and accept our compensation' (*Ha'aretz*, 23 November 1969, cited in Hirst, 1977: 241). A second strand of thought justified settlement building and retention of the occupied territories, on the basis of divine rights. Victory in the six day war was seen by many religious Jews as a sign of support from God and evidence that the messianic era was at hand, leading to a surge in support for religious nationalism. A number of new parties and organisations were formed who advocated permanent control and settlement of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, because, it was

argued, these areas were a central component of the biblical land of Israel. Harold Fisch, the former rector of Israel's Bar-Ilan University, argues that God promised Abraham the land of Israel as an eternal possession, and this provides justification for sovereignty over the West Bank and Gaza Strip:

The covenant between the people of Israel and its God, which includes the promised land as an integral part, is an important objective within the entire scheme of creation. It is from this fact that the linkage between the people of Israel and its land is rooted-in the transcendental will of God who created all in his honor (Fisch, 1982: 189)

These arguments are echoed in more contemporary comments. In a recent interview in the *Observer*, Ariel Sharon, the Israeli Prime Minister, was quoted as saying 'Israel is the promised land- promised to Jews and no-one else' (13 July 2003). The viewpoint has also gained ground in the U.S. via the Christian fundamentalist movement, who are key supporters of George W Bush and the Republicans. A BBC programme interviewed the pastor of a major church in Texas who explained his view that:

Well you understand that the Jewish state was something that's born in the mind of God and we are a people who believe the scripture and the scripture says very clearly that God created Israel, that God is the protector and defender of Israel. If God created Israel, if God defends Israel, is it not logical to say that those who fight with Israel are fighting with God? (BBC Radio 4, *A Lobby to be Reckoned With*, 7 May 2002)

Other arguments for Israel's rights to keep and settle the lands captured in 1967 included the position that since the land has changed sovereignty many times over the last two thousand years, the Jews have as much claim, as any others who had controlled it since they were exiled.²⁰ Some Israelis have argued that since the Arabs rejected partition in 1947 they have given up their rights to a share of mandatory Palestine. Others point to the legal status of the Balfour Declaration or argue that since Israel won the territories in a 'war of self-defense' they have a right to keep

them. Benjamin Netanyahu argues that to prevent Jews from building settlements in the occupied territories is a form of apartheid:

Careful manipulation of the media by the Arabs has left many Westerners with the indelible impression that Arab paupers are being kicked off their hovels in droves to make way for Jewish suburbs in the 'densely populated West Bank.' ... For what is manifestly occurring is that the West, which so sharply condemned anti-black apartheid in South Africa, is being used by the Arabs as an enforcer of anti-Jewish apartheid that pertains in the Arab's own countries. (2000: 189-192)

In a review of Israel's settlement building programs Israel Shahak and Norton Mezvinsky (1999) note that until 1974, Moeshe Dayan oversaw settlement activity. His policy was to limit settlements primarily to Hebron, Northern Sinai and the Jordan Valley, as part of a bargain he made with the Palestinian feudal notables who controlled the villages. After 1974 Shahak and Mezvinsky argue that religious settler groups, primarily Gush Emunim, and their political allies in the Knesset came to the fore in determining settlement policy, with the support of both Labor and particularly the Likud party. In 1973 Israel introduced the Galili Plan which Shafir suggests transformed the Alon plan's '*military frontier* to a combination of a *messianic frontier* and a *suburban frontier*' (1999: 92) Some commentators have pointed to the extreme ideological views of many religious settlers which justify attacks on Palestinians and attempts to expel them from the occupied territories in what is seen as a process of 'purification' or 'sanctification' of the land.²¹ Hirst has suggested that even prior to 1974, the creation of settlements was at the expense of Palestinians:

Sometimes it was necessary to uproot an entire village- though not necessarily all at once. For years the impoverished inhabitants of Beit Askariyah watched in impotent dismay as the great cantonments of the Kfar Etzion settlement went up around them, relentlessly encroaching on their agricultural and grazing land before swallowing up their homes too. In January 1972, the army expelled 6,000 bedouins from Rafah in north-east Sinai. It demolished their houses, poisoned their wells, and kept them at bay with a barbed wire fence. The Bedouins were eventually employed as night watchmen or labourers- on

their own property and in the service of those who had taken it from them.
(1977: 242)

In 1981 the Likud administration introduced the Drobless Plan. Shafir suggests that its purpose was to ‘scatter Jewish settlements among Arab towns and villages in order to ensure that no homogenous Palestinian inhabited area, the potential core of a Palestinian state would remain’ (1999: 92). In a more recent study Amnesty International (1999c) examined how settlement building and Palestinian house demolitions and are ‘inextricably linked with Israeli policy to control and colonize areas of the West Bank’, a policy that has been ‘energetically followed for over 30 years by all administrations from 1967 until the present time.’ The process of colonisation the report continues depends ‘not just on finding land that is physically ‘suitable’, but on alienating it from the Palestinians, defending it against Palestinian use, and ensuring through such processes as registration and leasing that Palestinians are disqualified from having any future benefit from that land’. Amnesty International argue that the damage to the ‘tight knit pattern of Palestinian villages’ has been pervasive. Settlement building is prohibited by the Fourth Geneva Convention, article 49 of which stipulates that ‘the occupying power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own population into the territory it occupies’. The Israeli government has disputed this, arguing that the area is ‘administered’ rather than ‘occupied’ and that article 49 of the Conventions has ‘no bearing’ on the Israeli settlements because the Convention was intended to cover forced transfers during the second world war, whilst ‘the movement of individuals to these areas is entirely voluntary, while the settlements themselves are not intended to displace Arab inhabitants, nor do they do so in practice’ (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1996). The practice has, however, been repeatedly condemned by the European Union and United Nations who have deemed the settlements illegal and in need of removal in multiple resolutions. The practice was recently condemned in United Nations resolution 55/132 by 152 votes to four (Israel, United States, Micronesia, Marshall Islands)

In Jerusalem, Israel initiated a policy of ‘Judaization’ in an attempt to change the demographic, physical, cultural, legal and economic status of the city. It appropriated Arab land in the city and demolished Arab housing. In the Jewish Quarter prior to 1948, approximately 20% of the property was Jewish owned. After 1967, Hirst suggests that Israelis ‘relentlessly forced out the 5,500 [Arab] inhabitants

who lived there' (1977: 235). The demolitions and evictions occurred all over the city, with the victims of land expropriations receiving either inadequate levels of compensation or sometimes none. Moves to change the legal and demographic structure of Jerusalem have drawn criticism from the international community. In 1999 the United Nations condemned such actions by 139 votes to one (Israel).²² Hirst also notes that Arab culture was suppressed or denigrated especially in schools.²³ The Israeli state quickly moved to integrate the Arabs living in the occupied territories into the Israeli economy. Some historians such as Sachar suggest that for Palestinians this was a generally beneficial process creating 'unprecedented affluence' as part of a 'comparatively painless' occupation (1977: 688-9). Other Israelis were critical of this process arguing that Israel was instituting colonial policies in which a powerful Israeli minority was exploiting a captive Arab population for the benefit of its cheap labour and its role as a market for Israeli products:

Better men than I have enlarged on the grim paradox that threatens the Zionist vision, the social and moral failure of that vision, which are to be expected from the transformation of the Jews into employers, managers and supervisors of Arab hewers of wood and drawers of water, and all of it plus the slogan of 'Integration'... There is an inescapable process in a population that is divided into two peoples, one dominant, the other dominated. No! The State of Israel will not be such a monstrosity. (Ya'akov Talmon cited in Sachar, 1977: 713)

There has also been commentary in the Israeli press suggesting the conditions under which the Palestinians were obliged to work for Israelis were exploitative and humiliating. Palestinians with jobs in Israel were not legally allowed to spend the night there so that many had to be bussed in over long distances from the occupied territories, sometimes extending their working day to 17 hours. The Israeli magazine *Haolam Haze* reported on those that were permitted to sleep illegally on Israeli farms: 'Too far away for the eye to see, hidden in the orchards, there are the sheep pens for the servants, of a sort that even a state like South Africa would be ashamed of' (22 December 1982, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 141). In a *Jerusalem Post* interview, the Israeli journalist Aryeh Rubinstein asks Amos Hadar, Secretary General of the Moshav [agricultural] movement whether he agrees with the use of Arab labour 'but only on condition that they will live in subhuman conditions, degraded, and not under

human conditions, more or less?’ ‘Correct’ replies Hadar stressing that ‘there is a difficult question here’. ‘There is no choice but to employ Arabs’ but they must be bussed in and out of Israel every day. ‘It is hard, it is costly it is problematic from an economic standpoint but there is no other solution’ (26 December 1982, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 141) There has also been criticism of Israeli use of Arab child labour. Israel’s Arabic language communist newspaper *Al-Ittihad* described a child labour market at Jaffa:

In this market foremen get rich by exploiting the labour of children and young men from the occupied areas. Every morning at 4.a.m. cars from Gaza and the Strip start arriving there, bringing dozens of Arab workers who line up in the street in a long queue. A little later at 4:30 a.m. Arab boys who work in restaurants in the town begin to arrive. These boys work in restaurants for a month on end, including Saturdays...Dozens, indeed hundreds of boys, who should be at school come from Gaza to work in Israel. The cars can be seen coming and going from earliest dawn. At about 6.a.m. Israeli labour brokers start arriving to choose ‘working donkeys’ as they call them. They take great care over their choice, actually feeling the ‘donkeys’ muscles. (30 April 1973, cited in Hirst, 1977: 246)

Military Occupation/Administration

Israel imposed a military administration on the occupied territories, which seriously restricted the social and political rights of its residents. According to the United Nations and human rights groups, it also involved extensive human rights violations. Israel argued that the policies were necessary to protect the state from attacks by infiltrators or Palestinians in the occupied territory, who they claimed were susceptible to PLO incitement. Morris suggests that that severe repression coupled with ‘massive use’ of informers and collaborators by the Israeli security service Shin Bet meant that armed activity by the PLO in the occupied territories was ‘virtually eradicated’ by 1971 (1992: 279). Some commentators such as Chomsky, have suggested that the imposition of such policies had another objective, that by making life difficult for the Palestinians in the occupied territories, they would emigrate and

allow Israel to absorb the parts of the occupied territories that it wanted, without having to worry about a large Arab population that would ‘dilute’ the Jewish character of the Israeli state. Chomsky points to the official government records of a meeting at the start of the Israeli occupation in September 1967, when Moeshe Dayan urged government ministers to tell the Palestinian residents of the occupied territories that ‘we have no solution, that you shall continue to live like dogs, and whoever wants to can leave-and we will see where this process leads... In five years we may have 200,000 less people-and that is a matter of enormous importance’ (Beilin, 1985, cited in Chomsky, 1992: 434). Professor Ian Lustick suggests that Israel also wanted to break up the territorial continuity of Israeli Arab villages in the Galilee and points to the 1976 Koenig memorandum in which, the Israeli Minister of the Interior recommended the ‘coordination of a smear campaign against Rakah activists...the harassment of ‘all negative personalities at all levels and at all institutions’ and the employment of techniques for ‘encouraging the emigration of Arab intellectuals, and for downgrading the effectiveness of Arab university student organizations’ (1980:256). It is widely argued that the policies Israel instituted, breached international law. They also led to it being frequently condemned at the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council by near unanimous votes.²⁴ These policies included the systematic torture of prisoners²⁵, imprisonment without trial²⁶, collective punishments²⁷, theft of natural resources, curfews and searches²⁸, house demolitions and deportations. The practices have also attracted criticism from human rights groups:

Amnesty International has for many years documented and condemned violations of international human rights and humanitarian law by Israel directed against the Palestinian population of the Occupied Territories. They include unlawful killings; torture and ill-treatment; arbitrary detention; unfair trials; collective punishments such as punitive closures of areas and destruction of homes; extensive and wanton destruction of property; deportations; and discriminatory treatment as compared to Israeli settlers. Most of these violations are grave breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention and are therefore war crimes. Many have also been committed in a widespread and systematic manner, and in pursuit of government policy; such violations meet

the definition of crimes against humanity under international law. (Amnesty International, 2002)

Palestinian Nationalism and the Rise of the Opposition Movements

In the aftermath of the 1948 the refugees who were displaced had begun to formulate a vision of 'the return'. Initially it was hoped the United Nations or the Arab States themselves would help the refugees achieve this objective. However as the years passed the lack of concrete progress began to frustrate the refugees and they became increasingly disillusioned by the leaders of the Arab States. By 1964 Yasser Arafat had established a small guerrilla organisation, which was granted a secure base by Syria's radical Baathist regime. Fatah's philosophy from the outset was to mobilise popular Arab support behind guerrilla operations of increasing scale and intensity conducted against Israel. Prior to the 1967 war Hirst (1977) alleges that Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon had all tried to prevent guerrilla incursions into Israel, but that after the war this became more difficult as popular support for guerrilla operations increased. By February 1968 Fatah members had taken control of the National Council of the PLO and Arafat became Chairman. The aftermath of the war also saw the formation of Dr George Habash's PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine) began to build a strong base of support in the refugee camps of the Gaza Strip.

In March 1968 Israeli forces launched an attack on the Karameh refugee camp in Jordan. Israel claimed the attack was in retaliation for attacks 7 which had killed six people and wounded 44. Fifteen thousand troops backed by tanks attacked the camp. Rather than retreat to the hills the guerrilla forces stayed and fought and suffered huge losses. Half the Palestinian guerrillas, 150 in all were killed, together with 128 members of the Jordanian army and 29 Israeli soldiers (Hirst, 1977). Although the guerrillas had lost many fighters it was considered a significant victory because the Israelis had suffered unusually high casualties and met fierce resistance. The battle of Karameh led to an influx of volunteers from across the Arab world to join the guerrilla movements. In the years after 1967, as well as engaging in a guerrilla war, the Palestinians began to formulate a vision of what a future Palestinian entity would look like. The result of this was the vision of the 'Democratic State of Palestine'. The brainchild of the PLO planner and negotiator Nabil Shaath, the Democratic State of

Palestine would involve the dismantling of the Israeli state and its replacement with a non-sectarian binational Palestine in which Christian, Moslem and Jew would live together in equality. (Hirst, 1977) The new entity would it was claimed include the Jews already residing there and the Palestinians who had been displaced in 1948 and 1967. These proposals were not immediately or universally accepted by Palestinians. Hirst (1977) suggests that some saw them as capitulation to the enemy or at best premature considering that Israel was still militarily dominant. Others feared that the more technologically advanced Jews would dominate them, whilst some considered it a tactical propaganda move aimed at international opinion. The concept was a complete non-starter for almost all Israelis. Israel had been constructed out of Palestine with huge military and diplomatic effort as a state for the Jewish people and there was no desire to dilute its Jewish character. Furthermore Israelis were fearful of the extreme anti-Jewish rhetoric emanating from its Arab neighbours and worried that any returning refugees might want to take revenge for being displaced from their lands.

In the two years after the 1967 war the forces of Fatah and the other guerrilla movements had gone from 300 to more than 30,000 and substantial funding was coming in from the Arab world. The number of operations also increased dramatically. Fatah records claim that 98 per cent of these occurred outside the State of Israel with two thirds of them occurring in the West Bank . Fatah regularly insisted that the army and 'Zionist institutions' were its real targets, not civilians especially women and children, and if these were attacked it was in response to attacks on Palestinian civilians, and was selectively done. However Hirst (1977) points out that although the 'great bulk' of attacks were aimed at military targets, civilians were unquestionably targeted. Bombs were planted in supermarkets in Jerusalem and bus stops in Tel Aviv and rockets were fired on settlements in Kiryat Shmoneh and Eilat. Whilst Fatah confined its actions to historic Palestine, the PFLP did not. It attacked targets all over the world. It hijacked foreign airliners. It firebombed branches of Marks and Spencers because of their fundraising for Israel. It blew up an Arab oil pipeline because the extraction was by an American oil company on behalf of a 'feudal' Arab monarchy. The main purpose of these actions George Habash maintained, was publicity:

When we hijack a plane it had more effect than if we killed a hundred Israelis in battle. For decades world public opinion has been neither for nor against the Palestinians. It simply ignored us. At least the world is talking about us now (*Der Stern*, 19 September 1970, cited in Hirst, 1977: 304)

However the opposition movements were to suffer a major blow in 1970. The PLO had formed a state-within-a-state in Jordan, openly threatening the rule of the Hashemite monarchy. Following an assassination attempt on King Hussein and a series of hijackings carried out by the PFLP, the King set his army upon the guerrillas. In ten days of bloody struggle thousands of guerrillas were killed, and within a year most of the fighters and political elements of the Palestinian movement were expelled and ended up in Lebanon. 'Black September' as it became known amongst Palestinians produced an organisation bearing the same name. Its most well known operation was the taking of Israeli athletes as hostages at the 1972 Munich Olympics. Eight Black September members took eleven Israeli athletes hostage at the Olympic village in Munich demanding the release of 200 Palestinians imprisoned in Israel. In the German rescue operation four of the Palestinian hijackers and all eleven Israeli hostages were killed. Three days later Israel launched attacks on Syria and Lebanon. There were reports that up to 500 people, mostly civilians, were killed in nine separate simultaneous Israeli air attacks (*Al-Nahar Arab Report*, 18 September 1972, cited in Hirst, 1977: 251)

The Phantoms and Skyhawks swooped on the suburban Damascus resort of al-Hama; the bombs fell indiscriminately on Palestinians in their hillside dwellings and on Syrians, in their cars or strolling by the river Barada on their weekend outing. Survivors recounted how they were machine-gunned as they ran for cover (Hirst, 1977: 251)

In 1973 there were further hijackings by Arab groups. In that year Israel had also shot down a Libyan airliner which had strayed over the occupied Sinai peninsula, killing all 106 passengers. Later, Black September militants took over the Saudi Embassy in the Sudanese capital demanding the release of Palestinian militants held in Jordanian jails. The authorities refused and a Jordanian together with an American and a Belgian diplomat were killed. There followed, in quick succession, hijackings

of Japanese, American, and Dutch airliners. The worst loss of life occurred at Rome airport in December 1973 when Palestinian militants killed 34, mainly American, civilians. Eleven months later a British Airways VC10 was hijacked by the Martyr Abu Mahmud Group, who called on the British Government to 'declare its responsibility for the greatest crime in history, which was the establishment of the Zionist entity, and foreswear the accursed Balfour Declaration, which brought tragedies and calamities to our region' (cited in Hirst, 1977: 321-2). In the wake of this hijacking Yasser Arafat, very publicly attempted to rein in the militants by arresting a number and amending the PLO criminal code to make hijacking that resulted in loss of life a capital offence.

The early 1970s had also seen the PLO begin to make diplomatic headway at the United Nations in its quest for institutional legitimacy and support for Palestinian nationalism. In 1970 a General Assembly resolution was passed recognising the need for Palestinian self-determination. General Assembly resolution 2649 'condemn[ed]s those Governments that deny the right to self-determination of peoples recognised as being entitled to it, especially of the peoples of southern Africa and Palestine' In 1974 UN resolution 3246 was passed which again stressed the need for Palestinian self-determination but also added as a corollary that it was legitimate to 'struggle for liberation from colonial and foreign domination and alien subjugation by all available means, including armed struggle'. In November 1974 the UN adopted resolution 3236 which for established UN support for the creation of a Palestinian state: 'The General Assembly.... reaffirms the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people in Palestine, including (a) the right to self-determination without external interference (b) the right to national independence and sovereignty'.

Many Israelis especially on the right disputed the whole notion of Palestinian nationalism arguing that it was a post 1967 invention created by the Arab states in order to wage a surrogate war against Israel. In 1969 the Israeli prime minister Golda Meir stated that 'It was not as though there was a Palestinian people in Palestine considering itself as a Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them. They did not exist' (*Sunday Times*, 15 June 1969, cited in Shlaim, 2000: 311). Similarly Netanyahu has argued that both Palestinian Nationalism and Palestinian refugees are post-1967 fabrications:

Indeed, most Palestinian Arabs have homes. Many of them, in fact, live as full citizens in Eastern Palestine-today called the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Similarly, most of the Arabs of Judea-Samaria are not homeless refugees; they live in the same homes they occupied before the establishment of Israel. The number of actual refugees is close to nil (2000: 156-8)

This is disputed by multilateral bodies such as the United Nations, who have explicitly recognised in many resolutions the existence of a distinct Palestinian people, their rights to national self-determination, and the existence of over three and a half million refugees.

1973 The October War

The War of Attrition had failed to secure the return of the occupied Sinai for Egypt but had instead left many of the Suez coastal cities devastated by Israeli raids. Shlaim claims that in the early 1970s Egypt made numerous attempts to regain the occupied Sinai through diplomacy but her peace overtures were rejected by Israel.²⁹ Shlaim suggests Israel's 'diplomacy of attrition' together with its openly annexation plans for the Sinai left Sadat with no diplomatic option and made war inevitable.

On 6 October 1973 Egyptian and Syrian forces attacked Israeli troop concentrations in the occupied Sinai Peninsula and Golan Heights. The Arab armies achieve early successes with the Egyptian army crossing the Suez Canal and advancing into the Sinai, and the Syrian army forcing back the Israelis on the Golan Heights. Eventually the Israeli army turned the tables and regained the territorial losses it initially sustained. The war cost the lives of 2,832 Jews and 8,528 Arabs (Shlaim, 2000) There have been suggestions that the conflict nearly precipitated both a nuclear exchange between the superpowers and an Israeli nuclear strike on Egypt.³⁰

The nature of the attack and the motivations of Syria and Egypt are contested. Netanyahu argues that the Arab forces had 'enormous advantages' over the Israelis, and the Israeli army had fought a 'pulverizing battle to keep the front from collapsing in the face of overwhelming numbers' (2000: 282). He claims that 'Israel's army was able, albeit by a hair's breadth, to prevent defeat in the face of a surprise attack' and that having 'so little to show for an onslaught stacked so decisively in their favour'

was what brought Sadat to negotiating table to sign a peace treaty with Israel at Camp David in 1979 (2000: 282). In contrast, Shlaim suggests that the Egyptian/Syrian attack was a limited venture designed to bring Israel to the negotiating table and force a political settlement in which the lands captured in 1967 would be returned. In an exact reversal of Netanyahu's thesis, Finkelstein (1999) argues that it was Israel who finally agreed to come to the negotiating table at Camp David after Egypt and Syria demonstrated that they possessed a 'military option'.

Following the Yom Kippur war the Arab world led by Saudi Arabia instituted an oil embargo on the West leading to a sharp rise in oil prices, which it is argued precipitated a major global recession. This again had the effect of focusing international attention on the need to resolve the conflict, or at least to neutralise some of its more dangerous elements.

Conflict in Lebanon

Having been forced out of Jordan in 1970, the PLO relocated to Lebanon from where it fought a guerrilla war against the Israeli state, attacking both military and civilian targets. Sachar (1977) lists numerous deadly attacks by Palestinian infiltrators on Israelis and argues that during the mid 1970s the 'violence continued almost without respite' (1977: 810). Netanyahu notes that the PLO were using Lebanon as a base from which to fire Katyusha missiles across the border into Israel, which he maintains had a very damaging effect on the lives of those in Israel's northern settlements:

The PLO used the territory of its de facto state to shell Israeli cities and towns. For years, the entire population of the northern border towns and villages were regularly driven into underground bomb shelters by barrages of PLO launched Katyusha missiles, the little brothers of the Scud missiles that Iraq launched against Israel in 1991. By 1982, the population levels Kiryat Shemona and Nahariya had fallen ominously; factories, schools and beaches were being closed repeatedly to avoid mass casualties during the shellings; and fear of economic ruin and depopulation had spread. (2000: 218-19)

During this period Israel bombed PLO positions, Lebanese villages and Palestinian refugee camps. The Israeli military analyst Ze'ev Schiff justified attacks on civilians on the basis that guerrillas used the villages and refugee camps for shelter:

In south Lebanon we struck the civilian population consciously because they deserved it...the importance of [Mordechai] Gur's [Israeli chief of staff] remarks is the admission that the Israeli army has always struck civilian populations, purposely and consciously...the army, he said, has never distinguished civilian [from military] targets..[but] purposely attacked civilian targets even when Israeli settlements had not been struck (*Ha'aretz*, 15 May 1978, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 181)

The Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban argued that 'there was a rational prospect ultimately fulfilled that affected populations would exert pressure for the cessation of hostilities' (*Jerusalem Post*, 16 August 1981, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 182) The Lebanese villagers though were unarmed and could do little to stop the armed guerrillas, and the Lebanese army was too weak to remove the Palestinians, who had virtually formed a state-within-a-state. Official government casualty statistics suggest that the scale of Israeli raids was disproportionate to the Palestinian attacks. The Israeli authorities estimated that 106 Israeli civilians were killed in attacks by Palestinian guerrillas on Israel's northern border in the period between 1967 and the 1982 Israeli invasion, at a rate of approximately seven a year (*Ha'aretz*, 22 June 1982, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 74). The American journalist Judith Coburn reported that diplomats in Beirut and UN officials estimated 3500 Lebanese citizens killed between 1967 and 1975 and at least twice as many Palestinian civilians, giving a rate of more than a thousand per year. Touring Southern Lebanon in the mid 1970s Coburn found many villages 'attacked almost daily in recent months...by airplane, artillery, tanks and gunboats' with the Israelis employing 'shells, bombs, phosphorous, incendiary bombs, CBUs [cluster bombs] and napalm' against Lebanese villages and refugee camps as part of what she claimed was a 'scorched earth' policy to remove the population and create a de-militarised zone. (*New Times*, 7 March 1975, cited in Chomsky, 1977:190). By 1977 it was estimated that 300,000 Lebanese

Muslims had been turned into refugees by the Israeli attacks (*New York Times*, 2 October 1977, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 191)

The PLO continued its diplomatic offensive at the United Nations. In November 1974, the United Nations officially granted the PLO observer status and later that month Yasser Arafat addressed the UN General Assembly for the first time, giving his 'gun and olive branch' address. The leadership of the PLO argued for the ending of the armed struggle, in return for the creation of a mini Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and a settlement of the refugee issue. This move was not accepted by all factions within the organisation, the PFLP leading the rejectionist wing which was against the concept of the mini-state and recognising the legitimacy of the Israeli state. These moves did not impress the Israelis. Israel's Foreign Minister claimed that 'the voice of Arafat was, and remains the voice of indiscriminate terror, the voice of the gun, with nothing in it of the olive branch of peace' (cited in Hirst, 1977: 335). The call for the creation of a Palestinian mini state between Israel and Jordan was similarly dismissed as a platform from which the PLO would attempt to destroy Israel. The Israeli daily *Yediot Aharonot* argued that 'no reasonable person...can ask us to hand over these regions to the PLO, unless it expects Israel to commit suicide' (14 November 1974, cited in Hirst, 1977: 336)

In the mid 1970s both sides as well as Syria became involved in the Lebanese civil war. The relative stability which had prevailed in the country after the 1943 power sharing National Pact broke down in the mid 1970s, culminating in the all out civil war of 1975-6. To simplify greatly, the conflict concerned two rival groupings, the right-wing Christian-Maronite-Phalangist alliance backed by Israel, which was economically dominant in the country, and the predominately poor majority leftist Muslim-Lebanese-Palestinian grouping. In mid 1976 with the leftist Muslim coalition gaining the upper hand in the conflict, the Syrians intervened on the side of the Christians occupying most of Lebanon apart from a southern strip bordering Israel. The intervention of the Syrian army at the behest of the Christians (and with the tacit support of Israel) brought a truce and relative calm to all but Southern Lebanon. The 18 months of civil war had devastated Beirut, which became partitioned, and killed tens of thousands of Palestinians and Lebanese. In April 1976 Israel and Syria reached a secret agreement with American mediation, splitting the area into 'spheres of influence'. Syria agreed to keep its troops north of the Litani River and not to install surface to air missiles there, recognising Southern Lebanon as Israel's security buffer.

In the mid 1970s Israel began supplying the two major Christian Maronite militias, the Phalangists and Chamouns with weapons. Jonathan Randal (1983), the former senior foreign correspondent of the *Washington Post* suggests was strategically useful for Israel because it tied down two of Israel's enemies, the Syrians and Palestinians, both of whom had come into conflict with the Christians by 1977. Israel was also backing General Haddad's South Lebanon Army which was acting as its proxy force in South Lebanon. Randal (1983) notes that this was controversial because Haddad's forces had been involved in serious abuses including many instances of large scale killings of civilians and involvement in the unlawful deaths of UN personnel. In 1978 Israel mounted a large scale invasion of Southern Lebanon claiming that it was in response to a Palestinian attack in Israel which had left 37 Israelis and nine Palestinians dead. The scale and effects of the invasion are disputed. Gilbert claims that 'several dozen PLO soldiers were killed or captured' and 'all PLO installations were systematically destroyed' (1999: 490). Randal claims it was civilians rather than guerrillas who bore the brunt of the attack:

The destruction was a scale well known in Vietnam. Aping the prodigal use of American firepower in Indochina, the Israelis sought to keep their own casualties to a minimum- and succeeded. But they failed to wipe out the Palestinian commandoes, who had plenty of time to scamper to safety north of the Litani River. Piling mattresses, clothes and families in taxis and overloaded pickup trucks, more than two hundred thousand Lebanese also fled north out of harm's way. They became exiles in their own country, squatters seizing unoccupied apartments, the source of yet more tension in West Beirut. The Israelis did succeed in massive killing: almost all the victims were Lebanese civilians-some one thousand according to the International Committee of the Red Cross. More than six thousand homes were badly damaged or destroyed. Half a dozen villages were all but levelled in a frenzy of violence in which Israeli troops committed atrocities (1983: 209)

After three months under pressure from the United Nations, who condemned the attack, the IDF withdrew from southern Lebanon replaced by a United Nations force. Most of the positions abandoned by the IDF were taken by the SLA. In January 1979 Ezer Weizman, the Israeli Defence Secretary announced a controversial pre-

emptive policy against Palestinian guerrillas in Southern Lebanon. He declared that Israel would not only strike in retaliation but 'at any time and any place that Israel deemed desirable' (cited in Randal, 1983: 220). In 1981 hostilities escalated in Lebanon. On July 17 Israel launched a major bombing raid on Southern Lebanon hitting refugee camps, ports, Lebanon's main oil refinery and all but one of the bridges over the Litani and Zahrani rivers (Randal, 1983). The Israelis claimed that the raids were necessary to deal with a PLO arms build-up in Southern Lebanon. The Palestinians held fire for three days and then began shelling and rocketing Northern Israel. On July 17 Israel bombed the Fakhani district in West Beirut, home to the PLO offices. More than one hundred and twenty Palestinian and Lebanese civilians were killed leading to international condemnation of the raid. The Palestinians then launched artillery attacks on twenty eight Israeli towns and settlements damaging crops and orchards, whilst tens of thousands of Israelis were temporarily forced to flee their homes in northern Israel (Randal, 1983). In the wake of this exchange both sides agreed to an American brokered ceasefire.

Diplomacy and the Camp David Accords

During this period a number of attempts were made by the Palestinians to push for a peace settlement. Palestinian representatives put forward a United Nations Security Council resolution in January 1976 which called for a two state solution on the 1967 borders 'with appropriate arrangements....to guarantee....the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of all states in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognised boundaries.' (UN Security Council Resolution S/11940). The resolution received nine votes in favour including France and the Soviet Union but was blocked by a single vote against from the United States. Chomsky (1999) points to PLO acceptance of the Soviet-American peace plan of October 1977, the Soviet peace plan of 1981 and the Saudi 1982 peace plan as well as a number of public statements by PLO representatives in the late 1970s that the Palestinians were proposing to end the armed struggle in exchange for the creation of a mini-state in Gaza and the West Bank.³¹ He notes that all such overtures were rejected by Israel. Some Israelis such as Benjamin Netanyahu have dismissed all Palestinian peace overtures as part of an attempt to force Israel to accept a PLO

‘Trojan horse’ whose purpose is to destroy the Israeli state. He argues that after the 1973 war the Palestinians realised they couldn’t destroy Israel with a ‘frontal military assault’ but were planning ‘an interim phase in which Israel would be reduced to dimensions that made it more convenient for the coup de grace’. This would be achieved in two phases ‘first create a Palestinian state on any territory vacated by Israel’ and ‘second mobilize from that state a general Arab military assault to destroy a shrunken and indefensible Israel’ (2000: 239). Netanyahu claims that the Arabs have been deceiving the Western nations with a moderate front:

For the PLO is a Pan-Arab Trojan Horse, a gift that the Arabs have been trying to coax the Arabs into accepting for over twenty years, so that the West in turn can force Israel to let it in at the gates. The Arabs paint their gift up prettily with legitimacy with the pathos of its plight, with expressions for the cherished ideas of freedom, justice, and peace. Yet no matter how it is dressed up to conceal the fact, the ultimate aim of the gift remains: to be allowed within Israel’s defensive wall, to be parked on the hills overlooking Tel-Aviv, where it can perform its grisly task. Every inch of Western acceptance –the cover stories the banquets, the observer status, the embassies, and any territory the PLO has been able to get its hands on-it uses to push ever closer to its goal. (2000: 256)

In March 1978, 350 Israeli reservists sent a letter to Begin which accused the government of preferring to build settlements and create a ‘Greater Israel’ rather than make peace with the Arab world. This was partly in response to Prime Minister Begin’s decision to support the creation of a number of new Gush Emunim settlements deep in the occupied territories. The letter marked the creation of the Peace Now movement which in September 1978 organised a mass rally of 100,000 Israelis in Tel-Aviv, the largest political demonstration in the state’s history. The European Economic Community also pushed for a solution to the conflict during 1979. Leaders of the EEC meeting in Venice in June 1979 issued statements supportive of Palestinian statehood, and the president-elect of the European Commission Gaston Thorn travelled to the Middle East and met Yasser Arafat. The PLO was recognised by Ireland and Austria and Giscard d’Estaing recommended the group be accepted as a partner in peace negotiations. The Europeans also attempted to

widen 242 to include Palestinian self-determination. Ovendale (1999) claims that the United States made it clear that it would veto any European resolution in the Security Council which supported Palestinian rights.

In March 1979 Israel signed a peace agreement with Egypt in Washington, on terms very similar to the ones rejected by Israel in 1972. The progress to the final settlement had been long and tortuous involving diplomacy stretching over several continents and many years. Israel agreed to hand back the Sinai peninsula in exchange for a comprehensive peace treaty, and demilitarisation of most of the Sinai. Both parties had compromised. Israelis agreed to remove the settlements and airfields, Egypt dropped the issue of Jerusalem, and the two sides agreed on only a vague autonomy plan for the Palestinians that would be implemented in stages over a number of years. The two signatories took a great deal of criticism over the conclusion of the peace treaty. Begin was attacked by the right and religious parties for returning the Sinai, while Sadat was criticised for breaking with Arab unity, by signing a peace treaty with Israel without having achieved a deal on Jerusalem, Palestinian statehood or a full Israeli withdrawal from Arab territory. Finkelstein (2001) suggests that the Israeli government agreed to peace with Egypt because it would neutralise the most powerful Arab military force threatening it, and subsequently allow it to break the nexus of the Palestinian national movement in Lebanon. On 30 July 1980 the Israeli government formally annexed all of Jerusalem, and the following year the Golan Heights were annexed in violation of the Israel-Egypt peace agreement and resolution 242. Both annexations drew immediate condemnation from the UN Security Council (Resolutions 478 and 497) who declared the annexations illegal, and demanded their rescission. The plans for Palestinian autonomy were not developed. Shlaim suggests that the Begin administration deliberately sabotaged the autonomy negotiations and expanded expropriations of Palestinian land and settlement building, because it wanted to retain control over the West Bank and Gaza Strip:

Begin managed the autonomy talks in such a way that nothing could possibly be achieved. The first sign was Begin's appointment of Dr. Yosef Burg, the minister of the interior, to head Israel's six-man negotiating team. Burg was the leader of the National Religious Party, which saw Israel's right to Judea

and Samaria as embedded in Scripture and supported the settlement activities of Gush Emunim. (2000: 381-2)

The Invasion of Lebanon 1982

On 6 June 1982 Israel invaded Lebanon and attacked PLO forces. It also engaged the Syrian army in its drive towards Beirut. In the early days of the conflict the *Economist* correspondent G.H. Jansen reported that the Israeli policy was to surround towns and cities 'so swiftly that civilian inhabitants were trapped inside, and then to pound them from land, sea and air. After a couple of days there would be a timid probing attack: if there was resistance the pounding would resume' (*Middle East International*, 2 July 1982, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 219). By the time an American sponsored cease-fire came into effect on 11 June the Israeli army had reached the southern outskirts of Beirut. Shlaim (2000) suggests that Israel was expecting their Christian allies in Lebanon, led by Bashir Gemayel, to attack the PLO forces who by this time, were trapped in West Beirut. However Gemayel was reluctant to take on the Palestinians and the Israelis did not want to get involved in potentially costly street fighting. By 13 June the Israelis had surrounded Beirut and for the next two months they laid siege to the city and bombarded it with heavy weaponry. The Israeli commander Ariel Sharon who led the Israeli attack claimed that 'no army in the history of modern warfare ever took such pains to prevent civilian casualties as did the Israeli Defence Forces' and that the 'Jewish doctrine' of tohar haneshek (purity of arms) was adhered to 'scrupulously' with the Israeli army 'attacking only predetermined PLO positions and in bombing and shelling buildings only when they served as PLO strongholds' (*New York Times*, 29 August 1982, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 243-4). Gilbert (1999) also stressed that the Israelis concentrated their attacks on PLO strongholds, although he notes that on one occasion a hospital was seriously damaged. Others reports from journalists in Beirut suggested that the Israeli attacks were indiscriminate. The *Independent* journalist Robert Fisk claimed the Israelis were employing 'time-on target salvos' which 'laid 50 shells at a time' across residential areas 'slaughtering everyone within a 500 yard radius of the explosions' (2001: 284). He also claimed that the Israelis used cluster bombs, and phosphorous bombs, which were designed to create fires and cause untreatable burns. The Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* reported that

vacuum bombs, which ignite aviation fuel in such a way as to create immense pressure and literally implode large buildings, were also dropped on residential areas (11 August 1982). A Canadian surgeon Chris Giannou who had been working in a Palestinian hospital testified before the US Congress that he had witnessed the ‘total, utter devastation of residential areas, and the blind, savage, indiscriminate destruction of refugee camps by simultaneous shelling and carpet bombing from aircraft, gunboats, tanks and artillery’. He testified that cluster bombs and phosphorous bombs had been used widely in residential areas and that he had seen ‘savage and indiscriminate beatings’ of prisoners, which were sometimes fatal as well as frequent use of torture.³² The bombing intensified during July and August and Hirsh Goodman reported it continued even after an agreement in principle for the PLO to leave had been reached (*Jerusalem Post*, 1 October 1982, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 241). In July supplies of food, water, medicines and fuel were cut to the city. By August 4 Elaine Carey reported that eight of the nine orphanages in Beirut had been destroyed by cluster and phosphorous bombs, despite clear markings and Israeli assurances that they would be spared (*Christian Science Monitor*, 4 August 1982, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 225). On August 12 the bombing reached a peak. The American journalist Charles Powers argued that:

To many the siege of Beirut seemed gratuitous brutality...The arsenal of weapons unleashed in a way that has not been seen since the Vietnam war, clearly horrified those who saw the results firsthand and through film and news reports at a distance. The use of cluster bombs and white phosphorous shells, a vicious weapon was widespread...In the last hours of the last air attack on Beirut, Israeli planes carpet bombed Borg el Brajne [a refugee camp]. There were no fighting men left there only the damaged homes of Palestinian families, who once again would have to leave and find another place to live. (*Los Angeles Times*, 29 August 1982, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 242)

Eventually at the end of August the PLO forces were evacuated from Beirut to Tunis. Outside Beirut there were reports of widespread destruction of refugee camps and Lebanese villages. In Sidon, Fisk claims over 2000 Lebanese civilians were killed in air attacks he describes as ‘the most ferocious ever delivered upon a Lebanese city’

(2000: 204). The head of the UN refugee agency that administered the camps Olof Rydbeck said that 32 years of work had been ‘wiped out’ with ‘practically all of the schools, clinics and installations of the agency in ruins.’ (*New York Times*, 19 August 1982, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 223). The scale of civilian and PLO casualties during the war are contested. Gilbert (1999) claims that 460 Lebanese civilians and 6000 PLO fighters were killed. The Lebanese police estimated 19,085 killed though to August with 6775 killed in Beirut, 84 per cent of them civilians (*Christian Science Monitor*, 21 December 1982, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 221). The United Nations estimated 13,500 houses severely damaged in West Beirut, thousands more in other parts of the country, not taking into account damage to the refugee camps which were towns themselves (*Christian Science Monitor* 18 November 1982, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 223). There were also reports that all the teenage and adult Lebanese and Palestinian males, were taken to camps where they were humiliated and tortured.³³ Chomsky cites testimony from the IDF Lieutenant Colonel Dov Yirmiah which appeared in the Israeli daily *Yediot Ahronot* on the fate of Palestinian and Lebanese detainees:

He tells story after story of prisoners savagely and endlessly beaten in captivity, of torture and humiliation of prisoners, and of the many who died of beatings and thirst in Israeli prisons or concentration camps in Lebanon....The long and repeated interrogations were accompanied by constant beatings, or attacks by dogs on leashes, or the use of air rifles that cause intense pain but do not kill... New loads of clubs had to be brought into the camps to replace those broken under interrogation. The torturers were ‘experts in their work,’ the prisoners report, and knew how to make blows most painful, including blows to the genitals, until the prisoners confessed that they were ‘terrorists’ (8 November 1982, cited in 1999: 240)

Other reports in the Israeli press claimed that members of the Israel’s proxy militia the South Lebanon Army were allowed in the camps to torture prisoners and that some gang raped women and attempted to force them to have sex with dogs (*Koteret Rashit*, 16 March 1983, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 236). After the PLO had agreed to leave Lebanon one of the war’s most notorious incidents occurred at the refugee camps at Shatila and Sabra. After the departure of the PLO from Lebanon, the

Israeli forces sealed off the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps on September 16 and allowed in between 100 and 130 Phalangist and Haddadist troops. Ariel Sharon claimed that the camps contained 2,000 well armed Palestinian fighters and the Christian forces had been sent in to clear them out. However Edward Walsh argues that 'no one has publicly explained how the Israelis expected 100 to 130 Phalangists to defeat such a force of Palestinians' (*Washington Post* 26 December 1982, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 369), and in a visit to the camp a few days before the killings journalists reported finding no military presence (*Time*, 4 October 1982, cited in Chomsky, 1999:369). Once in the camps the Phalangist forces raped and killed many of the camps inhabitants who were primarily women, children and the elderly. The death toll is disputed. The official Israeli Kahan Commission estimated 7-800 killed, the Lebanese authorities put the figure at approximately 2,000, whilst the Israeli journalist Amnon Kapeliouk (1984) citing evidence from the International Committee of the Red Cross estimated 3-3,500. Responsibility for the killings have also been partly attributed to the United States who gave explicit assurances that the Muslim civilian population of West Beirut would be protected as part of the PLO deal to evacuate Beirut (Ovendale, 1999). The massacres were condemned by the United Nations by 147 votes to two (Israel, United States), and international lawyers in Belgium have since attempted to indict the Israel commanders Ariel Sharon and Amos Yaron for war crimes.

The Lebanon war appeared to split Israeli society. Some questioned whether the scale of death and destruction inflicted on Southern Lebanon was proportionate to the threat posed by Palestinian militants. In 1983 a debate on Zionism was held at Tel-Aviv University where Aluf Hareven of the Van Leer Institute commented:

According to the figures provided by the Ministry of the Interior Yosef Burg, in 1980, 10 Jews were killed by terrorists and in 1981- 8. In contrast we have killed about a thousand terrorists in 1982, and caused the loss of life of thousands of inhabitants of an enemy country. If so, it results that for every 6-8 Jews sacrificed, we kill in return thousands of Gentiles. This is undoubtedly, a spectacular situation, an uncommon success of Zionism. I might even dare to say-exaggerated. (*Migvan*, October/November 1982, cited in Chomsky 1999: 74)

The massacres at Sabra and Shatila also led to the largest protests in Israel's history. On the September 25 1982 more than 400,000 Israelis joined a Peace Now demonstration in Tel-Aviv. Others suggested that a large part of the population was unconcerned if not approving of the events at the refugee camps:

In the matter of Sabra and Shatila- a large part of the community, perhaps the majority, is not at all troubled by the massacre itself. Killing of Arabs in general, and Palestinians in particular, is quite popular, or at least 'doesn't bother anyone' in the words of youth these days. Ever since the massacre I have been surprised to hear from educated, enlightened people, 'the conscience of Tel Aviv', the view that the massacre itself, as a step towards removing the remaining Palestinians from Lebanon is not terrible. It is just too bad that we were in the neighbourhood (*Ha'aretz*, 19 November 1982, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 395)

Israel's motives for launching the attack are contested. Mitchell Bard (2003), the director of the American-Israeli Cooperative Institute, points to three reasons for Israel's decision to attack Lebanon. Firstly he claims that the PLO were repeatedly breaching the ceasefire negotiated by the Americans in July 1981 and attacking Israelis across the Lebanese border. Secondly he alleges that 15-18,000 PLO members were encamped in Southern Lebanon and were equipping themselves with a huge arsenal including rockets, surface to air missiles, mortars, tanks and enough weapons to arm five brigades. He suggests that Israeli strikes and commando raids could not prevent the emergence of this 'PLO army'. Finally Bard points to the attempt on the life of the Israeli ambassador to London Shlomo Argov by the Abu Nidal group. All of these explanations have been disputed.³⁴ Shlaim suggests that Israel had two objectives, to create a new political order in Lebanon and to 'destroy the PLO's military infrastructure in Lebanon and to undermine it as a political organisation' (2000: 396). Former IDF education officer Mordechai Bar-on argued that 'there is no doubt that the [war's] central aim was to deal a crushing blow to the national aspirations of the Palestinians and to their very existence as a nation endeavouring to define itself and gain the right to self-determination' (*New Outlook*, October 1982, cited in Chomsky 1999: 203). With the PLO infrastructure destroyed and the refugees

dispersed, some commentators suggest that the organisation might revert to hijacking and therefore undermine its growing political status:

If the PLO were now thrown out of Lebanon-or, better yet, reduced to mad dog terrorism that would destroy its growing political and diplomatic legitimacy-then Israel stood a better chance of annexing the West Bank and Gaza strip still thoroughly loyal to Arafat's leadership despite his many errors. (Randal, 1983: 250)

Shlaim (2000) suggests that another aspect of Sharon's 'big plan' was to install Israel's Christian ally Bashir Gemayel in power in Lebanon, and force the Palestinian refugees out of Lebanon to Jordan, leading to the overthrow of the Hashemite monarchy and its conversion to a Palestinian state, thereby weakening international pressure on Israel to vacate the West Bank and allowing Israel to annex the territory. Neither of the larger geo-strategic aims were achieved. Bashir Gemayel was assassinated shortly after the war whilst the Hashemite monarchy remained intact in Jordan.

In the aftermath of the Sabra and Shatila killings, American marines returned to Lebanon as part of a multinational force. They however soon came into conflict with Shia and Druze forces opposed to Israel's occupation of Southern Lebanon. When US warships shelled Druze positions, it appeared that the US had entered the civil war in support of the Christian-Israeli alliance. On 23 October a suicide bomber killed 256 American and 58 French troops leading to the withdrawal of American and European forces. A Shiite group with links to Iran later claimed responsibility for the attack. Ovendale (1999) claims that after the 1982 war Israel and the United States strengthened their political and military ties, by embarking on joint weapons projects. In 1986 the Israeli nuclear technician Mordechai Vanunu revealed to a *Sunday Times* interview the existence of Israel's substantial nuclear arsenal, revelations which were to earn the Israeli an 18 year prison term. Recent newspaper reports suggest that the Israeli nuclear arsenal has increased to approximately 200 warheads, many of which are fitted to American supplied Harpoon cruise missiles capable of hitting any of Israel's Arab neighbours (*Observer*, October 12 2003).

In the mid 1980s further attempts were also made to find a negotiated solution to the conflict. In February 1985 Yasser Arafat and King Hussein of Jordan issued the

Amman Declaration which proposed Palestinian self-determination within a Palestinian-Jordanian confederation. The composition of the negotiating team proved a problem with Israel refusing to negotiate with any PLO members. Margaret Thatcher attempted to push the plan and proposed a peace conference to include PLO members. However the plans were derailed by a series of events. Firstly Abu Nidal, backed by Syria, threatened to assassinate any PLO members who accepted Thatcher's invitation. Then on 25 September 1985 three Israelis were killed on a boat in Larnaca. The Israeli government blamed the PLO. The PLO claimed the three were Mossad agents. Israel then dispatched a number of American made F-16 fighters to bomb the PLO headquarters in Tunis. In the attack, 58 Palestinians and 15 Tunisians were killed. The attack was supported by US but condemned by the European Community and United Nations. Soon afterwards a small Palestinian group, the Palestine Liberation Front hijacked the Achille Lauro and killed an elderly Jewish passenger before surrendering. Following the hijacking the US pressurised Britain to cancel a scheduled meeting between the Foreign Secretary and PLO members. Britain then insisted that the PLO members sign a statement denouncing all forms of political violence. The PLO members refused, arguing that this would cover armed resistance to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the meeting was cancelled. Soon afterwards King Hussein of Jordan announced the end of his collaboration with the PLO leadership blaming Arafat's refusal to accept resolutions 242 and 338. In the wake of this rupture between the PLO and Jordan, King Hussein and Shimon Peres kept close diplomatic links and considered ways of restarting peace talks whilst excluding any members of the PLO from negotiations (Shlaim, 2000). Israel's pursuance of the 'Jordanian option' Shlaim suggests was blocked by the Israeli premier Yitzak Shamir who was opposed to any international conference which might involve pressure from outside mediators.

1987: The First Intifada

On December 9 1987, following the death of four Gazans the previous day, in a road traffic incident Palestinians from the Jebalya refugee camp began throwing stones at an Israeli army compound. Within days unrest spread to the West Bank. Unarmed Palestinian men, women, and children attacked Israeli soldiers and armoured

personnel carriers. Benny Morris claims that the Intifada was ‘not an armed rebellion but a massive, persistent campaign of civil resistance, with strikes and commercial shutdowns accompanied by violent (though unarmed) demonstrations against the occupying forces’ (1992: 561). The factors behind the Intifada, which was to last six years until it was called off by the Palestinian leadership in the wake of the Oslo agreements, are contested. Netanyahu has argued that the Israeli administration in the occupied territories had instituted a ‘liberal policy aimed at radically improving the lives of the Palestinians’ and that material and educational prosperity had gone hand in hand with political rights including ‘a press consisting of newspapers representing various factions (some openly sympathetic to the PLO) and the right to directly appeal all decisions to the democratic court system’ (2000: 176). He argues that the impetus for the Intifada was ‘virulent PLO agitation’ that led the population in the occupied territories to adopt ‘ever more extreme and implacable positions’ (2000: 177). He also claims that the PLO had forced children out of their schools to take part in confrontations with Israeli forces. Gilbert blames Jordan for not integrating the Palestinians living in the West Bank into Jordanian society before 1967, and argues that the impetus for the Intifada came from a ‘bitter hard core of extremists who were prepared to face Israeli bullets in order to defy the occupiers and assert their national identity’ (1999: 525) Some Israelis blamed outside agitation for the Intifada. Yitzak Rabin accused Iran and Syria of fermenting unrest. Others have questioned whether Israeli policy in the occupied territories was really liberal and suggest that the Intifada was the result of severe and persistent human rights abuses. A report by the Israeli Committee for Solidarity with Bir Zeit (the West Bank University periodically closed by the Israeli authorities) described the Israeli administration in the occupied territories as an ‘attempt to revive an old well-known colonial method in a new ‘original’ Israeli form’ in order to create ‘an Israeli Bantustan, which imposes on the Palestinians the role of hewers of wood and drawers of water for Israeli society’. To achieve this the report claimed that there was widespread and violent suppression of all forms of political activity, and that ‘quislings from the Village Leagues’ together with settler groups inflicted ‘humiliation, harassment and terror’ on the local population.³⁵ The United Nations also produced a number of reports in the mid 1980s which were critical of Israeli human rights abuses in the occupied territories and pointed to widespread acts of violence committed against Palestinians by armed

settlers.³⁶ Israel Shahak, argues that such abuses were the main factor behind the Intifada and cites examples from the Israeli press:

In fact, before the Intifada, the daily oppression, humiliations, land confiscations and arbitrariness of the Israeli regime were steadily increasing. This increase, duly recorded by the Hebrew press, was the chief reason for the outbreak of the Intifada. Readers of Israel's Hebrew-language press are aware of how outrageously the Israeli armed forces were behaving before the Intifada. On June 19, 1987, Eyal Ehrlich reported in an article in *Ha'aretz* headlined, 'An occupier against his will,' the testimony of a young Israeli soldier assigned to serve in the border guards. Whenever a Palestinian is accosted to show his I.D., the soldier wrote, its checking is always accompanied by 'a slap, a punch. a kick.' 'The border guards usually enjoy beating the Arabs,' the account continues. They derive pleasure from it...Sometimes I feel like a Nazi when I watch my friends in action. I try hard to stay away from one of my commanders ... He always behaves very badly toward the locals: with violence, beatings, and the like...The soldiers spit in the faces of the Arabs, or they kick them in the testicles. And there is always that slap in the face.' An article in *Hadashot* of July 7, 1987 by Menahem Shizaf was headlined, 'Border guards order the Arabs to masturbate and to lick the floor.' It described the treatment meted out to Palestinian workers from the occupied territories who were found spending the night in shacks in Israel rather than returning to their homes. (*Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, March 1991)

The Israeli Minister of Defence Yitzak Rabin explained that the Israeli response to the Intifada would consist of 'force, might, beatings' (*New York Times*, 23 January 1988, cited in the *New York Review of Books*, 17 March 1988), whilst Prime Minister Shamir was reported in the Israeli publication *Hadashot* as warning those protesting the occupation that they would be crushed 'like grasshoppers' with their heads 'smashed against the boulders and walls' and that 'we say to them from the heights of this mountain and from the perspective of thousands of years of history that they are like grasshoppers compared to us' (6 January 1988, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 482). By February 1988 the Intifada became formalised with the establishment of the

United National Leadership of the Uprising. The organisation encouraged strikes amongst those who worked in Israel and attacks on the Israeli administrative structure. Taxes were withheld, those who worked as administrators and tax collectors resigned and Israeli goods were boycotted (Ovendale, 1999). Roadblocks were set up to keep out the Israeli army and Palestinians tried to create an alternative system of local self-government independent of the military authority.

In February 1988 the United States attempted to put forward a peace plan based on Palestinian autonomy in the occupied territories. The plan was rejected by Israel, and the PLO who noted it made no mention of statehood. In April Abu Jihad, the PLO second in command was assassinated by Israel in Tunis. The Tunisian government complained to the United Nations Security Council. The Israeli daily *Ma'ariv* later reported that the future Prime Minister Ehud Barak had directed the assassination from a navy ship off Tunis (4 July 1988). In July King Hussein of Jordan announced that his country was severing its links with the West Bank effectively killing the 'Jordanian option' that had long been favoured by the US and some Israeli leaders. In September Yasser Arafat told the European Parliament in Strasbourg, that the PLO would accept Israel's right to security if Israel recognised a Palestinian mini-state. In November the Palestinian National Council meeting in Algiers agreed to recognise Israel, as well as all UN resolutions dating back to 1947 and to forswear its claim to all of mandatory Palestine. It also proclaimed the establishment of the state of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital. The Israeli Prime Minister, Shamir, dismissed the resolutions as a 'deceptive propaganda exercise, intended to create the impression of moderation and of achievements for those carrying out violent acts in the territories of Judea and Samaria' (cited in Shlaim, 2000: 466). Yasser Arafat wanted to appeal to the UN General Assembly, but despite being recognised by more than sixty nations the United States refused him an entry visa (Ovendale, 1999). The General Assembly then voted to hold its plenary session in Geneva, and Arafat under strong pressure from the American Secretary of State, George Shultz, announced that the PLO accepted resolutions 242 and 338, as well as Israel's right to exist and renounced 'terrorism'.

Meanwhile Israel's response to the Intifada was attracting widespread international criticism. By January 1989 the US State Department reported that the unrest had claimed the lives of eleven Israelis and 366 Palestinians. Some on the

Israeli right argued that the criticism of Israel and media coverage of the Intifada was biased and unfair, and that the Israeli response was restrained and proportionate:

Ignoring the Arab reign of terror in the Palestinian streets, the media created for themselves nightly instalments of a popular romance drama: heroic underdog in search of self-determination taking on a terrifying Israeli tyrant...Since viewers were being told this was an 'army of occupation'- that is, it had no right to be there in the first place- the media managed to transform even the most necessary aspects of maintaining law and order into unforgivable crimes. Utterly lost from the images on the screen was the organised nature of the rioting, the internecine violence, and the terrorised lives of the innocent Arabs (and Jews) who were ground under the intifada's heel. Similarly lost were the restrictive firing orders that stayed the hand of every Israeli soldier, and the swift trial of the 208 Israelis who in any way disobeyed these orders- as against the tens of thousands of Israeli soldiers and reservists who followed the regulations with impeccable restraint. (2000: 181-2)

The United Nations, NGOs, human rights groups and some Israeli soldiers disputed this. In December 1988 the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution by 106 to 2 (Israel, United States) which condemned the conduct of the IDF and settlers during the Intifada. The resolution

Declare[d] once more that Israel's grave breaches of that Convention are war crimes and an affront to humanity'. Amongst many criticisms the resolution 'strongly condemned' the 'implementation of an "iron-fist" policy against the Palestinian people...the escalation of Israeli brutality since the beginning of the uprising...the ill-treatment and torture of children and minors under detention and/or imprisonment...the killing and wounding of defenceless demonstrators...the breaking of bones and limbs of thousands of civilians...the usage of toxic gas, which resulted, inter alia, in the killing of many Palestinians' (United Nations, 1988).

Israel was particularly criticised for its treatment of children during the Intifada. A thousand page Save the Children study documented the 'indiscriminate beating, teargassing, and shooting of children.' The report found that the average age of the victims was ten years old and that the majority of those who were shot were not participating in stone throwing. The report also alleged that in 80% of cases where children were shot the Israeli army prevented the victims from receiving medical attention. The report concluded that more than 50,000 children required medical attention for injuries including gun shot wounds, tear gas inhalation and multiple fractures (report cited in Finkelstein, 1996: 47). The August 1989 bulletin from the Israeli League for Human and Civil Rights was entitled 'Deliberate Murder' and reported on the targeting of Palestinian children in leadership roles. It found that the Israeli army and snipers from 'special units' had 'carefully chosen' the children who were shot in the head or heart and died instantaneously (report cited in Finkelstein, 1996: 47). Others reports from Israelis human rights groups and articles in the Israeli press also allege that torture, including severe beating and electric shocks were used extensively against detainees including children.³⁷

The Intifada also saw the birth of Hamas, the Islamic opposition movement formed by Sheik Yassin in February 1988. The organisation which emerged out of the Muslim Brotherhood, stressed a return to conservative Islamic values and provided a network of health, and social services for Palestinians in the occupied territories. For many years the organisation received extensive funding from Israel (Shlaim, 2000; Chomsky, 1999; Mishal & Sela. 2000). Shlaim claims that this was done 'in the hope of weakening the secular nationalism of the PLO' (2000: 459) Chomsky (1999) suggests such a weakening would be beneficial to Israel because it would allow them to evade a political solution to the conflict which might involve returning the occupied territories. The Hamas charter issued in August 1988 argued that all of Palestine belonged to the Muslim nation as a religious endowment and that it was each Muslim's duty to engage in jihad (a religious war) to 'liberate' Palestine. The degree to which its intentions match its rhetoric is disputed. Most Israelis regard the organisation as fundamentalist and uncompromising, dedicated to killing Jews and destroying the Israeli state. Two Israeli academics, Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, suggest that the organisation is more complex and pragmatic than this. They suggest that Hamas utilizes 'controlled violence' as a 'means rather than an end' to mobilize political support and is 'cognizant of power relations and political feasibility' (2000:

viii). Mishal and Sela argue that its main purpose has been to establish itself as the major force in Palestinian political life and that in the future it ‘may find that it can accept a workable formula of coexistence with Israel in place of armed struggle’ (2000:ix). In 1989 the groups’ founder Sheik Yassin was arrested by Israel, and in the occupied territories the Israelis increased their use of deportations and curfews in an attempt to suppress the Intifada. They also outlawed the committees administering the uprising. This was a problem for Palestinians as they saw the committees as the nucleus of the self-governing institutions they hoped to build once the occupation ended.

In 1989 Yitzak Shamir put forward an initiative which proposed elections and expanded Palestinian autonomy in exchange for the ending of the Intifada. Shamir set down certain preconditions, there would be no Palestinian state, no PLO involvement (even if its representatives triumphed in the elections) and no participation in the elections for the inhabitants of East Jerusalem. The plans were eventually derailed by members of Shamir’s own cabinet, principally Ariel Sharon, David Levy, and Yitzhak Moda’i who argued that Israel was giving too much away, and was adopting too liberal an attitude to the Intifada (Shlaim, 2000). Egypt and the United States then put forward their own peace initiatives. These precipitated a split in what was then a National Unity government in Israel, which led to its downfall. One part of the government, the Labour Alignment, unsuccessfully urged Shamir to accept the American initiative, whilst some members of the right wing Likud party, felt Israel was making too many concessions and not cracking down sufficiently hard on the Intifada. For six weeks the Labor party’s Shimon Peres tried unsuccessfully to form a new coalition, and eventually Yitzak Shamir formed one in which his Likud part linked up with ultranationalist and religious parties. This new coalition which Shlaim (2000) claims was the most right wing and hardline (in its attitudes to the Arabs) in Israel’s history, immediately announced that it would end the Intifada, create new settlements and expand existing ones. It also insisted there would be no Palestinian state, no negotiation with the PLO and no sharing of Jerusalem.

The Intifada which continued to smoulder during this period, was re-ignited in October 1990 when Israeli troops killed 21 Palestinians on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The Israelis claimed they had responded to acts of stone throwing directed at Israeli worshippers. The Palestinians claimed that the stone throwing only began after the Israelis started shooting. The United Nations Security Council condemned

the killings, but Israel managed to prevent the United Nations from acting on Palestinian demands to replace the Israeli military government in the occupied territories with a UN force (Ovendale, 1999).

In August 1990 the Iraq war intervened when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait and occupied the country. Five months later an American led coalition attacked Iraq forcing its withdrawal from Kuwait. Both the Palestinians in the occupied territories and the PLO leadership allied themselves with Saddam Hussein because of the Iraqi dictator's attempt to make a 'linkage' between Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait and Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories, and because he struck at the Israeli state with scud missiles. In doing so the Palestinian leadership effectively lost much of the political capital it had built up over many years, whilst Israel benefited internationally by not responding to the Iraqi attacks. In the aftermath of the war the US moved to bring Israel and its Arab adversaries together in an international peace conference.

The Beginning of the Oslo Process

In Madrid at the end of October 1991 an Israeli delegation met Palestinian and other representatives from Israel's 'confrontation states' (Syria, Jordan, Lebanon). Although the Palestinian representatives were pro-PLO, they were not publicly stated as being members of the organisation, as this would have landed them in jail under Israeli law. The Americans who set up the conference insisted that it be based around UN Resolutions 242 and 338 and the principle of 'land for peace'. This premise was accepted by the Palestinians but rejected by the Israelis (Shlaim, 2000). In the run up to the conference the Likud administration announced a new wave of settlement building designed to double the settler population in the occupied territories in four years. Little progress was made in negotiations either at Madrid or in the five rounds of bilateral talks which took place in Washington. Shlaim argues that an 'immense gap' separated the parties:

The Palestinians started with the assumption that they were a people with national rights and that the interim arrangements under discussion were the precursor to independence and should be shaped accordingly. The Israeli government started with the assumption that the Palestinians were the inhabitants of the territories with no national rights of any kind and certainly no rights to independence, not even after the end of the transitional period. (2000: 493)

In June 1992 the Israeli population went to the polls to elect a new administration. The Likud party pledged to continue the peace process whilst retaining all the occupied territories and expanding settlement building. The Labor party vowed to conclude a deal on Palestinian autonomy, allow residents of East Jerusalem to take part in negotiations and freeze the construction of the 'political settlements' deep in the occupied territory. Labor won the election under Yitzhak Rabin in a major political swing which ended fifteen years of Likud rule. In an Israeli newspaper interview just after his election defeat Shamir declared that 'I would have carried on autonomy talks for ten years, and meanwhile we would have reached half a million people in Judea and Samaria' (*Ma'ariv*, 26 June 1992)

Over the next 20 months Israeli and Palestinians sympathetic to but not members of the PLO, engaged in 10 rounds of negotiations in Washington that produced no tangible results. In the middle of those negotiations Rabin deported 416 Hamas activists to Lebanon following the killing of an Israeli border policeman. This move, which was condemned by the UN as a breach of international law, was intended to curb Hamas's influence but actually had the opposite effect. Mishal and Sela argue that the deportations were a 'milestone in Hamas's decision to use car bombs and suicide attacks as a major modus operandi against Israel', because they came into contact with Hezbollah guerrillas who provided training in such techniques. (2000: 65-6), They note that Hamas first used suicide attacks shortly after the return of the deportees to the occupied territories.³⁸

The Declaration of Principles

While the official negotiations continued the Israelis decided to open up a second and secret channel of diplomacy in Oslo. For the first time they agreed to negotiate with a section of the PLO. These talks bypassed the bulk of the PLO and Fatah, with negotiations directed only towards Yasser Arafat and a few close associates. In September 1993 the Declaration of Principles between the Palestinians and Israel was finally brought into the open and signed by both parties on the White House lawn. The Declaration was an agenda for negotiations which stipulated that within four months of signing the agreement Israel had to withdraw completely from Gaza and Jericho, with a Palestinian police force taking over internal security in those areas, though Israel would still maintain overall responsibility for external security and foreign affairs. Elsewhere in the West Bank Palestinians were to take control of five spheres: education, health, social welfare, direct taxation and tourism. Within nine months elections were to be held for a Palestinian Authority which was to assume responsibilities for those municipal affairs. Final status negotiations were scheduled to start within two years and were due to be completed within five years. All of the most serious issues affecting the two parties including possible Palestinian statehood, borders, refugees, settlements and Jerusalem were postponed to the final settlement talks. The PLO agreed to accept UN resolutions 242 and 338, end the armed struggle against Israel and amend the parts of the Palestinian National Charter which called the destruction of the Israeli state. Israel agreed to recognise the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people. The Declaration of Principles brought to an end to the first Intifada which according to the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem had seen 160 Israelis and 1,162 Palestinians killed (B'Tselem, 2003a).

The treaty met with opposition on both Israeli and Palestinian sides. Likud and the right wing nationalist and religious parties denounced the agreement as a betrayal of the settlers in the occupied territories, an end to Biblical Greater Israel, and a mortal threat to the security of the State. They argued that the occupied territories could not be ceded by politicians as they had been eternally promised to the Jews by God. Binyamin Netanyahu, the Likud leader completely rejected the accord and pledged to cancel it if he became Prime Minister. He compared the agreement to the

appeasement of Hitler and told Peres, 'You are even worse than Chamberlain. He imperilled the safety of another people, but you are doing it to your own people' (cited in Shlaim, 2000: 521). The accord was eventually approved by the Knesset by a margin of 61 votes to 50. Israeli public opinion on the accords was generally favourable with 65% saying they approved of the agreement and only 13% declaring themselves 'very much against' it (Shlaim, 2000). In an analysis of Palestinian reaction to the Oslo Accords, Mouin Rabbani identified four distinct positions and argued that 'contrary to most press reports the fault line....within the Palestinian body politic is not an ideological one separating peace-loving moderates from violent extremists' but rather one which revolves 'primarily around issues of substance and procedure' (*Middle East International*, 24 September 1993). He claimed that only a few Palestinians were 'enthusiastic supporters', with a majority whom he characterised as 'optimistic and desperate in equal measure' had serious doubts but were prepared to give the agreement a chance. He suggested that this large group could quickly turn against the agreement if the human rights situation did not improve, and the settlement activity and occupation continued. The third group, he identified, comprised senior political and cultural figures³⁹ such as Edward Said, who although supporting a peaceful resolution of the conflict, nevertheless regarded the accords as a 'deeply flawed' and 'potentially fatal to Palestinian national aspirations'. They objected to Arafat signing the document without public debate or consultations and believed it was a bad deal. They pointed out the Palestinians were agreeing to end the Intifada and renounce their rights to 78 per cent of historic Palestine without any guarantee of statehood, agreement to remove settlements (or even stop settlement building), and any commitments to improve the human rights situation, or to resolve the refugee issue and status of Jerusalem. For this group the agreement undermined the internationally recognised rights of Palestinians and 'foreshadows permanent dispossession of the majority of Palestinians' as well as creating the potential conditions for a civil war. The fourth position that Rabbani identifies is that of the rejectionists who comprise both the radical Islamic and secular movements such as Hamas and the PFLP, and their supporters in the occupied territories. These groups, argues Rabbani, regarded the agreement as a 'textbook case of Bantustanisation' in which the principal Palestinian weapon the Intifada was being liquidated so that Palestinians could become the joint administrators of the occupation, in a weak subservient statelet or series of statelets. Rabbani suggests that had the agreement

involved moves towards real statehood and been reached in 'conformity with the Palestinian national consensus and properly ratified' then much of the rejectionist camp with the exception of Islamic Jihad and sections of Hamas and the PFLP would at least have tacitly accepted the deal.

The 1993 Declaration of Principles was followed in February 1994 by the signing of the new set of documents in Cairo. The IDF agreed to redeploy its forces from urban centres to rural areas allowing it to maintain control of overall security and land crossings. On 25 February Dr Baruch Goldstein, an American born settler and member of the Kach party opened fire with an IDF issued Galil assault rifle on Muslim worshipers at the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron killing 29 people before he himself was killed. Rachelle Marshall, a journalist and member of the Jewish Peace Union, writes that the killings were followed by five week round the clock curfew imposed on more than a million Palestinians, during which the IDF killed a further 76 Palestinians, mostly stone throwing youths (*Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, June, 1994). The Israeli journalist Danny Rubenstein was later to argue that the Hebron killings 'directly and immediately created the chain of suicide bombings and the appalling upward spiral composed of Israeli responses and Palestinian counter-responses' (*Ha'aretz*, 28 September 1998). In the wake of these events Israeli government under pressure from the Palestinians and sections of Israeli public opinion moved to outlaw the overtly racist party Kach, but refused Palestinian demands to remove the few hundred heavily armed and guarded settlers who lived among more than 100,000 Palestinian Hebronites. The Israeli government also refused PLO requests to put the issue of settlements on the negotiating table, arguing that under the Declaration of Principles it was not obliged to do so until the third year of the interim period. Hamas vowed revenge for the Hebron killings, and shortly before the signing of the next stage of the interim agreements in Cairo in May 1994 it carried out a car bombing in Afula which killed eight, and the first ever suicide bombing in Israel which killed five people. Suicide bombings involved individuals strapping explosives, nails, and ball bearing to their bodies which were then detonated in densely packed areas such as markets or buses. This new and indiscriminate weapon left those who survived permanently scarred or disabled, and significantly intensified security fears amongst Israelis. A report from a *BBCI* News bulletin describes the aftermath of a suicide attack on a crowded Israeli market:

The two explosions came within seconds of each other cutting down scores of people in the heart of the crowded market. It was just after one o'clock and the market was full of shoppers. Streams of ambulances came to carry away the dead and the injured. It was a place of appalling suffering... Those who escaped injury were led away from the devastation and others arrived desperate to see if their friends and relatives had escaped the carnage. (BBC 1 Evening News, 30 July 1997)

Some Palestinians have tried to justify such attacks by arguing that they are in response to the killing of Palestinian civilians by Israelis. Others have argued that they are resisting an illegal occupation, or that it is the only effective weapon against a much more powerful adversary. Dr Eyad El-Sarraj, a psychiatrist and winner of the 1998 Martin Ennals human rights award, has noted that most suicide bombers had suffered a severe trauma when young, 'often the torture of a close relative' and that 'children grow up wanting to take revenge for their trauma. Torture is an integral part of that cycle of violence' (*Guardian*, 24 January 2003). Whatever the motivations or factors behind suicide bombings Human Rights groups have unequivocally condemned such attacks and demanded that those involved in planning attacks be brought to justice. In a report entitled *Without Distinction: Attacks on civilians by Palestinian armed groups*, Amnesty International, argue that indiscriminate attacks on civilians cannot be justified whatever the circumstances or provocations:

The obligation to protect civilians is absolute and cannot be set aside because Israel has failed to respect its obligations. The attacks against civilians by Palestinian armed groups are widespread, systematic and in pursuit of an explicit policy to attack civilians. They therefore constitute crimes against humanity under international law. They may also constitute war crimes, depending on the legal characterisation of the hostilities and interpretation of the status of Palestinian armed groups and fighters under international humanitarian law. (Amnesty International, 2002)

The Cairo Agreement and Oslo II

The agreement signed in Cairo on 4 May 1994 concluded the Gaza and Jericho phase of the redeployment and set the terms for expanding Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank. These had three stages. Firstly the Palestinian National Authority was to take charge of a number of municipal functions secondly the IDF would withdraw from population centres and finally there would be Palestinian elections for a new authority. However Palestinian negotiators were disappointed with the new agreement. They had hoped that Israel would replace the complex system of military ordinances and occupation laws, with the Fourth Geneva Convention and international law within the occupied territories, but this was not forthcoming (Shlaim, 2000). The United Nations Commission on Human Rights continued to be critical of Israeli human rights abuses in the occupied territories. In 1994 it issued a resolution 'condemning' settler and IDF killings, torture, imprisonment without trial, house demolitions and land expropriations, curfews, collective punishments, restrictions on movement and settlement building (United Nations, 1994).

The construction of illegal Jewish settlements had accelerated following the election of the Rabin administration in 1992. Between 1992 and 1995 the settler population in the occupied territories (excluding East Jerusalem) rose from 74,800 to 136,000 (*Foundation for Middle East Peace*, 1997). Palestinians believed that increased settlement building and expropriations of Palestinian land was a violation of the spirit if not the letter of the Oslo Accords, and would ultimately prejudice the possibility of a viable Palestinian state. The American historian and Middle East commentator, Geoffrey Aronson argued that 'there is no missing the fact that Rabin's settlement drive is aimed at putting the future of the city [Jerusalem] and its West Bank environs beyond the reach of diplomacy.' (*Report on Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Territory*, May 1995) He also cited statements from the Israeli commentator Ze'ev Schiff that 'when we come to the final stage [of negotiations] nothing will be left [in Jerusalem] for the Palestinians to negotiate, apart from the Islamic holy places.' Rabin's administration also embarked on a process of building bypass roads linking settlements which could only be used by Jewish settlers and the IDF. This plan, Israel Shahak (1995) claimed was originally conceived by Ariel Sharon in 1977 but was finally implemented by Rabin directly after the Declaration of Principles. He argued that its purpose was to create a matrix of control whereby all the Arab

population centres were split into enclaves criss-crossed by the roads and settlement blocks so that the Israeli army will be able to control the discontinuous cantons 'from outside'. Tel-Aviv University professor Tanya Reinhart, argued that Rabin's policies 'resemble[d] the beginning of Apartheid rather than its end' and were 'almost identical' to the South African Bantustan model (*Ha'aretz*, 27 May 1994). The construction of the bypass road network also allowed the Israeli government to enforce closures on the Palestinian areas which restricted Palestinian movement and access to employment. Israel justified such measures by arguing that it was necessary to prevent attacks by Palestinian militants against Israelis. It did however have very serious effects on the Palestinian economy. The Israeli journalist Nadav Ha'etzni reported that by May 1995 that curfews and closures had 'devastated the Palestinian economy and destroyed 100,000 families in Gaza alone' (*Ma'ariv*, 5 May 1995, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 548). The deteriorating economic situation for Palestinians was compounded by Israeli moves to achieve 'separation' by replacing Palestinian workers with migrant labour from Thailand, the Philippines, Romania and other parts of Eastern Europe. Such factors Shlaim suggests 'actually worsened the situation in the occupied territories and confounded Palestinian aspirations for a state of their own.' (2000: 530). Furthermore there was no halt to the bloodshed on both sides. Between the signing of the Declaration of Principles in September 1993 and the end of 1994, 93 Israelis and 194 Palestinians were killed in violent incidents (B'Tselem, 2003)

In late September 1995 Yasser Arafat and Yitzak Rabin concluded the next stage of the interim agreement under which the West Bank was divided into three areas. Area A, (3 per cent of the West Bank incorporating Nablus, Jenin, Tulkarem, Qalqilya, Ramallah, Bethlehem and subsequently, in January 1997, 80 per cent of Hebron) would have its civilian administration and internal security controlled by the Palestinian Authority. Area B (23 per cent of the West Bank comprising 440 villages and surrounding lands) was to have certain municipal functions administered by the Palestinian Authority whilst security would be dealt with by joint Palestinian-Israeli patrols. Area C (comprising 74 per cent of the West Bank, including all of the 145 settlements and the new Jewish neighbourhoods in and around East Jerusalem) would remain under complete Israeli control.

On November 4 1995 Yitzak Rabin was assassinated by a 25 year old settler, Yigal Amir. After the killing the unrepentant Amir accused Rabin of selling out the settlers and preparing to give away the occupied territories to the Palestinians. Rabin was succeeded as Prime Minister by Shimon Peres who pledged to maintain the momentum of the peace process. No Israelis had been killed in suicide attacks since the August 21 bombing in Jerusalem which had killed three Israelis and an American. Mishal and Sela (2000) suggest that both Hamas and Islamic Jihad were under pressure from both the Palestinian Authority and Israel, and did not want to antagonise Palestinian public opinion by precipitating a halt to the scheduled Israeli redeployments. Mishal and Sela also note that militant groups had been pushing for 'a conditional cease-fire with Israel to stop the bloodshed of innocents on both sides' (2000: 71). In early 1996 Peres ordered the killing of Yahya Ayyash, a Hamas leader who had previously masterminded several suicide attacks which had killed approximately 60 Israelis. Shlaim claims that the Israeli media had exaggerated his status presenting him as 'public enemy number one' whilst 'omitting to mention that the attacks he organized came as a response to the [Hebron] massacre.' (2000: 556) The assassination of Ayyash using a booby trapped phone led to Hamas vowing revenge and there followed six suicide bombings in February and March 1996 which left 62 Israelis dead (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1999). Peres's popularity declined under attacks from the right, and he moved to suspend talks with the newly elected Palestinian Authority and closed the borders to all workers from the occupied territories.

Shortly afterwards Peres launched a major offensive against Hezbollah guerrillas in Southern Lebanon. Israel had been fighting a long guerrilla war against Hezbollah militants. Hezbollah claimed they were trying to end the illegal Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon, which had been ongoing since 1978, in violation of United Security Council resolution 425.⁴⁰ Israel claimed that Hezbollah were intent on the destruction of the Israeli state. Casualty statistics suggest that Palestinian and Lebanese civilians had suffered disproportionately in the conflict. In the period between 1985 and 1996 the Israeli army estimate that Hezbollah guerrilla and rocket attacks had killed six Israeli civilians (Israeli Defence Force, 2003). In a single operation in 1993 Amnesty International (1996a) reported that Israel killed 118 Lebanese civilians and that 300,000 people were displaced. The journalist and former chief inspector of the US Information Agency, Richard Curtiss argues that after this

operation, unwritten rules of engagement were crafted by the US State Department's Warren Christopher with both sides agreeing to confine attacks to combatants in South Lebanon (*Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, May/June 1996). On April 11 1996 Peres launched Operation 'Grapes of Wrath'. This was claimed to be in retaliation for rocket strikes on Israeli settlements which had injured 34 civilians, and other attacks which had killed eight members of the IDF in Southern Lebanon. Hezbollah's view was that they had a right to resist the Israeli troops illegally occupying Southern Lebanon, and that the rockets fired on Israeli settlements were retaliation for the killing by Israel of three Lebanese civilians. The attack involved more than a thousand air sorties and 16,000 shells against less than 500 Hezbollah fighters (*Ha'aretz*, 21 May 1996). Curtiss claims that many of attacks were 'targeted at electric power plants and relay stations, bridges, and other parts of Lebanon's war-battered basic infrastructure' (*Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, May/June 1996). The Israeli journalist Avi Shavit alleges that 400,000 civilians were forced to flee their homes in eight hours, after which the Israeli airforce treated the abandoned properties as military targets and shelled them (*Ha'aretz*, 21 May 1996). On 18 April Israel bombed the United Nations Compound at Qana, killing 106 refugees who had sought sanctuary there. Israel stated that the bombing which involved anti-personnel munitions was a mistake and that the real target was an area nearby where Hezbollah militants had been operating. Both a UN (1996) and Amnesty (1996b) report found that the attack on the UN compound was unlikely to have been accidental, and also condemned Israeli missile attacks on ambulances and residential areas which killed many civilians. Shlaim suggests that the operation was an attempt by Shimon Peres to revive his flagging political fortunes and recast himself 'as the hard man of Israeli politics ahead of the crucial general elections' (2000: 560). However it did nothing to revive his political fortunes and the following month he was beaten in the General election by the Likud candidate Benjamin Netanyahu.

The Netanyahu Administration

Netanyahu's attitude towards the peace process before his election had been one of undisguised antipathy. He had campaigned publicly against its implementation in speeches and in print, and had been accused by Rabin's widow of inciting his

assassination by making inflammatory public speeches, which likened Rabin to an SS officer. His coalition included the far right and settler groups who called for the forced deportation of all Palestinians from the occupied territories. Netanyahu's central argument was that the peace process had illustrated Israel's weakness, reduced the deterrent power of the IDF and damaged the nation's security. He argued that Israel had adhered to the Oslo formula whilst the Palestinians had failed to keep their side of the bargain, by failing to dismantle militant organisations, collect their weapons or extradite their members to Israel. Netanyahu's alternative was to renegotiate the redeployments that had been agreed in principle. He argued that these threatened Israel's security and that 'whatever the officials of the previous Labor administration had whispered in Palestinian ears was irrelevant' (Netanyahu, 2000: 343). He was also against full statehood for the Palestinians, arguing that Israel had to control the exit and entry points to the Palestinian entity as well as its airspace, much of the Jordan valley and the West Bank water supply. He also argued that Arab nations should resettle the Palestinian refugees. Shlaim claims that as soon as he took power Netanyahu began to renege on Israel's Oslo obligations:

Serious deterioration occurred in Israel's relations with the Palestinians as a result of Netanyahu's backtracking. He adopted a 'work-to-rule' approach designed to undermine the Oslo process. There was no Israeli pullout from Hebron, no 'opening of the safe passage' route from Gaza to the West Bank, and no discussion of the further West bank redeployment that Israel had pledged to carry out in early September. Instead Palestinian homes without an Israeli permit were demolished in east Jerusalem, and plans were approved for the construction of new Israeli settlements. The quality of life for the Palestinians deteriorated progressively, and hopes for a better future were all but extinguished (2000: 576)

In October 1996 serious violence erupted in Jerusalem when Netanyahu ordered the blasting open an archaeological tunnel close to the al-Aksa Mosque. This was taken by Palestinians as a statement of sovereignty over Islamic holy sites and triggered disturbances in which 15 Israeli soldiers and 80 Palestinians were killed, and a further 1500 Palestinians wounded. Under pressure from the Americans Netanyahu agreed to the delayed redeployment of Israeli troops from Hebron in January 1997 by

signing the Hebron protocol, which also committed Israel to three further redeployments in the West bank over the next 18 months. Under the agreement Hebron was split into Jewish and Arab zones. The Jewish zone reserved for the 450 settlers constituted 20% of the city, including its best commercial areas. The remaining 80% of the city was reserved for the 130,000 Palestinian Hebronites who were subject to frequent curfews and restrictions on movement.

After the signing of the Hebron protocol Netanyahu approved a number of new settlements. In February 1997 he announced plans for 6,500 new dwellings for 30,000 settlers at Jabal Ghneim (Har Homa) on the outskirts of annexed East Jerusalem. Har Homa would complete the chain of concentric settlements around Jerusalem and cut off Arab East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank. The move was met with anger from Palestinians and condemned by the United Nations (1997) General Assembly by 130 votes to two (Israel, United States). Palestinians were unhappy with more expropriation of their land and called a general strike in protest. The US twice vetoed Security Council resolutions condemning the project, whilst the General Assembly passed further resolutions calling for a halt to the Har Homa project, the removal of settlements in the occupied territories, and the application of the Fourth Geneva Convention within the territories. None of these moves stopped the construction of the new settlements. In June 1997 the Israeli journalist Jay Bushinsky reported that Netanyahu had outlined his 'Allon plus' plan for a possible settlement with the Palestinians. The plan involved Israel annexing approximately 60% of the West Bank that would include Greater Jerusalem, the hills east of Jerusalem, the Jordan valley, the settlements and all the bypass roads connecting them, plus permanent Israeli control of the West Bank water supply (*Jerusalem Post*, 5 June 1997). The proposals were met with dismay by Palestinian leaders who accused Israel of violating the Oslo Accords and trying to destroy the peace process.

Although the conflict between Palestinian fighters and the IDF and settlers in the occupied territories continued to claim more lives, there were no suicide attacks in Israel between March 1996 and March 1997. Between March 21 1997 and September 4 1997 militants carried out three suicide attacks killing 24 Israelis. Hamas representatives argued that the attacks were the only way to stop the expropriation of more Palestinian land for settlement building and the 'Judaization' of the Holy places. On September 23 1997 the Hamas leadership sent a letter to Netanyahu, delivered by King Hussein of Jordan, in which Hamas suggested setting up an indirect dialogue

with the Israeli government, that would be mediated by King Hussein. The purpose of the dialogue would be to achieve a cessation of violence as well as a 'discussion of all matters' (*Ha'aretz*, 9 October 1997, cited in Sela & Avraham, 2000: 72). Two days later Netanyahu ordered the killing of the head of Hamas's Political Bureau, Khalid Mash'al in Jordan. The attempted assassination by two Mossad agents was botched and Mash'al's bodyguard captured the two assassins who were later traded for the imprisoned Hamas spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. The attempted killing soured relations with King Hussein, Israel's closest ally in the Arab world and ended any opportunity for a cease-fire. The release of Yassin followed by his return to Gaza strengthened Hamas's support.

In March 1998 1,500 reservists included twelve retired major-generals called on Netanyahu to stop settlement building and try to end the conflict and normalise relations. (Shlaim, 2000). However Netanyahu cancelled the scheduled Israeli redeployments, citing security concerns. Despite efforts by both Britain and the US to revive the process it ground to a halt. Both sides in the conflict accused the other of bad faith in reneging on their Oslo obligations. Netanyahu reiterated his claims that the PLO had failed to disarm or arrest militant groups, prevent attacks against Israelis, and amend the PLO charter. Others contested this. Tanya Reinhart writing in the Israeli publication *Tikkun* claimed that Arafat had taken strong action against Hamas and that this was recognised by Israel's security services:

Arafat's security services carried out this job [maintaining Israeli security] faithfully, by assassinating Hamas terrorists (disguised as "accidents"), and arresting Hamas political leaders... Ample information was published in the Israeli media regarding these activities, and 'security sources' were full of praises for Arafat's achievements. For example, Ami Ayalon, then head of the Israeli secret service (Shabak), announced, in a government meeting on April 5, 1998 that "Arafat is doing his job—he is fighting terror and puts all his weight against the Hamas" (*Ha'aretz*, April 6 1998). The rate of success of the Israeli security services in containing terror was never higher than that of Arafat; in fact, it was probably much lower. (March/April 2002)

In a 1998 report, the Israeli peace group Gush Shalom (1998) blamed the Netanyahu administration for the breakdown in the peace process and accused the

government of 19 separate violations of the Oslo Accords including settlement and bypass road building, use of closures, failure to release Palestinian prisoners, torture and other human rights abuses, and failure to undertake scheduled military withdrawals and move towards final status negotiations. During this period support for militant organisations such as Islamic Jihad and Hamas grew whilst the PLO and particularly Yasser Arafat lost popularity. Partly this was because of corruption scandals that engulfed the PLO leadership which was accused of nepotism and siphoning off funds meant for the Palestinian Authority. It was also because of Arafat's autocratic style and the serious human rights abuses committed by the Palestinian security forces who were using torture and engaging in extra-judicial killings against opponents of the Oslo process. There was also widespread anger that Arafat had failed to stop settlement building. Geoffrey Aronson claimed that Arafat and the other PLO 'outsiders' (those from outside the occupied territories) failed to appreciate the significance of the settlements:

PA chairman Yasser Arafat is briefed infrequently on Israel's settlement policy, and his response is generally stunned silence as he looks at the maps depicting the dimensions of the enterprise. Palestinian Authority negotiators Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) and Ahmad Quray (Abu Ala) have never been on a 'settlement tour.' If one is to judge by their negotiating priorities, they have no concept of the role of settlements in the history of Israel's policies in the occupied territories, nor do they believe that such an understanding is required. (*Report on Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Territories*, July/August 1998)

In October 1998 Israel and Palestinian negotiators met at Wye River Plantation to negotiate on the next phase of the Oslo process. This brings to an end the historical review of the conflict, which has illustrated the extraordinary range of viewpoints on the history of the conflict. In the next chapter I will examine how journalists have drawn from these perspectives in their reporting of the conflict.

Chapter 3 Content Analysis of the Wye Accords

Introduction

This content analysis examines how television news covered the Wye Peace summit which took place in America in October 1998. The summit which involved Israeli and Palestinian delegations meeting in an attempt to further the Oslo peace process, was presided over by the American president Bill Clinton. It was widely accepted by all parties that the peace process, which had been inaugurated five years previously by Yitzak Rabin and Yasser Arafat signing the Declaration of Principles on the White House lawn, was encountering some problems. The process had ground to a halt, with Israel refusing to carry out the troop withdrawals scheduled in the previous agreements. The reasons for the breakdown were contested. The Netanyahu government argued that the Palestinians had failed to adhere to their commitments under the Oslo agreements by not curbing incitement, preventing attacks against Israelis or arresting Palestinians suspected of involvement in attacks. Some prominent Israelis disputed this. For instance Ami Ayalon, the head of the Israeli secret service (Shabak) had praised Arafat for his attempts to rein in Hamas activists (*Ha'aretz*, April 6 1998). Far right parties and religious settler groups who were part of Netanyahu's coalition government favoured withdrawing from the peace process completely. They argued that the occupied territories were part of biblical Israel, promised to the Jews by God, and should not be returned to the Palestinians in exchange for peace. Palestinians were sceptical of the Israeli government's commitment to the peace process and noted that Binyamin Netanyahu had been a vocal critic of the Oslo process and its 'land for peace' formula. They pointed to increased expropriations of Palestinian land, the demolition of thousands of Palestinian homes, and the creation of more illegal Israeli settlements. They were also angered that Israel had created a grid of military checkpoints and bypass roads across the occupied territories, which severely limited their freedom of movement, and which had been likened to South Africa's pass laws (cited in Philo & Berry, 2004). Many Palestinians believed that the peace process was being manipulated to allow Israel to take more and more occupied land, and feared that Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority could not be relied on to negotiate an equitable settlement.

The purpose of the content analysis is to examine the range of explanations offered to viewers during reporting of the peace conference. These explanations,

which were contested by the opposing parties, related to various different aspects of the conflict, and the moves towards a settlement. Some explanations referred to the historical origins of the conflict. Others focused on why the peace process had ground to a halt and who was to blame. There were also the differing perspectives on the issues which separated the parties, like settlements and the status of Jerusalem, as well as the factors which led some parties to oppose the peace process. The purpose is to ascertain whether certain perspectives and explanations were highlighted in coverage and whether others were marginalized. It thus looked at questions of representation, access and power.

Methodology

In October 2002 Stephen Bates reported that the Israeli state had commissioned two of America's most renowned public relationships professionals in order to try and improve Israel's public image and counter what was argued was a bias against Israel in the British media (*Guardian* 12 October 2002). Bates cited comments by Gidon Meir, the Israeli foreign ministry's deputy director for public affairs, who described the Palestinian public relations strategy as a 'strategic threat'. Meir argued that the 'Palestinians understand that one of the most important weapons in this conflict is a camera ... In some places we are winning and in others we are losing and are engaged in damage control'. Meir is emphasizing the importance of the mass media as a site in the struggle for public legitimacy. The winning of public consent in democratic societies is vital for the exercise of power and this is no less true in an international context. The ability to engineer that consent is partly dependent on the capacity to make sure that a particular perspective or ideology becomes widely accepted. The mass media then serve as a site of conflict where various groups struggle to make sure that their perspective predominates whilst that of their rivals is marginalized. However this struggle does not take place on a level playing field. Some groups because of their place in the institutional structure of British political life, or ability to access public relations resources have inbuilt advantages in making sure their perspective is heard. The methodology employed here, Thematic Analysis, examines how competing viewpoints are covered (or excluded) by journalists in controversial areas of coverage. The methodology has been developed by the Glasgow Media Group and applied to a number of different areas of news coverage such as industrial

news, war reporting and coverage of public health issues. In the mid 1970s the group examined the coverage of British industrial news and in particular focused on the differing explanations put forward for Britain's declining industrial performance. Whilst business leaders and the Conservative party blamed the decline on the power of unions and the prevalence of strike action, the trade unions pointed to low levels of investment in plant and machinery which meant that workers in competing countries were using more modern and efficient equipment. The group examined the published evidence which supported both positions and then examined which perspectives were highlighted or downplayed in television news coverage. The group found that while there was much coverage which blamed the decline on strike action and the behaviour of trade unions, there was none which linked it to low levels of investment or management failings. They also suggested that once the explanation that 'strikes were to blame' became established in the news this then set the pattern and structure for further reporting. Journalists would visit factories and interview workers about strikes, but not interview or question management about investment decisions. Thus the pattern of coverage could implicitly assume the explanation that strikes were the culprit without actually having to state it explicitly.

In the previous chapters I reviewed how the historical record of the conflict has been contested by Israelis and Palestinians. The purpose of this exercise was to lay out the range of views which exist on the conflict. In the content analysis, I want to examine how journalists have utilised elements of history of the conflict to contextualise their coverage, and explain events. I began by transcribing all news coverage of the Wye Accords on all five terrestrial channels. In total 44 bulletins were transcribed over six viewing days yielding 1417 lines of text. I then calculated the amount of space given to different subject areas. The most prominent area of coverage dealt with the latest progress of negotiations and discussion of America's role in brokering the conference, accounting for nearly half the coverage. This was followed by an examination of the range of explanations offered to viewers in relation to various aspects of the conflict. Some explanations related to the history and origins of the conflict, others concerned the issues under discussion at the summit and a third category dealt with the final status issues, such as Jerusalem, which were at the heart of the conflict. This was followed by an analysis of how journalists evaluated the health of the peace process and discussed those who opposed the process. Finally I examined the access given to the Palestinian and Israeli sources, the quantity of space

given to reported statements from both sides and the language used by journalists in talking about the conflict.

Whilst discussing the coverage I also reference audience research which examined public understanding of the conflict. This research involved both questionnaire and focus group methods. The focus groups consisted of seven to eight people on average, who were brought together by a mediator to discuss various aspects of the conflict. In total 100 people were involved in the focus groups who were selected on the basis of income, age and gender. The questionnaire part of the study involved more than 700 students from Britain, America and Germany answering questions about various aspects of the conflict. This research can be found in Philo and Berry (2004).

Theme 1: Progress of talks/Movement of dignitaries/Discussion of America's role in the Peace Process

This was by far the largest single aspect of the coverage accounting for 53 percent of the total (753 lines out of 1417). Within this category was grouped all news coverage that dealt with the movement of important dignitaries, the progress of peace negotiations and discussion of America's role in brokering the conference. Any references to the issues being discussed or the history or causes of the conflict were not included within this category. Much of the coverage consisted of updates on the progress of talks, with extensive description of the latest developments. However these reports on the progress of the talks were rarely accompanied by any in depth discussion of what was being negotiated or the factors underpinning the conflict. Here for example is a news bulletin from ITN reproduced in its entirety:

Newscaster: The West Bank Peace talks in America are on the brink of collapse tonight with the Israelis saying they have their engines running and are ready to pull out. The negotiations have gone on longer than scheduled. President Clinton has been trying to nudge the two sides together. King Hussein of Jordan left his sick bed to help.

Journalist: The talks in this secluded mansion outside Washington were supposed to last two days. That was seven days ago. In that time the Palestinian and Israeli leadership have been deadlocked unable to get the peace process that began in Oslo five years ago back on schedule. King Hussein of Jordan has come from his sick bed in a Minnesota cancer clinic to try and achieve a breakthrough, so far to no avail. President Clinton has made repeated visits to negotiate with the leaders separately and together but he too cannot bridge the gap. Perhaps the most striking thing about these talks is the amount of time the President has invested personally he has been here six days out of seven. It means that if they succeed they will be seen as a considerable personal triumph but if they fail a serious setback for the prestige of American diplomacy. And with the Israelis today threatening to pack up and go home failure seems the most likely outcome. The State Department spokesman was today brutally realistic.

US State Department Spokesman: We can't hold people here against their will and we can't make them make the tough choices. This is their security interests that are at stake, for both the Palestinians and the Israelis, their future that is at stake and they have to make those decisions.

Journalist: President Clinton is deciding now whether to make another visit to the talks this evening. After seven days patience is running short. There may not be much time left. (ITV, Evening News, 21 October 1998)

Television news because of its format puts a premium on the latest updates and breaking news. However this emphasis on immediacy can marginalize explanations that are necessary if viewers are to understand stories. There is nothing in the above broadcast, except the brief comment from an official US source that 'security interests... are at stake' that gives the viewing audience any clues as to what was actually under discussion at the talks or what the conflict is about. Here is another report this time from an early evening news bulletin on BBC1:

Newscaster: King Hussein of Jordan has flown from his hospital bed to join President Clinton's attempt to cajole the Middle East talks to some sort of

agreement. The talks in Maryland have entered their sixth day with no sign of a breakthrough. Meanwhile the armed wing of the militant Islamic movement Hamas, has said that it carried out the grenade attack which brought the talks to the brink of collapse. And our Washington correspondent Stephen Sackur is at the talks in Maryland. Stephen, King Hussein is clearly very ill why is his intervention considered necessary?

Journalist: The Americans believe that King Hussein could make the difference between success and failure in this six day long summit. They believe that he is the one man who has the ear of both Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, and Yasser Arafat the Palestinian leader. And in particular King Hussein is going to express fears, also expressed by President Clinton that if no deal is done here in Maryland then the whole Middle East could go into a series of conflicts and turmoil which would be very bad for the Palestinians, bad for the Israelis and bad for neighbours like King Hussein of Jordan. So its going to be a clear message a simple message to both sides that a deal must be done and it must be done now.

Newscaster: Is yesterday's grenade attack still having an effect on the talks?

Journalist: In a sense not so much. The Israelis yesterday in the immediate aftermath of that attack in Beersheba in Israel said that they would talk about nothing in these negotiations except security. They suspended all other talks. Well today their position has shifted and I understand that is because of substantial American pressure. The Americans were frustrated that the Israelis were allowing that terror attack to shift the whole nature of these talks there were serious words between President Clinton and Benjamin Netanyahu about that last night. And now all of the committees are doing their work I've just spoken to the State department spokesman who says that very hard bargaining is taking place and it does look as though in the words of the Americans we are reaching the end game in this long summit. (BBC1, Early Evening News 20 October 1998)

In this example there is a very brief mention that the Israeli delegation 'would talk about nothing in these negotiations except security' but little information about the issues at the talks. The pronounced emphasis on the latest events and the role of important dignitaries, tends to crowd out explanations for the conflict which might help viewers understand the motivations and positions of the Israelis and Palestinians. As will be discussed in more detail in the chapter dealing with production factors, this appears partly to be a function of the pressure to produce dramatic bulletins which will maximise audiences. The former BBC correspondent Tim Llewelyn has spoken of the 'intense competitiveness' between news channels. News editors, he suggests, 'want stuff that has immediate impact, they don't want somebody explaining anything...the competition, the bang bang aspect, the drama of news has overridden everything else' (Interview, 16 April 2004). In the above news bulletins there seems to be an attempt by journalists to inject drama into the proceedings at the expense of producing more analytical coverage. Journalists' talk of the Israelis with their 'engines running...ready to pull out', the arrival of the cancer-stricken King Hussein from his 'sick bed', the 'striking' personal commitment of Bill Clinton and the danger that 'the whole Middle East could go into a series of conflicts and turmoil' is dramatic. However other areas of coverage appeared to suggest that what was being debated at the Summit was not as significant as the reports above indicated. For instance an ITV correspondent later reported that an Israeli source had told him that 'what has been negotiated over the past week are simply peanuts compared to the major issues that have yet to emerge in a final agreement' (ITV, lunchtime news, 23 October 1998). The essential point is that by devoting more than half of all coverage to latest developments, or descriptive accounts of America's role in negotiations this leaves less space to provide analysis of the conflict. As will be seen, vital aspects of the dispute, necessary for a coherent understanding of the conflict were barely mentioned.

The role of the United States received a great deal of attention in reporting. Comments about American diplomacy and in particular President Clinton's role accounted for 23 percent of all coverage (328 lines out of 1417). All comments regarding the role of the United States were extremely positive, arguing that President Clinton had expended a great deal of effort in attempting to bring peace to the Middle East and that if the summit failed it would be a 'serious setback' for American diplomacy:

President Clinton wants a Middle East peace agreement very badly perhaps more than the Israelis and the Palestinians themselves. His extraordinary investment of time and prestige in this summit continued today, he went to Maryland with a familiar message. (BBC1 Early Evening News, 22 October 1998)

It took 20 hours of non-stop talks away from the TV cameras to clinch the deal. President Clinton pressured Benjamin Netanyahu and Yasser Arafat through a series of last minute problems. Just after 3am local time the deal was done. The Palestinians get more West Bank land the Israelis receive new security commitments, the Americans will oversee the deal. (BBC1 Early Evening News, 23 October 1998)

President Clinton has made repeated visits to negotiate with the leaders separately and together but he too cannot bridge the gap. Perhaps the most striking thing about these talks is the amount of time the President has invested personally he has been here six days out of seven. It means that if they succeed they will be seen as a considerable personal triumph but if they fail a serious setback for the prestige of American diplomacy. (ITV Evening News, 21 October 1998)

Well it is a big deal for President Clinton and I would argue that President Clinton needed this deal at this particular time more than either Mr Arafat or more than Mr Netanyahu as well. He had invested so much time and prestige in this summit and in the effort to get this interim deal together that it would have a terrible blow to his prestige and his international credibility if he failed. There was a blazing row today I understand between the Israeli Prime Minister and Bill Clinton and it looked as though at the very last minute the Israelis might withdraw from the deal because of a row over an Israeli spy in an American jail. But Bill Clinton stood his ground he got through that and he won a standing ovation tonight from all sides for his effort to make this work. (BBC2 Newsnight, 23 October 1998)

The clear message of the coverage appears to be that President Clinton is acting a peace broker, attempting to 'bridge the gap' between two bitter enemies. The president is portrayed as having put an 'extraordinary investment of time and prestige' into the peace process, having 'stood his ground' in the face of Israeli demands and 'won a standing ovation tonight from all sides for his effort to make this work'. In one exchange between a BBC news anchor and a foreign correspondent it was suggested that American pressure on Israel had been so great that it might threaten the relationship between the two countries:

Correspondent: The Israelis say those security proposals are simply not enough and that the Palestinians are breaking promises, in this case you've got the Palestinians and Americans on one side and the Israelis on the other. It may be a situation in which the Israelis feel they have no option but to walk out.

News Anchor: And could we be looking here, briefly Stephen, at the breakdown of a relationship between the United States and Israel.

Correspondent: Its to early to say that Peter, but I've just had James Rubin, the state department spokesman, say that this is a key moment in the history of the Middle East peace process. (BBC1 evening news, 21 October 1998)

For Newsnight's David Sales the prerequisite for any further moves towards a peaceful solution was even more American involvement:

It will take a miracle for a permanently reluctant Netanyahu and a much weakened Arafat to bring about any final agreement on schedule given the blood, sweat, tears, and brinkmanship that have plagued even this week's modest interim deal. The absolute must for any success will be for Mr Clinton to get down there in the trenches as he has done this past week. Without him nothing. (BBC2, Newsnight 23 October 1998)

However a rather different image of the Clinton administration's position in the conflict appeared in the Israeli press some time before the summit. Under the title

‘The Jews who run Clinton’s Court’ *Ma’ariv* columnist Avinoam Bar-Yosef, spoke of the ‘enormous Jewish influence’ within the Clinton administration manifested in the high proportion of Jews employed in the most senior and sensitive positions within the government (2 September 1994). Bar-Yosef noted that ‘in the National Security Council, 7 out of 11 top staffers are Jews’ whom Clinton had placed ‘in the most sensitive junctions in the U.S. security and foreign policy administrations’. He further maintained that ‘the situation is not much different in the president’s office, which is full of warm [pro-Israel] Jews’ and the State Department which has a ‘a long list of senior Jewish officials’ including many members of the pro-Israel lobby. Bar-Yosef also noted that two members of the pro-Israel lobby, Dennis Ross and Martin Idnyk headed the Clinton administration’s Middle East policy team. Martin Idnyk was previously a media consultant to the far right Israeli prime ministers Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir. He later became director of research for the leading pro-Israel pressure group, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). AIPAC consistently features in *Fortune* magazine’s list of America’s most influential lobby groups and its website states that ‘the US must stand by its loyal ally, Israel, and not subscribe to an unprincipled policy of ‘even-handedness’’ in its dealings with the Israel-Palestine conflict (AIPAC, 2004). It has been suggested that AIPAC and the wider pro-Israel lobby create such political pressure that it is very difficult for American administrations to take an objective stance on the conflict:

AIPAC has a lot of influence on foreign policy. They work very hard to make sure that America endorses pretty much Israel’s view of the world and the Middle East. They do partly by convincing, partly by implied threats. AIPAC does not raise money for candidates but there are Jewish PACs (Political Action Committees) that raise campaign funds for candidates. Four or five times over the last twenty years, these PACs have gone after members of Congress who voted in ways that AIPAC didn’t like. They have flooded their opponents with money and enabled them to beat the incumbents. Sent a message that if you really want to go against AIPAC, you’d better know where your next dollar is coming from. So that, as I’ve been told by a number of congressional aides over the last few years, if the congressman doesn’t vote against Arafat, they’ll pay a price. If they do vote against Arafat, there’s no price to be paid. There’s no percentage for the member of Congress to stand

up for peace, for compromise. Nobody is going to reward them they'll be punished. (*A Lobby to Reckon With*, BBC Radio 4, 7 May 2002, cited in Philo & Berry, 2004: 253)

The Clinton administration provided more than three billion dollars worth of annual aid to Israel. Much of the funding was spent on military equipment, which was used against Palestinians. Some of the aid was also used for building illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied territories (Said, 1996). The Clinton administration had also provided diplomatic support for successive Israeli governments' illegal settlement building programs. Palestinians believed that the creation of more settlements was undercutting the peace process, because once these 'facts on the ground', as some Israeli leaders had referred to the settlement blocks, were established, it was highly unlikely they would ever be returned in a peace agreement. The United Nations had repeatedly criticized Israel's settlement drive, which it described as an 'obstacle to peace'. The previous year when the Netanyahu government began construction of a 6,500 unit settlement block in occupied East Jerusalem, the General Assembly had condemned the move by 130 votes to 2 (Israel and the United States). When the issue moved to the Security Council the Clinton administration twice vetoed resolutions condemning the settlement activity. It was not difficult to find alternative voices which questioned what Clinton was actually supporting under the banner of the Oslo process, even in the Israeli press. A week before the talks began, Edward Said wrote of the 'bankruptcy' of the Oslo process:

If the last few years have proved one thing, it is the bankruptcy of the vision proclaimed by Oslo, and of the leadership that engineered the whole wretched thing. It left huge numbers of Palestinians unrepresented, impoverished and forgotten; it allowed Israel to expropriate more land in addition to consolidating its hold on Jerusalem, the Golan Heights, and the West Bank and Gaza settlements; it validated the notion of what can only be called petty Palestinian nationalism, which in reality was little more than a few worn-out slogans and the survival of the old PLO leadership...Oslo, in my view, was a clever way for the Labor Party to create a series of Bantustans in which the Palestinians would be confined and dominated by Israel, at the same time

hinting that a quasi-state for Palestinians would come into being. (*Ha'aretz*, 11 October 1998)

Likewise Robert Fisk writing in the *Independent* after the talks was very critical of what had been agreed and America's role in the process:

Oslo and Wye destroyed any Palestinian hope for a just peace. Israel was allowed to build more Jewish settlements on Palestinian land, confiscate Palestinian identity papers, demolish Palestinian homes. And Arafat - for perhaps 14 per cent of the land of 'Palestine' - had to promise to protect the Israelis who were building the settlements, confiscating the paper and demolishing the homes. And they called it peace. (*Independent*, 16 December 1998).

The views presented above represent a very different view of the American administration than that presented to viewers. Many Palestinians did not believe that the 'absolute must for any success [in the peace process] will be for Mr Clinton to get down there in the trenches' (BBC2 Newsnight, 23 October 1998). Instead many believed the American president was giving unconditional support to unilateral Israeli moves which were undermining any possibility of a just settlement.

Theme 2: Explanations for the Conflict

In this section were analysed all references to the history of the conflict and the various factors which underpinned the dispute. This area of coverage is important because it provides rationale and explanations for the actions and motivations of the protagonists. It is difficult for viewers to comprehend why the dispute has been so bitter, bloody and protracted without some information regarding the history of the conflict and the various issues which still separate the two parties. This area dealing with explanations is also the most controversial aspect of reporting because it involves a great deal of contested history. For instance, the Israeli and Palestinian perspectives on issues such as refugees and settlements are markedly different. Three important areas of coverage were identified. The first deals with the origins and historical roots

of the conflict, the second deals with explanations of the issues that were actually on the table during the Wye Summit and the third deals with the issues which were postponed to the final status negotiations. These final status issues, such as the future of settlements, Jerusalem, and Palestinian refugees are at the heart of the conflict and it is very difficult to understand the conflict without some knowledge of them.

The Historical Origins of the Conflict

There were no attempts in the coverage to outline the history of the conflict or explain how the protagonists had become involved in such a long running dispute. Out of 1417 lines of coverage only 4 or 0.28 percent of the total coverage mentioned any aspect of the conflict's history:

And this morning in Israel settlers from the West Bank tried blocking Palestinian traffic praying for the talks to fail and urging Benjamin Netanyahu to return none of the land captured in 1967 (Channel 5 Lunchtime News, 22 October 1998)

In East Jerusalem which Israel has occupied since the 1967 war Palestinians were relieved that the deadlock has been broken. (BBC1 Early Evening News, 24 October 1998)

The Luz family live in the settlement of Beit-El on land Israel captured in the 1967 war because they feel this is the heartland of the Jewish people (BBC1 Evening News, 24 October 1998)

A swap of more Palestinian land occupied by Israel since 1967 in return for tougher Palestinian measures against Islamic terrorists. (BBC2 Newsnight, 23 October 1998)

These brief allusions to the six day war offer little to those who do not already possess a knowledge of the conflict's history. All of the major issues separating the two parties, i.e. the settlements, Palestinian statehood, the refugees, the military

occupation, the status of Jerusalem, and control of the region's water resources relate to key moments in the region's history. For instance, to understand the refugee issue requires the knowledge that the refugee problem was created during the birth of the state of Israel when approximately three quarter of a million Palestinians were displaced from their homes (Gilbert, 1999). Despite many UN resolutions they were never allowed to return. To understand the military occupation, the significance of Jerusalem, and why Israel has security concerns requires knowledge about the events of 1967 when Israel conquered the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights and East Jerusalem. Israelis and Palestinians, of course, offer different accounts of those two pivotal years, but without any knowledge of events in 1948 and 1967 it is very difficult to understand the conflict. However with a little historical background it becomes easier to understand the significance of the various contentious issues and the motivations of the two parties.

What is particularly ironic about the lack of historical context presented to viewers, is that many of the BBC reports were presented by its chief Middle East correspondent, Jeremy Bowen, who has written extensively about how the present conflict is in large part a consequence of the events of 1967. In *Six Days: How the 1967 War Shaped the Middle East* Bowen argues that in order to understand why the conflict is so deep seated one must go back to the events of 1967:

The six day war swept up a generation of Israelis and Arabs whose children still cannot live peacefully in the world the war created. Israelis deserve peaceful, safe lives. Palestinians who were dispossessed and exiled if they became refugees, humiliated and abused if they stayed, deserve justice. Israel's overwhelming victory turned into a curse. It has never been able to digest the land it swallowed in 1967. It has poured money in colonising the Occupied Territories, defying international law and splitting its own people. Thirty six years after six days of fighting with Jordan, Egypt and Syria, after thousands more deaths and the failure of six years of negotiations Israelis and Palestinians are still fighting over the future of the West Bank and Gaza. It is still a low intensity war. But if another full blown Middle East war breaks out, its roots will live in those six days in 1967. The Middle East will have no peace until Israelis and Palestinians, as equal partners settle the future of the

land that was captured in 1967 and unwind the consequences of the war.
(Bowen, 2004: 3-4)

An obvious question arises- if the journalist recognises so clearly the importance of knowing about key moments in the region's history as a prerequisite for understanding the conflict (and how to resolve it), then why doesn't he provide any information about those pivotal moments when he's standing in front of a camera as a BBC correspondent? Focus group work suggests that the lack of historical context has a serious impact on audiences' ability to understand the conflict and the motivations of Israelis and Palestinians. However it was found that even providing a very brief potted history of the conflict could have a 'dramatic effect' on the understanding of viewers:

The majority [of focus group members] also had no knowledge of the link between the wars of 1948 and 1967 – that Palestinians who were displaced from what became Israel in 1948 moved to areas such as Gaza, the West Bank of the Jordan and East Jerusalem and were then subject to military occupation after 1967. In the focus groups, the moderator was sometimes asked by the participants about the origins of the conflict. In response they were given a very brief account of the events of 1948 and 1967, based on the work of the Israeli historian Avi Shlaim (2000), and sometimes helped by the comments of journalists who were present. Although the account given was extremely brief it could have a very dramatic effect on the understanding of group members.
(Philo and Berry, 2004:213)

The lack of historical context is a particular problem for Palestinians because their grievances such as the refugee issue and the military occupation, which are related to particular historical events, are occasionally named but never properly explained so as to make clear their importance. Conversely, as will be seen, the major issue for Israelis, their personal security, received extensive coverage.

Interim Issues

This area of coverage involved what was actually under discussion at the Wye Summit. Understandably journalists chose to focus far more extensively on these interim issues than on the more intractable and important final status issues, which had been postponed to a later date. The discussion of interim issues accounted for 15 percent of total coverage (217 lines out of 1417).

Land and Security

One of the ways the interim issues were explained was to group two main issues, the return of Palestinian land and the security of Israelis together. This accounted for 2.7 percent of total coverage (39 lines out of 1417) and approximately a third of all coverage of interim issues. Journalists employed phrases such as 'land and security' or 'land for peace' as a form of shorthand for the central focus of the summit

The two sides have been talking for eight days trying to reach a deal over land and security in the West Bank (BBC1 Evening News, 22 October 1998)

Negotiators have been working through the night to draw up a new deal over land and security issues and President Clinton is expected to return later today to add his weight to any agreement (ITV Lunchtime News, 22 October 1998)

And its an interim deal based on the exchange land for security (Channel 4 News, 23 October 1998)

Back in America President Clinton who has already spent 57 hours at the talks waits in Washington, hoping to be called back to the talks if the two sides can conclude a deal on land and terrorism (Channel 5 Lunchtime News, 22 October 1998)

Journalists are expected to point out what was actually being debated at the summit but explanations presented in this format are not very informative to viewers

who lack detailed background knowledge of the conflict. With virtually no historical background provided in coverage it may be difficult for viewers to understand what 'land' in this context means. Is it Israeli land that is being given up as a compromise for peace? or is it land that was conquered by Israel and is being returned to its legal owners? In coverage the status of the 'land' is unclear. Focus group research suggests that viewers' understanding of the territorial dimensions of the conflict are confused and contradictory, with many viewers believing that the conflict involved two states fighting over a coveted piece of land, as in a border dispute (Philo & Berry, 2004). The occupied territories are regarded under international law as Palestinian territory, and journalists could have made this clear by stating that Israel was returning land that it had captured during the six day war in 1967. On some occasions this was made clear. For instance on one Channel 5 bulletin (Lunchtime, 22 October 1998) a journalist reports that settlers were urging the Israeli Prime Minister 'to return none of the land captured in 1967'. However on nearly 90 percent of occasions (28/32 references, 87.5 percent of the total) journalists used neutral phrases such as transfer, pullback, withdrawal, or phrases which suggested Israel was transferring territory it owned such as 'giving up', 'giving away', or 'making concessions'. On only four occasions out of 32 was it made clear that Israel was 'returning' or 'handing back' territory.

Israel's Security

The single issue which received the bulk of coverage was the subject of Israel's security presented on its own. In total this accounted for 9 percent of all coverage (129 lines out of 1417) and approximately 60 percent of the coverage of all interim issues (129 lines out of 217). This theme became particularly pronounced after a grenade attack on Israeli soldiers by a Palestinian at a bus station in Southern Israel on the 19th October 1998, which was frequently cited as a justification for Israel's hard stance on security issues at the negotiations. Security was often presented as the central issue dividing the two parties and the 'stumbling block' to any further progress:

A spokesman for Mr. Netanyahu said that it [the grenade attack in Southern Israel] really reinforced the need for Israel to get strong and complete guarantees both in word and deed from the Palestinian side that they could control terrorism and they could provide security on the West Bank (BBC1 Lunchtime News, 19 October 98)

What you have now is an Israeli decision to talk about nothing at this summit conference except security. The Palestinians are furious about that, they are saying it's a form of blackmail but as far as the Israelis are concerned they are saying look no troop withdrawals can happen no meaningful negotiations can take place unless we feel that the Palestinians are doing all within their power to ensure there are not attacks on Israelis and according to the Netanyahu government the Palestinians simply cannot and will not deliver on that security pledge (BBC1 Evening News, 19 October 98)

It is perfectly legitimate to highlight the security concerns of Israelis. However there are a number of problems with this coverage. Firstly without any information regarding the causes of the conflict it may be difficult for viewers without a deep knowledge of the dispute to understand why Israel has security concerns. The term needs to be elaborated to make more explicit its meaning or meanings for audiences, because for Israelis and Palestinians the word has different connotations. The Israeli government argues that Israel has a security problem because the Palestinian Authority cannot or will not control 'terrorists' intent on killing Israelis. This was the perspective of the security issue provided by journalists especially on BBC, as in the following examples:

Yes even before this bomb attack this was always going to be the stumbling block the reluctance of Israel to pull out of the West Bank, the 13 percent they are negotiating about until the Palestinian Authority can provide guarantees that they can control the terrorists (BBC lunchtime news, 19 October 1998)

Security is the central sticking point. Yesterday's grenade attack at a bus stop in Beersheba injured 64 Israelis and while the Palestinians insist it was an isolated incident to the Israelis it was further evidence that Yasser Arafat

cannot control Islamic militants. The Palestinian leader has instructed his police force to clampdown on Hamas and other extremist groups. Mr. Arafat says he gives the issue 100 percent commitment but admits he cannot promise 100 percent results. The talks will resume later today the Palestinians say it's time for the Israelis to make a brave decision for peace. The Israelis will once again insist that their people must be safe from terrorist attack (BBC1, Lunchtime News, 20 October 1998)

An obvious unanswered question arises here: why are Palestinians risking their lives to attack Israelis? Since there is no historical background provided to viewers it may be difficult for them to understand Palestinian motivations. Focus group work in this area suggests that many viewers are confused about the motivations of the parties. Whilst most participants had absorbed the message that Israel-Palestine was a place of bloodshed, suffering and death, far fewer participants were able to provide cogent explanations as to why the two sides were fighting. Some viewers linked this lack of understanding to the structure of television news and a lack of explanation in this area:

First speaker: There's too many gaps, if you are being shown a partial picture, you are obviously not being shown a whole picture...they are showing you what they want you to see, and it shows, what we are seeing is what we are being fed.

Second speaker: They never really tell you the in-depth reasons about it- 'This guy went into bomb a pizza restaurant'- why? 'The Israelis are going to attack' – why?

First speaker: What pushes them to that extreme? (Low income male group, London, cited in Philo & Berry, 2004: 211-212)

There is a recognition here that bombing a pizza restaurant is an 'extreme' action which requires some kind of explanation. People, unless they are mentally ill, generally don't behave in such ways unless they have some motive. Amnesty International, for instance, have repeatedly stressed that Israeli security concerns are a consequence of human rights violations carried out against Palestinians by the Israeli army and armed settlers:

Without human rights there can be no genuine security and no sustainable peace. Amnesty International requests the Commission to call on the Israeli government to immediately cease violations of basic human rights and to apply fully United Nation human rights treaties, as well as the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, in the Occupied Territories (Amnesty International, 1999a)

However there were no attempts in coverage to link the conditions created by the occupation to Israel's security concerns and in one bulletin a BBC1 journalist reports that the Israeli 'government here rejects emphatically all Palestinian suggestions that its actions provoke attacks like this morning's' (BBC1, Evening News, 19 October 1998) There is no explanation of what these Israeli actions might be, because the nature of the occupation and its social consequences for Palestinians are not discussed in coverage. One aspect of the occupation which has been linked to Israeli security concerns involves the extensive use of torture by the Israeli security services:

A similar cycle of humiliation and mistreatment fomenting hatred has been observed by the Palestinian psychiatrist Dr Eyad el-Sarraj, who studied suicide bombers. 'Most of them had suffered serious trauma when young, often that involved close relatives being tortured by the Israelis,' he said. 'Children grow up wanting to take revenge for their trauma. Torture is an integral part of that cycle of violence. More oppression is making people more violent, in the way that abused children become abusive fathers.' (*Guardian*, 24 January 2003)

There was also the question of what the security provisions of the agreement would actually entail. Journalists here spoke of arresting 'terrorists', collecting weapons held by Palestinians and instituting a 'security clampdown':

The specifics of a Palestinian crackdown on Islamic militants in the West Bank and Gaza are still being worked out. Imprisonment of radicals and confiscation of illegal weapons and key components. (BBC 1, early evening news, 22 October 1998)

The Palestinian charter, their constitution, will abandon its demand for the destruction of Israel and the CIA will help with a new security clampdown by the Palestinians involving the arrest of 30 top Arab extremists (ITV, evening news, 23 October 1998)

The nub of the agreement is that the Palestinians will curb violent extremism (Channel 4 news, 23 October 1998)

However human rights groups and some print journalists had pointed out at the time, that the security measures were rather more controversial than they appeared in the television news coverage. Robert Fisk noted that security provisions would mean more 'prison, hatred and (let's not be squeamish) torture' (*Independent*, 24 October 1998) The day before the agreement was signed on the 22 October 1998 Human Rights Watch released a statement in Washington which urged the United States and Israel not to pressure the Palestinian Authority to implement the security provisions of the agreement without all sides making a clear commitment to safeguard human rights. Hanny Megally, executive director of Human Rights Watch's Middle East and North Africa Division, noted that the 'Palestinian Authority's human rights record is already deplorable,' and that the 'U.S. doesn't condemn these violations now -- will the U.S. condemn violations once it is formally part of the process that creates them?' The Israeli human rights group B'Tselem published a report a month after the signing of the Accords titled *The Human Rights Fruits of the Wye Memorandum* noting that the two weeks after the signing the fruits are already apparent: 'mass arbitrary arrests by both the Palestinian Authority and Israel'. The report further noted that 'the agreement merely pays lip service to human rights, with no intention by any of the parties - Israel, the Palestinian National Authority or the United States - to hold the sides accountable for human rights violations.' The television news coverage made no mention of the fact that the security provisions of the agreement might lead to an increase in human rights abuses including torture.

It was also argued that the security issue was that it was being used as a way of extending military control over Palestinians and undermining any prospect of land transfers during the Oslo process. Prime Minister Netanyahu had consistently campaigned against the 'peace process' before becoming Prime Minister and Avi

Shlaim has argued that Netanyahu by increasing house demolitions and settlement building whilst cancelling the scheduled IDF redeployments was adopting a ‘work-to-rule’ approach designed to undermine the Oslo process’ (2000: 576). Similarly, Professor Ian Lustick has argued that the Netanyahu government:

avored offering lip-service to the peace process in deference to the opinions of the majority of Israelis, while in fact using a ‘work-to-rule’ approach to the Oslo Accords—treating them not as a basis for an evolving partnership, but as an array of legalist and public relations weapons that can free Israel of its commitments, prevent further transfers of territory to Palestinian control, and delegitimize Arafat and the idea of a Palestinian state in the mind of Israeli public opinion. (1997: 87)

When Palestinian spokespersons were given the opportunity to speak this scepticism towards negotiations was made explicit:

These incidents should not be used as an excuse to run away from negotiations about the real problems in this area. And the real problem is the fact that the Israelis are still occupying most of the Palestinian lands and the Palestinians are in need of self-determination. (BBC1, Lunchtime news, 19 October 1998)

From my experience and assessment of the extremist ideological right wing fundamentalist stance of Netanyahu and the settlers and his cabinet it is very clear there is no commitment to a genuine peace and that the process is being manipulated to continue Israeli control and to undermine Palestinian rights. (BBC 1, Evening News, 19 October 1998)

The Palestinian people are certainly much more sceptical they do not look at this as a serious breakthrough or as an earth-shattering agreement it’s like pulling teeth and there’s certainly is no confidence in the Israeli government or in the follow up steps (Channel 4 News, 23 October 1998)

However when journalists provided commentary on the peace negotiations they reproduced only the official Israeli perspective. In many bulletins, and

particularly on BBC1 which featured the majority of explanations for the conflict, the Israeli security perspective was given such overwhelming prominence that it overshadowed all other questions appearing to be virtually the only issue, or at least in the words of the BBC's Stephen Sackar 'the key issue'. Here are some exchanges between journalists illustrating this:

Newscaster: But Stephen what are the main obstacles to peace?

Journalist: Well I just mentioned security arrangements Moira, and those are the key issues and in a sense the key obstacles. It's quite clear now that the Israelis are committed to pulling back from a further 13 percent of the West bank but only if the Palestinians can convince them that they are able to offer new written cast-iron security commitments, better than anything they have offered in the past. There are key issues like the Israelis wanting the extradition of more than 30 Palestinian Islamic militants to Israel for trial. For example they want to make sure that illegal weapons held by Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza are confiscated. Those are specific detailed issues the Israelis want the Palestinians to deliver and they want American intelligence to be involved to verify Palestinian compliance. (BBC1, Early Evening News, 18 October 1998)

Newscaster: Joining me now is our Washington correspondent Tom Carver. Tom its early morning there, I know, but has there been any reaction yet to this attack in Israel.

Journalist: Yes officials from both sides have said that they will not leave the negotiating table that they will continue to stay here despite the attack. A spokesman for Mr. Netanyahu said that it really reinforced the need for Israel to get strong and complete guarantees both in word and deed from the Palestinian side that they could control terrorism and they could provide security on the West Bank. So this clearly will have played into the hands of the hard-liners in Netanyahu's government and will make it very hard for him, I think, to convince his hard-liners back home that he can get those sort of guarantees from the Palestinians.

Newscaster: And it is those security issues that are proving the most difficult to overcome in the talks is it?

Journalist- Yes even before this bomb attack this was always going to be the stumbling block the reluctance of Israel to pull out of the West Bank, the 13 percent that they are negotiating about until the Palestinian Authority can provide guarantees that they can control the terrorists and it seems that this is exactly the sort of thing that Israel is dreading this sort of attack. And, of course, the Palestinians will say we can provide the security but we must also negotiate about other things about Israel's continued occupation of the territories. (BBC1, Lunchtime news, 19 October 1998)

In one of the above examples a journalist argues that 'It's quite clear now that the Israelis are committed to pulling back from a further 13 percent of the West bank' if they can get the required 'security guarantees'. However as already noted Palestinians regarded this as far from 'clear' which is why Palestinian spokespersons had expressed 'no confidence in the Israeli government or in the follow up steps'. Prime Minister Netanyahu had repeatedly suspended previous scheduled troop re-deployments and six weeks after Wye again cancelled the scheduled troop re-deployments unless the Palestinians fulfilled five conditions most of which were new and according to Avi Shlaim 'designed to torpedo the peace process and put the responsibility on the Palestinians' (2000: 605). However there was no attempt by journalists on any channel to articulate the Palestinian position that the arguments around security were being employed as an excuse to avoid land transfers and extend Israeli control over the occupied territories. It would not have been difficult for journalists to provide the Palestinian perspective along with the Israeli viewpoint:

Yes officials from both sides have said that they will not leave the negotiating table that they will continue to stay here despite the attack. A spokesman for Mr. Netanyahu said that it really reinforced the need for Israel to get strong and complete guarantees both in word and deed from the Palestinian side that they could control terrorism and they could provide security on the West Bank. *However Palestinians argue that the Israelis government, which is*

composed of parties opposed to the peace process, are using arguments about security to avoid the return of occupied Palestinian land and instead strengthen their hold on the Palestinian territories.

One reason why there was so much coverage dealing with the security provisions of the agreement was that journalists used this element of the accords as a point of linkage to the concerns of Israeli settlers living in the occupied territories. This made specific connections between the security provisions of Wye and the dangers faced by individual settlers. Here are some exchanges between journalists and settlers:

Journalist Less than a mile away rabbi Benny Alon, one of the leaders of the religious right in Israel's parliament is getting ready for the Jewish Sabbath at a synagogue in an otherwise Palestinian area that his supporters have just re-occupied. Rabbi Alon says the right will try to bring the government down because he believes Benjamin, BB, Netanyahu has put Israel in danger.

Israeli Settler: BB Netanyahu established in this summit the Palestinian state and by this he risks not only the Jewish revival he risks the Jewish state of Israel's survival. (BBC1, Evening News, 23 October 1998)

Journalist: Mecaby Luz is worried about his children's safety. The Luz family live in the settlement of Beit-El on land Israel captured in the 1967 war because they feel this is the heartland of the Jewish people. Now they're disgusted that the prime minister they voted for is transferring more territory to the Palestinians.

Israeli Settler: This agreement endangers us more than we were endangered before. We're worried because we've seen friends of ours killed and the murders run away it takes them two minutes to flee into the autonomy areas and now there's going to be more of these areas and we are very scared and we are very disappointed. (BBC1, Evening News, 24 October 1998)

Journalist: At the Israeli West Bank settlement of Beit-El hardline settlers followed the news on car radios as they hurried home before the sabbath shutdown. The settlement is already close to Palestinian homes and maybe virtually surrounded by Palestinian territory under the new agreement. Many of the settlers are bitterly disappointed and planning protest action.

Israeli Settler: We believe that we are going to be subject to firebombs to arms to bombings to you name it. (ITV Evening News, 23 October 1998)

It is perfectly legitimate for journalists to highlight the security concerns of Israeli settlers and how the provisions of Wye will affect them. However there was little attempt to show or discuss how the security provisions, or as many Palestinians saw it – the extension of military rule, had affected the lives of ordinary Palestinians. The closest any broadcaster came to this was this single brief mention in one BBC1 bulletin:

Journalist: At the Palestinian house restaurant in Ramallah, one of the biggest towns controlled by Yasser Arafat on the West Bank, they were getting ready for a birthday party. They didn't see any point in celebrating the peace process though when Israel still controls Palestinian lives.

Palestinian civilian: You need permission to go to Jerusalem first of all, Jerusalem is closed always. If you have a West Bank ID there's no way you can get in. If you want to go to Nabulus if there's a closure you can't even reach Nabulus. If you want to go anywhere you can't, it's ridiculous I think it's a joke.

This was a very important facet of the military occupation which wasn't highlighted anywhere else in coverage. The reason why Israel still controls Palestinian lives' is that during the Oslo process Israel had built a matrix of military checkpoints across the occupied territories which meant that Palestinians found it difficult to travel anywhere in the West Bank. This building programme which had drastically altered the geography of the West Bank and would have been difficult for journalists to miss. The enforcement by Israel, of what the United Nations had condemned as illegal

closures and 'flagrant violations of international law', had a serious impact on the Palestinian economy which had been severely damaged, and all other aspects of social life:

During years of waiting for promised benefits, Palestinians have seen their standard of living steadily decline. In the seven years between the signing of the Oslo Accords and the start of the uprising in September 2000, Israeli policies -- including border controls, retention of Palestinian funds, and restrictions on trade, investment, and access to water resources -- resulted in growing trade and budget deficits for the Palestinians. Unemployment was hovering at 50 percent, poverty rates increased, health standards deteriorated, and any sense of opportunity among Palestinian youth began to fade (Yackley & Zunes, 2002)

This was the only time that journalists mentioned the social impact of the demographic changes initiated by the Israelis during the peace process.

The Military Occupation

In total mentions of the occupation accounted for 15 lines or 1 percent of coverage. On each occasion the issue was merely named. The fact that it was military in nature and had serious social consequences for Palestinians wasn't mentioned:

And, of course, the Palestinians will say we can provide the security but we must also negotiate about other things about Israel's continued occupation of the territories. (BBC1, Lunchtime News, 19 October 1998)

In East Jerusalem which Israel has occupied since the 1967 war Palestinians were relieved that the deadlock has been broken. (BBC1, Early Evening News, 24 October 1998)

He comes from the occupied West Bank and is said by the Israeli authorities to have deliberately targeted soldiers.(ITV, Lunchtime News, 19 October 1998)

A swap of more Palestinian land occupied by Israel since 1967 in return for tougher Palestinian measures against Islamic terrorists. (BBC2, Newsnight, 23 October 1998)

However, human rights groups have been less reticent in documenting the social consequences of living under the military occupation:

Amnesty International has for many years documented and condemned violations of international human rights and humanitarian law by Israel directed against the Palestinian population of the Occupied Territories. They include unlawful killings; torture and ill-treatment; arbitrary detention; unfair trials; collective punishments such as punitive closures of areas and destruction of homes; extensive and wanton destruction of property; deportations; and discriminatory treatment as compared to Israeli settlers. Most of these violations are grave breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention and are therefore war crimes. Many have also been committed in a widespread and systematic manner, and in pursuit of government policy; such violations meet the definition of crimes against humanity under international law. (Amnesty International, 2002)

If the nature and consequences of the military occupation are not explained by journalists it is unlikely that viewers will be aware of them. Focus group work suggests that many participants did not understand that the Palestinians had been subject to a military occupation since 1967. They also found that few viewers were aware that human rights abuses were a part of the occupation. They related this ignorance to omissions in news coverage:

There was little understanding of areas such as human rights- only two people in all the focus groups raised these as an issue. Even in groups that tended to be sympathetic with the Palestinians (such as low-income males in London) there was some surprise that there were pass laws and identity cards which restricted movement. There was almost no knowledge of the large number of UN resolutions which have been passed, either those relation to the legality

of the occupation or those relating to human rights abuses in the occupied territories. (Philo & Berry, 2004: 218)

Coverage of the interim issues was dominated by the issue of Israeli security concerns, which was the only aspect of the agreement which was explained in a detailed manner. Most other issues like the land issue and the military occupation were named without being explained. Journalists spoke in a kind of shorthand which assumed a level of background knowledge, which focus group research suggests is lacking in most viewers. There were three other issues referred to:

- The release of Palestinian Prisoners (0.8 percent of total coverage, 11 lines)
- The rewriting of PLO charter (0.3 percent of coverage, 4 lines)
- Economic development in occupied territories - land links, port, airport (0.1 percent of coverage, 2 lines)

Final Status Issues

Coverage of final status issues accounted for 4 percent of coverage (63 lines out of 1417). More than two thirds of this (42 lines out of 63) dealt with Israeli settlements and settlers' anger and concerns. The other primary issues of concern to Palestinians: statehood, refugees, water and Jerusalem accounted in total for 1.5 percent of coverage (21 lines out of 1417). The final status issues were only mentioned in the final two days coverage of the talks, when journalists switched their attention to the issues that hadn't been part of the negotiations. Reporters stressed the limited aspect of what being signed at Wye, and then named without explaining the final status issues still to be resolved.

Settlements

The issue of Jewish settlements is one of the most contentious issues in the conflict. There are a number of different ways for journalists to approach the issue of

settlements and their significance in the conflict. Journalists can present the Israeli settler's perspective which maintains that Israeli Jews have a right to construct settlements anywhere in the occupied territories because the land was given to them by God. The Israeli government has also argued that the settlement blocks close to the Green Line have a security function because they act as a bulwark preventing Palestinians from entering Israel. For the Israeli government and settler groups the two primary issues in relation to the settlement question are whether any of the settlements will have to be removed in the course of the peace process and the safety of Israelis living in settlements, who have come into conflict with Palestinians. There is also the question of the political muscle of settler groups who have a powerful voice within Israeli political life, and formed a significant part of Prime Minister Netanyahu's ruling coalition. They have been strongly opposed to the peace process and any return of Palestinian land captured in 1967. The perspective on settlements held by Palestinians and the international community is at odds with the Israeli perspective. Palestinians see settlements as a form of colonisation whereby the settler population has been stealing Palestinian land and dispossessing the local population. The settlements close to the Green line were designed to have a strategic function in that they allowed the Israeli state to gain control of West Bank land and the region's water supply (Shlaim, 2000). This is a serious issue for Palestinians because their economy is largely agricultural and so access to water is vital. Palestinians also point out that all settlers are armed with automatic weapons and mount attacks against the Palestinian population who are not legally allowed to own weapons. A report by the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem argued that armed intimidation was used as a tactic to force Palestinians off their land:

Actions initiated by settlers against Palestinians and their property are carried out by individuals or organized groups to intimidate, deter, or punish, using firearms and ammunition provided to them by the IDF. Such action may be a reprisal operation following Palestinian violence, or it may be unrelated to any specific previous incident. Among the settlers' actions against Palestinians are setting up roadblocks to disrupt normal Palestinian life, shooting at roof-top water heaters burning cars, smashing windows, destroying crops and uprooting trees, and harassing merchants and owners of stalls in the market. Some of the settlers' violence against Palestinians is intended to force

Palestinians to leave their homes or land, so that the perpetrators can take control over Palestinian land. (B'Tselem, 1998)

The friction between Palestinians and Israeli settlers has worsened during the peace process because of the large rise in the settler population, and the fact that settlers are rarely prosecuted when they attack or kill Palestinians (Amnesty International, 2001a). Between the start of the peace process in 1991 and the Wye Accords the settler population in the occupied territories (excluding East Jerusalem) rose by 80 percent from 94,100 in 1991 to 169,400 in 1998 . Running concurrently with this rise has been an increasing expropriation of West Bank land for settlement purposes. It is widely argued that the settlements are illegal under international law because they breach the Fourth Geneva Convention, article 49 of which stipulates the occupying power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own population into the territories it occupies.' The United Nations has been extremely critical of the settlement program in the occupied territories passing annual resolutions that have deemed the settlements illegal and in need of removal. These resolutions have been passed with large majorities at the General Assembly with one passed ten months prior to Wye by 149 votes to 2 (Israel, United States). The European Parliament has also issued statements condemning settlement building.⁴¹

In coverage journalists highlighted only three aspects of the settlement question: what would be the future of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, the security of settlers living in the occupied territories and settler opposition to the Wye Accords:

They haven't even started to tackle the most serious issues yet those include the future of Jewish settlements like this one, the future of Jerusalem, of Palestinian refugees and the shape of Israel's final borders. (BBC1 Evening News, 23 October 98)

...these are small measures of progress compared to the really big issues which remain to be addressed in any kind of final settlement. That's for example the fate of Jerusalem, the fate of the Israeli settlements on the West Bank, and whether or not the Palestinians get a state. Those are the ones that they'll really have to try for (ITV Early Evening News, 23 October 1998)

I was just at an Israeli settlement on the West Bank called Betel, they run the risk of being virtually isolated, virtually cut off under this agreement. Not surprisingly they are bitterly against it (ITV Early Evening News, 23 October 1998)

Jewish settlers mounted protests on West Bank roads. There is a feeling that Mr. Netanyahu's decision to pull back from the brink of a walk out yesterday makes an agreement and a 13 percent Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank more likely (BBC1 Early Evening News, 22 October 1998)

This is a rather incomplete and partial treatment of the settlement issue. There is no discussion of what a settlement is or its strategic role in controlling the land and water resources of the occupied territories. There is also no mention of the fact that settlers are heavily armed and have been repeatedly censured by the United Nations and human rights groups for taking land and attacking Palestinians. From the coverage it could appear as if they are civilians who are being attacked for no obvious reason. Focus group work suggests that some viewers had internalised this view of settlements as vulnerable communities, subject to violent attacks for no clearly discernable reason (Philo & Berry, 2004). On the issue of the legitimacy of the settlements viewers are only presented with the settlers' perspective:

Jewish settlers who held prayer demonstrations believe this land was given to them by God and their homes and their families already heavily guarded will be in danger if any more of it is turned over to the Palestinians (BBC1 Evening News 23 October 1998)

The Luz family live in the settlement of Beit-El on land Israel captured in the 1967 war because they feel this is the heartland of the Jewish people. Now they're disgusted that the prime minister they voted for is transferring more territory to the Palestinians. (BBC1 Evening News, 24 October 1998)

Israel will stay quiet until the Jewish Sabbath ends at sunset this evening. Only then will the religious nationalistic right start the campaign which it promises will bring down the Netanyahu government to try to stop the handover to the

Palestinians of more of the land that religious Israelis believe God gave to the Jews (BBC1 Early Evening News, 24 October 1998)

There is no attempt to balance the claim of divine right to the land held by settlers with the view that most governments regard the settlements as being illegal and a violation of the Geneva Convention. It is also noteworthy that in the above example that the journalist presents the settlers' perspective that they 'will be in danger if any more of it is turned over to the Palestinians'. In another broadcast on ITV a reporter states that:

At the Israeli West Bank settlement of Beit-El hardline settlers followed the news on car radios as they hurried home before the Sabbath shutdown. The settlement is already close to Palestinian homes and maybe virtually surrounded by Palestinian territory under the new agreement. Many of the settlers are bitterly disappointed and planning protest action. (ITV Evening News, 23 October 1998)

Palestinians and independent human rights groups have argued that the settlers are putting themselves in danger not because of an agreement to hand back territory, but because they have been forcing Palestinians off their land and constructing illegal settlements. However this perspective is absent. The above example from ITV is particularly confused arguing that the settlements 'maybe surrounded by Palestinian territory' which misses the obvious point that the settlements were actually built on what the international community regards as Palestinian territory, which is why they are so bitterly resented by Palestinians. Out of the 42 lines of coverage which dealt with the settlement issue only one referenced the Palestinian perspective (though without actually interviewing any Palestinians):

Israeli peace campaigners went to help Palestinians on the West Bank with the olive harvest. The Palestinians here say Jewish settlers are trying to take their land. These Israeli leftists believe their country will never have peace until the Palestinians have justice. (BBC1 Evening News, 24 October 1998)

There is no indication as to whether the Palestinian claim that settlers ‘are trying to take their land’ is true, it is reported as an unsubstantiated claim. The journalist then tells viewers that ‘these Israeli leftists believe their country will never have peace until the Palestinians have justice’, but it is far from obvious to viewers, who lack a detailed knowledge of the conflict, how the existence of settlements affects Palestinian ‘justice’, or even for that matter what ‘justice’ in this context means. Without providing any information on the pivotal role of settlements in the struggle to control the region’s land and water, statements such as these are unlikely to be comprehensible to most viewers.

Jerusalem

Jerusalem is the centre of the religious, cultural, social and economic existence of Israelis and Palestinians. The city has particular significance to the Judean, Christian and Muslim faiths due to the presence of important holy sites. Israel argues the city is its ‘eternal and undivided capital’ because of its religious significance and the fact that the city has always had a significant Jewish population. Palestinians want Arab East Jerusalem as the capital of any prospective Palestinian state, and have been angered by Israeli moves to alter the demographic composition of the city. Arab East Jerusalem has been under military occupation since 1967 and in the interim period human rights groups note that Israel has carried out sustained illegal settlement programs and has been expelling Palestinians and destroying their homes at an increasing rate. According to Amnesty International the purpose of these practices in East Jerusalem has been ‘to transform the ethnic character of the annexed area from Arab to Jewish’ by the restriction and confiscation of residency documents, and the destruction of Palestinian homes⁴². At present Amnesty estimates that about 35 percent of East Jerusalem has been confiscated, more than 90 percent of which had been owned by Palestinians and used for grazing or cultivation. Of the current estimate of 28,000 Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem, Amnesty reports that approximately 12,000 or 43 percent of the total are under demolition orders from the Israeli authorities. The UN has also been heavily critical of these Israeli practices in Arab East Jerusalem. Ten months prior to the Wye Accords a UN resolution condemning the expulsions and house demolitions was passed by 148 votes to one

(Israel) with nine abstentions. It has also passed numerous General Assembly and Security Council resolutions asking Governments not to move their embassies to Jerusalem and declaring all moves by Israel to alter the demographic character of the city as invalid. In this coverage, the future of Jerusalem accounted for 0.6 percent of total coverage (9 lines out of 1417). None of the references to the issue extended beyond a single sentence, and none explained the significance of the issue:

The big issues, the future of Jerusalem and the Palestinian demand for statehood must now be faced. (BBC1: 21:00, 23 October 98)

And the really tough stuff lies ahead, the so called permanent status issues which should by rights be decided within the next six months, can Jerusalem be shared? The Palestinians want a part of it as their capital. (BBC2: 22:30, 23 October 98)

..these are small measures of progress compared to the really big issues which remain to be addressed in any kind of final settlement. That's for example the fate of Jerusalem, the fate of the Israeli settlements on the West Bank (ITV: 17:45, 23 October 98)

There is an acknowledgement by journalists that the future of Jerusalem is a 'big issue' but no explanations as to why. This is significant because another major Palestinian grievance that is driving the conflict is left unexamined. Focus group research suggests that most viewers who rely on television news as their main source of information are very confused about what the two sides are fighting over (Philo & Berry, 2004). Some viewers believed that the conflict involved neighbours who couldn't get along, or fanatics who harboured inexplicable and irrational hatreds. This is to be expected, if there is little explanation of the political and territorial dimensions of the dispute.

Palestinian Refugees

The fate of Palestinian refugees is one of the most intractable issues separating the two sides. It is so important that many on both sides regard it as a 'deal breaker' with the potential to scupper any attempts to reach a final settlement. The bulk of the refugees were created in 1948 when approximately 750,000 Palestinians were displaced during the creation of the Israeli state (Gilbert, 1999). A further 320,000 Palestinian refugees (and 90,000 Syrian refugees) were created in 1967 when Israel invaded the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Golan Heights (Harris, 1980). The refugees and their descendents now number more than five million according to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) and are concentrated primarily in the occupied territories, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, with 1.2 million living permanently in very poor social conditions in refugee camps. A report published in the *British Medical Journal* by the British charity Medical Aid for Palestinians catalogued the severe health problems experienced by people living in camps including infectious diseases linked to poor sanitation; mental health problems associated with displacement and with experiencing prolonged bombardment; intellectual and physical disability among children; poor health among pregnant women and infants; and chronic diseases such as diabetes. (17 March 1999).

All Israeli political parties (excluding the Arab and Communist parties) are opposed to the return of Palestinian refugees to Israel because they argue that it would threaten both the security and the Jewish character of the State.⁴³ For Palestinians the right of return for refugees lies at the heart of the conflict. The expulsion of the refugees in 1948 is remembered by Palestinians as Al Nakba, the catastrophe, and possible solutions to the refugee problem have generated much debate amongst Palestinians⁴⁴. The United Nations has been supportive of the right to return. On the 11th December 1948 the United Nations General Assembly passed UN resolution 194 which established the right of return for all Palestinian refugees displaced in the 1948 War:

Resolves that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of

international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible

Ten months prior to Wye the 'right of return' was re-affirmed by the United Nations by the margin of 159 votes to two (Israel, United States) with one abstention. There has also been support for the right to return from the European Union.⁴⁵ Although both sides admit the absolute centrality of the issue to any resolution of the conflict it received scant mention in coverage. References to the refugee question accounted for 0.2 percent of coverage (3 lines out of 1417). On each occasion the issue was named but not explained:

They haven't even started to tackle the most serious issues yet those include the future of Jewish settlements like this one, the future of Jerusalem, of Palestinian refugees and the shape of Israel's final borders. (BBC1 Evening News, 23 October 98)

Is there to be a right of return for Arab refugees? How many will be permitted to come in from exile, and when? (BBC2 Newsnight, 23 October 98)

..this really only takes us through till the final settlement which will involve the most difficult problems of all, questions like the final settlement of Jerusalem, the return of refugees (ITV Lunchtime News, 23 October 98)

Control of Water Resources

Another key final status issue concerns the water supplies of the occupied territories. As previously noted the construction of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories was linked to the struggle over the water supplies of the region. This has meant that Israel has taken control of the water supply of the occupied territories most of which is diverted for the use of settlements and Israeli industry. The Israeli human rights organisation B'Tselem has noted that Israeli water practices breach international law and have a highly negative impact on all aspects of life in the occupied territories:

Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians suffer from a severe water shortage throughout the summer. This shortage of water affects every function that water plays in human life: drinking, bathing, cleaning, and watering of crops and animals. The shortage drastically affects the residents' health and economic well-being. The shortage of drinking water can cause dehydration and the inability to maintain proper hygiene and thus lead to illness. Failure to water crops and animals affects the livelihood of the residents. The water shortage violates the basic human rights of Palestinian residents of the Occupied Territories such as the right to health, to adequate housing, to equality, and to benefit from their natural resources. This harm results from Israeli policy, in effect since 1967, based on an unfair division of resources shared by Israel and the Palestinians. (B'Tselem, 1998, *The Water Crisis in the Occupied Territories*)

The United Nations has been critical of the Israeli policy on West Bank water noting that it breaches international law. It has passed numerous resolutions pointing out that Israel must not exploit the water resources of the occupied territories.⁴⁶ The issue of water is of central importance to the conflict yet it accounted for only 0.07 percent of total coverage (1 line out of 1417). The single reference to the issue appeared during BBC2's *Newsnight*, rather than during the mass audience bulletins on BBC1 or ITV:

How is water to be shared an eternal and crucial problem in the Middle East
(BBC2: 22:30, 23 October 1998)

This reference is rather brief and requires explaining so as to make clear the importance of water in the context of the conflict. Sometimes journalists grouped a number of interim issues together in their discussion of what was still to be negotiated as in the following examples:

They haven't even started to tackle the most serious issue yet. Those include the future of Jewish settlements like this one, the future of Jerusalem, of

Palestinian refugees and the shape of Israel's final borders (BBC1 evening news, 23 October 1998)

We have to recognise above all that this is an interim deal that really only takes us through to the final settlement which will involve the most difficult problems of all, questions like the final settlement of Jerusalem, the return of refugees and for example the final borders of a Palestinian state. (ITV, lunchtime news, 23 October 1998)

Well if so they're going to get there by inches because these are small measures of progress compared to the really big issues which remain to be addressed in any kind of final settlement. That's for example the fate of Jerusalem, the fate of the Israeli settlements on the West Bank, and whether or not the Palestinians get a state. Those are the ones that they'll really have to try for. (ITV, early evening news, 23 October 1998)

Just naming the major issues is unlikely to be helpful to most viewers. Each issue must be individually explained by journalists so as to make clear its relevance and importance.

Theme 3: The Peace Process: Effects and Implications

This area involved Israeli and Palestinian perspectives on whether the process was achieving its objectives. Under the terms of the Oslo Accords by the time of Wye, Israel was due to have withdrawn its troops from most of the West Bank, and permanent status negotiations should have been underway for more than a year, with their completion scheduled for May 1999. However when the Wye Accords took place Palestinians had total control over only 3 percent of the West Bank and the final status talks had not even begun, with each side accusing the other of bad faith in failing to implement their obligations under the agreements. Discussion of the peace process accounted for 2 percent of total coverage (30 lines out of 1417). All of this coverage merely stated that the peace process has been stalled for approximately 18 months or that the Accords have brought 19 months of deadlock to an end:

Tonight the summit is in deep trouble it was supposed to revive the peace process which effectively collapsed 19 months ago. Because the gap between the two sides is so wide the Summit was never going to produce anything more than a limited and fragile agreement. (BBC1, Evening News, 19 October 98)

A clearly elated Yasser Arafat has been in Austria today taking the plaudits from European ministers for his part in the settlement which has broken the deadlock in the Middle East. (ITV, Early Evening, 24 October 98)

After nine days of titanic negotiations it seemed the Americans had managed to broker a deal on a land for peace settlement that would break 19 months of deadlock. (Channel 4, News, 23 October 98)

Here is a discussion on the subject between a Channel 4 news anchor and a journalist on the state of the 'peace process' and its prospects:

Newscaster: And what is the Armageddon scenario? In other words if it does go wrong and people are saying it's pretty serious?

Journalist: It's serious. It just drags on. It seems to go on forever. These talks have been stalled for the last 18 months. They're going nowhere.

Newscaster: But on the ground people are saying it could be disastrous.

Journalist: On the ground people are getting angry, Palestinians are getting angry, Israelis are getting angry. Both sides are getting extremely angry, it never seems to quite boil up and boil over. But I think that this is extremely serious because what it means is that all the accords that were signed in Oslo, all those years ago, they really are going absolutely nowhere. (Channel 4 News, 21 October 1998)

This exchange offers a descriptive account letting viewers know that there are serious problems with the peace process and that this is intensifying anger on both sides. However it offers viewers no explanations. As previously noted, the Israeli argument that the breakdown in the peace process were caused by the failure of the Palestinian Authority to halt attacks by Palestinians was extensively reported by journalists. The Palestinian position that the Israelis had used the Oslo process to take more land and water and build settlements wasn't provided by journalists. There were four references claiming that the Oslo process hasn't achieved its objectives for either Palestinians or Israelis:

The peace process has been in a state of collapse for 19 months. Even if the Summit does produce an agreement it will be limited and fragile. It's almost impossible these days to find anybody Israeli or Palestinian who still has faith in the peace process. After four years it hasn't delivered peace or security for Israelis, or the land, dignity and self-determination that the Palestinians want. (BBC1, lunchtime & early evening news, 19 October 1998)

The previous Oslo deal was signed amid euphoria but then failed to deliver much freedom for the Palestinians or security to the Israelis. (ITV: 13:00, 23 October 98)

We'll have to see whether this is a turning point reviving the peace process or whether this is one good day in a process which for so long has been deeply wretched and has delivered nothing either to the people of Israel or the Palestinians. (BBC2: 22:30, 23 October 98)

These statements may be difficult for viewers, who lack detailed knowledge of the conflict, to understand. The journalists speak in a shorthand which assumes a high level of background knowledge that focus groups research suggests most audience members don't possess (Philo & Berry, 2004). Words like 'security', 'freedom', and 'self-determination' which are employed without explanation are only really comprehensible if you understand the history of the conflict and the ramifications of the military occupation. One of the reports above argues that the process 'has delivered nothing either to the people of Israel or the Palestinians'. This is a

questionable statement which ignores some of the central factors driving the continuance of the occupation. Although the Oslo process had failed to deliver security to ordinary Israelis it had allowed the Israeli state to appropriate more West Bank land, expand settlements in Jerusalem and across the occupied territories, monopolise the regions water resources on which Israeli industry is heavily reliant, and open up Arab markets to Israeli goods and services. There was one reference on Channel 4 that Israel at this summit may finally 'sign up properly to the Oslo Accords' (19:00, 23 October 98) and one reference on Channel 5 that 'Palestinians argue that peace is fragile because Israel hasn't even enforced what's already been agreed' (12:00, 22 1998). However these brief and cryptic comments needed to be expanded and explained. Journalists appear to be shying away from providing explanations as to why Palestinians had lost faith in the peace process.

Theme 4: Opposition/Attitudes to the Wye Accords

Coverage of opposition to the Wye Accords accounted for 10 percent of all coverage (138 lines out of 1417). Two thirds of this coverage (93 lines out of 138) dealt with the issue of Israeli settler opposition to the Accords, a fifth (29 lines out of 138) dealt with Palestinian opposition and approximately a tenth (16 lines out of 138) lumped Palestinian and Israeli opposition together as in the examples below:

They [delegates at the summit] all radiated optimism but they also warned that opponents of peace Israeli and Arab might use violence to try to destroy what they had achieved. (BBC1, Early Evening News, 24 October 1998)

In both camps zealots will do their damndest to bring down the peace process as it continues to unfold. Islamic terrorists on the one side fighting what they call a holy war, nationalists bigots and ultra-religious fundamentalists in Israel's midst. (BBC2, Newsnight, 23 October 1998)

Israel's security forces will now be braced for attacks from either hardline Jews or Palestinian extremists who will both seek to destroy the deal by protest or violence even as it's born. (ITV, Lunchtime News, 23 October 98)

Israeli settlers had opposed the Oslo Accords for two reasons. The first involved the claim that Israeli Jews had the right to settle anywhere in the occupied territories because the land were promised to their ancestors thousands of years ago by God. The second maintained that any return of land captured by Israel in the 1967 war would threaten both their personal security and the security of the entire Israeli state. Both of these arguments were represented in coverage. Journalists also discussed the power of settler groups, their political opposition to the Oslo process and their attempts to pressurise Netanyahu into not handing back any of the occupied territories. The potential threats to the security of Israeli settlers was emphasised by journalists visiting the homes of settlers and discussing their fears. Settlers were also permitted to make very contentious statements without being challenged by journalists as in two of the examples below:

Michael Kleiner- Knesset Member: I believe its a black day for Israel, a black day for the Jewish people if one knows history it reminds me of the days of the Munich agreement when Chamberlain came very happy with a piece of paper signed with Mr Hitler and later on everyone found out it was a terrible mistake. (Channel 4 News, 23 October 1998)

Benny Alon- Israeli Settler: BB Netanyahu established in this summit the Palestinian state and by this he risks not only the Jewish revival he risks the Jewish state of Israel's survival. (BBC1 Evening News, 23 October 1998)

Jewish settlers who held prayer demonstrations believe this land was given to them by God and their homes and their families already heavily guarded will be in danger if any more of it is turned over to the Palestinians. (BBC1 Evening News, 23 October 1998)

I was just at an Israeli settlement on the West Bank called Betel, they run the risk of being virtually isolated, virtually cut off under this agreement. Not surprisingly they are bitterly against it.(ITV Early Evening News, 23 October 1998)

Palestinian opposition to the Accords was motivated by many factors. Professor Khalil Shikaki (1999), the former director of the Centre for Palestine Research and Studies in the West Bank city of Nablus has argued that the demographic transformation of the occupied territories had led to a substantial shift in Palestinian public opinion during the five years between Oslo and Wye. Shikaki reports that when the Oslo process began in 1993 support for the process stood at approximately two thirds of the population but that ‘uncertainty about Israel’s intentions and prospects for establishing a Palestinian state led most Palestinians to support both continued negotiations and violence against Israelis’. By early 1996 in the wake of troop withdrawals support for the peace process had risen to 80 percent whilst support for attacks on Israelis had fallen dramatically to about 20 percent of the population. Support for militant Islamic and nationalist groups also slumped by half to less than 20 percent of the population. However the election of Netanyahu as Prime Minister which led to a further expansion in settlement activity resulted in a deterioration in all peace indicators by the time of Wye. Palestinian faith that the Oslo process would lead to the creation of a Palestinian state slumped to only 37 percent of the population, whilst only 31 percent of the population believed that the two sides would reach an agreement on final status issues. Support for violence against Israelis increased dramatically to approximately 50 percent of the population and this support was ‘equally widespread among men and women of all age groups and educational levels, and among residents of cities, villages, towns, and refugee camps, reflecting deep anger about Israel’s failure to honour its peace commitments’. Shikaki explains that support for armed violence against Israelis was not seen as an alternative to the peace process but as tactic designed to prevent further Israeli land appropriations and settlement building which in Palestinian eyes was making the proposed final status negotiations largely irrelevant:

Palestinian public opinion approved of diplomacy as a strategic choice while it supported armed attacks as a tactical response to perceived Israeli intransigence and broken promises... rather than viewing violence as an alternative to diplomacy, some Palestinians regard[ed] violence as a supporting tactic to improve the Palestinian negotiating position and to force Israel to stop creating facts on the ground that prejudge[d] the outcome of negotiations. (Shikaki, 1999)

In news coverage Palestinians who opposed the Oslo process were described as 'extremists', 'militants' or 'terrorists':

In Gaza the extremist group Islamic Jihad demonstrated against any compromise with Israel. They burnt a coffin meant to symbolise the peace process. The Palestinian Authority which controls Gaza has promised Israel they will stop demonstrations like this and arrest people who attack Jews. Sheik Ahmed Yasseem the leader of Hamas, the other hard-line Islamic group, said the new agreement might obstruct them for a while but they would fight Israel until freedom or martyrdom (BBC1 Evening News, 23 October 1998)

So far its the extremists on both sides who've done most to make their views on this agreement known. On the Gaza Strip Palestinian supporters of Islamic Jihad marched in the white shrouds of suicide bombers. A speaker declared that the struggle against Israel will continue. (ITV Evening News, 23 October 1998)

Yasser Arafat also has to overcome his normal opponents. Sheik Yaseem the leader of the militant group Hamas said he would just ignore today's accord. Anti-agreement demonstrators were out in Gaza expressing their habitual disapproval for the benefit of the cameras. But there is more than that profound despair amongst most Palestinians who believe that after two years of foot dragging president Netanyahu can't be trusted. (Channel 4 News, 23 October 1998)

It might be asked whether it is appropriate to use a term like 'extremist' if half the population supports such groups. The Channel Four journalist appears aware of this, when she adds that there is 'profound despair amongst most Palestinians who believe that after two years of foot dragging president Netanyahu can't be trusted' but this brief reference to the fact that scepticism to the peace process was widespread amongst Palestinians isn't developed. Many of the Palestinian grievances were not complicated or difficult to present. It viewed the Israeli settlement building programs, human rights abuses and the removal of the Palestinian population from East

Jerusalem as the opposite of what the Oslo process was supposed to achieve. Many Palestinians and some Israelis believed that the end of the Oslo process would not result in a viable sovereign Palestinian state but in the creation of Bantustans as used to exist in South Africa, a prediction that Hamas, Islamic Jihad the PFLP, and some Palestinian intellectuals, such as Edward Said, had made at the outset of the Oslo process in 1993 (see p.113-4). Shortly before the Wye Summit, Shlomo Ben-Ami, the Israeli historian and Ehud Barak's chief negotiator at the 2000 Camp David talks, wrote that 'in practice, the Oslo agreements were founded on a neo-colonialist basis, on a life of dependence of one on the other forever.' The peace agreements were designed to impose on the Palestinians 'almost total dependence on Israel,' creating 'an extended colonial situation,' which is expected to be the 'permanent basis' for 'a situation of dependence.' (Ben-Ami, 1998, cited in Carey, 2000:). In this context journalists' descriptions of Palestinians who opposed what was occurring as 'devoted to wrecking the peace process' (BBC 1, evening news, 20 October 1998) or 'the enemies of peace' (BBC 1, lunchtime news, 24 October 1998) could sound incongruous. It highlights the lack of a critical informed edge in reporting, and the tendency of journalists to accept at face value the American perspective on the integrity of the peace process. Alternative perspectives which questioned both the legitimacy and trajectory of the peace process were not present in coverage.

Sourcing and Reported Statements

Here I was interested in ascertaining whether there was an equivalence in the level of coverage offered to Israeli and Palestinian sources, and whether journalists proffered the perspectives of all sides equally when they reported statements from the different parties. To do this I tallied up the total space given to direct and reported statements from both sides. Three lines of direct statements would look like this:

Uzi Landau- Government MP: I believe that the minister has to halt these talks, go back home and make it clear to the Palestinians that we are prepared to negotiate with them but only on condition that they are negotiating really for peace above the table, and not standing behind terrorism under the table.

Whilst three lines of reported statements would look like this:

Journalist: A spokesman for Mr. Netanyahu said that it really reinforced the need for Israel to get strong and complete guarantees both in word and deed from the Palestinian side that they could control terrorism and they could provide security on the West Bank.

Figure 1. Lines of direct statements provided by Israeli, Palestinian and American sources..

Figure 1. Lines of direct statements from different parties.

	BBC1	BBC2	ITV	Channel 4	Channel 5	Total
Israeli	18	4	9	11	13	55
Palestinian	22	2	5	5	3	37
American	37	7	13	8	3	68

Overall Israeli sources were given fifty per cent more space than Palestinians, though both were eclipsed by American sources who were the most accessed particularly on the mass audience bulletins on BBC1 and ITV. Since the American representatives tended to support the Israeli positions this served to reinforce the imbalance in Israel's favour.

Figure 2. Reported statements from different parties

	BBC1	BBC2	ITV	Channel 4	Channel 5	Total
Israeli	26	4	5	5	5	45
Palestinian	19	2	1	2	1	25
American	9	7	0	6	0	23

The reported statements shown in Figure 2 again show that Israeli statements are overall reported almost twice as much as statements by Palestinians, which are given approximately as much space as American ones.

'Terrorism' and Descriptions of Violence

The choice of language is extremely important in indicating the social legitimacy, or lack of thereof, of different groups or positions. Terms used in conflicts, such as 'soldier', 'rebel', 'militant', 'insurgent', 'freedom fighter', 'resistance fighter', 'guerrilla' and 'terrorist' all imply different levels of social legitimacy and are likely to have important consequences for how viewers see those involved. In coverage important differences were evident in the terms employed to describe Palestinians and Israelis. Israelis were described as 'soldiers', 'civilians', 'settlers', 'right wing settlers', 'hardliners' and on one occasion, during a Newsnight broadcast, 'nationalist bigots and ultra-religious fundamentalists'. Palestinians were described as 'terrorists', 'Islamic terrorists', 'militants', 'Islamic militants', 'zealots', and 'hardliners'. Journalists from all channels except Channel Four described the Palestinians fighters opposing the occupation as 'terrorists'. This trend was particularly noticeable on the BBC:

Yes even before this bomb attack this was always going to be the stumbling block the reluctance of Israel to pull out of the West Bank, the 13 percent that they are negotiating about until the Palestinian Authority can provide guarantees that they can control the terrorists and it seems that this is exactly the sort of thing that Israel is dreading this sort of attack (BBC1, Lunchtime News, 19 October 1998)

The Middle East peace talks are in deep trouble tonight after a Palestinian terrorist hurled two grenades into a bus queue in Israel. (BBC1, Evening News 19 October 1998)

The Americans were frustrated that the Israelis were allowing that terror attack to shift the whole nature of these talks there were serious words between President Clinton and Benjamin Netanyahu about that last night. (BBC1, Early evening, 20 October 1998)

The Israelis will withdraw troops from a further 13 percent of the West Bank. They'll also release hundreds of Palestinians from Israeli jails. In return the Palestinians will adopt a security plan to arrest terrorists and crack down on anti-Israeli violence. (BBC1, Evening News, 23 October 1998)

The Middle East Peace talks are in serious difficulties tonight after a Palestinian terrorist hurled two grenades into a bus queue in Israel. (BBC2, Newsnight, 19 October 1998)

A swap of more Palestinian land occupied by Israel since 1967 in return for tougher Palestinian measures against Islamic terrorists... In both camps zealots will do their damndest to bring down the peace process as it continues to unfold. Islamic terrorists on the one side fighting what they call a holy war, nationalists bigots and ultra-religious fundamentalists in Israel's midst. (BBC2 Newsnight, 23 October 1998)

Meanwhile Israeli officials have seized on this latest terrorist attack as support for the tough line Israel has so far taken at the peace summit in the United States. (19 October 1988, ITV Lunchtime & Early Evening News)

Last minute negotiations are taking place in Maryland in America this evening to hammer out the final details of a Middle East peace deal. Here are the main points of the proposed agreement. A 13 percent Israeli troop withdrawal from the West Bank. The release of 750 jailed Palestinians by the Israelis and a timetable for Palestinians to arrest suspected terrorists (ITV, Early Evening News 23 October 1998)

The latest victims of the latest bloody effusion of Arab anger. Over 50 wounded were rushed to hospital after a callous terrorist grenade attack upon a crowded bus station... As the southern Israeli city of Beesheba reached its morning rush hour peak, a lone terrorist leapt from a car and hurled two hand grenades into the main bus station... The atrocity has cast a long shadow over the latest Middle East peace talks half a world away in Maryland... Bus stations have in the past been favourite targets for Hamas and other terror

groups opposed to deal making with Israel. (Channel 5, Lunchtime News, 19 October 1998)

Back in America President Clinton who has already spent 57 hours at the talks waits in Washinton, hoping to be called back to the talks if the two sides can conclude a deal on land and terrorism (Channel 5 Lunchtime News, 20 October 1998)

There are a number of problems with journalists using the label terrorist. Firstly it is so emotive that it can serve to demonise the accused to such an extent, that it can obscure both motives and possible resolutions. The conflict clearly has underlying political dimensions that have to be resolved if there is to be a settlement. However if journalists use words like 'terrorist' the danger is that these can be lost and the solution to the conflict get reduced to 'controlling the terrorists'. Amnesty International never use the words 'terrorism' or 'terrorist' in their literature (unless it is in inverted commas). Marie-Anne Ventoura an information officer for Amnesty International explained that this was partly because there was 'no internationally agreed definition of the term' (Email, 22 September 2004). She also claimed that Amnesty adopted the same reasoning as been taken by Ms Kalliopi Koufa, the Special Rapporteur of United Nations Sub Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, who noted in 2001

that the issue of 'terrorism' has been 'approached from such different perspectives and in such different contexts that it has been impossible for the international community to arrive at a generally acceptable definition to this very day' The Special Rapporteur also points out that 'the term terrorism is emotive and highly loaded politically. It is habitually accompanied by an implicit negative judgement and is used selectively.' The Special Rapporteur underscores the risk of mixing definitions with value judgements, which often leads commentators to qualify as 'terrorist' those acts they are opposed to, or to reject the use of the term when it relates to activities they support. (Email, 22 September 2004)

Instead of using the words 'terrorism' and 'terrorist' Amnesty specify when international human rights law has been violated and by whom. This is also more impartial because it means that both state and non-state actors can be held to account without prejudice. This is perhaps a tactic that journalists could adopt. This points to another problem in that there is a certain double standard in the way that human rights violations are reported by the media. Whilst journalists described Palestinian violence as 'terrorism', Israeli 'security measures', at the this time being largely carried out by the Palestinian Authority were described in very euphemistic language. However many Palestinians regarded these measures as 'state terrorism' and some commentators and human rights groups suggested that the Wye Memorandum would make them worse:

The most significant and innovative aspect of the Memorandum is its barely concealed call for state terror to achieve the goals of the US led program. That breaks new ground for international agreements. The memorandum emphasizes that the Palestinian security forces, which have a shocking record of torture and terror, must act to ensure the safety of Israelis. The CIA will supervise them as they carry out arrests, hold mock trials, collect arms, and 'criminalise' incitement against the agreements.(Chomsky, 1999: xvii)

Chomsky points to an Amnesty International reports on a history of major human rights violations committed by security forces (both Palestinian and Israeli) during the Oslo process:

Amnesty International published an assessment of the human rights situation since Oslo as the Wye Agreement was signed. AI estimates 1600 Palestinians routinely arrested by Israeli forces every year, half 'systematically tortured'. AI notes again as other major human rights organisations regularly have, that Israel is alone in having 'effectively legalised the use of torture' (with the Supreme Court's approval), determining that in pursuit of Israel's perceived needs 'all international rules of conduct could be broken' AI reports similar practices on the part of the Palestinian Authority, including execution of two Palestinians for 'incitement against the peace process'. The State Security Courts which conduct such abuses have been endorsed by the US State Department as demonstrating

‘Arafat’s commitment to the security concerns of Israel’ with the support of Al Gore. (1999: xvii)

This appears to be a persistent feature of coverage. In their examination of coverage of the Intifada, some two years later, Philo and Berry (2004) also found that news media sometimes used very different language when describing the activities of the two parties. Whilst the killing of two Israeli soldiers by Palestinians was describing using emotive language such as ‘lynch mob’ and ‘murder’, Israel launching rocket attacks from helicopter gunships on crowds of demonstrators was reported as ‘Israel still wielded a big stick’ (BBC1, 18:00, 4 October 2000). Some print journalists have also accused the news media of using more euphemistic language when referring to Israeli behaviour. Robert Fisk writing in the *Independent* noted that when Israel captures Palestinian fighters they are often taken away by the army and killed (17 April 2002). He points out that journalists, who are well aware of what is occurring, often refer to these actions as ‘mopping up’ exercises.

Another issue in relation to the use of language involved journalist’s descriptions of the legal status of the West Bank and Gaza. In most instances journalists did describe the territories as being ‘occupied’. However in three bulletins a BBC1 reporter refers to the West Bank as being ‘disputed’ territory (BBC1 Lunchtime, Early Evening & Evening News 19 October 1998). Channel Five journalists also referred to the territories as ‘disputed’ on two occasions (Channel 5 Evening News, 23 October 1998 & 24 October 1998). The distinction here is important, ‘disputed’ territory implies that the legal ownership of the West bank and Gaza strip is unclear, whilst ‘occupied’ indicates that the territory is Palestinian and the Israeli presence there is illegal. This seems strange since the official British government position (like almost all other governments) is that the territories are ‘occupied’, not ‘disputed’.

This content analysis has pointed to a situation where journalists seem able to more easily present the Israeli perspective on most aspects of the conflict than the Palestinian perspective. In the next chapter I will examine why this might be so.

Chapter 4

Productions Factors in the Reporting of the Israel-Palestine Conflict

Years of experience have taught me that one should never venture an opinion, favourable or unfavourable, on events concerned in any way with Israel. Any attempt at a detached view opens the way for letters, telegrams, personal exasperations and, above all, telephone calls on what the late Sir Lewis Namier called 'the terror by telephone.' The only safe course is never, never, never to have any opinion whatsoever on the Middle East.

AJP Taylor, *London Review of Books*, 17 November 1982.

Here I will relate the theoretical issues discussed in chapter one to the specific problems encountered by journalists reporting on the conflict.

Time Constraints, New Technologies and Commercial Pressures

Journalists operate in a commercial and highly competitive environment in which there are time constraints, which can make it a challenge to provide the necessary level of context or historical background. This is made all the more difficult for journalists when they are dealing with an area like the Israel-Palestine conflict which is uniquely controversial. Journalists have commented that it a challenge to provide context and background when time is short, and the historical record is fiercely contested by the different parties. The Channel 4 journalist Lindsey Hilsum has suggested that:

There are two problems...how far back do you go is one and the other is with a conflict like this, nearly every single fact is disputed...I think, 'Oh God the Palestinians say this and the Israelis say that' and I have to, as a journalist- make a judgement and I say this is what happened and it's quite clear and there are other things where I wasn't there and I didn't see it with my own eyes. I know it's a question of interpretation so I have to say what both sides think and I think sometimes that stops us from giving the background we should be giving, because I think well, bloody hell, I've only three minutes to do this piece in and I'm going to spent a minute going through the arguments. (cited in Philo & Berry, 2004: 245)

The emergence of new technologies and television formats also seems to have had important repercussions. The proliferation of new digital channels and in particular the arrival of 24 hour news channels have been cited as important changes affecting the way journalistic operate. Some have argued that the proliferation of new channels have meant that journalists now spread themselves more thinly, further reducing the time available for researching stories and providing context:

Part of the problem is just the way the news medium works nowadays – where you are geared up to having constant twenty-four hour news and you get the feeling that some of the journalists on the spot are spending more time in front of a camera because they have to do fifteen different TV news programmes and four different radio programmes, than they are actually finding out what's happening in the story, and that means we do not get as much analysis, as much colour, as much depth in what's going on. You get moment by moment repetition. (Photographer, cited in Philo & Berry, 2004: 244)

Others have suggested that the advent of 24 hour news has meant that controversial views can be shunted to the margins of programme schedules where they are unlikely to reach many viewers. The former BBC correspondent Tim Llewelyn has suggested that the BBC has marginalized the Palestinian perspective in this manner:

The BBC can banish the awkward squads who might raise (or answer) real questions about the Middle East to the watches that end the night. Critics who say that the Palestinian or Arab view has not be aired can be referred to the World Service at 3.00am, or News 24 at 6:00am, and so on. (Llewelyn, 2004: 227)

Others have pointed to how the progressive relaxation of media regulation over the last two decades has affected the climate journalists operate in. Greg Lanning, an experienced documentary producer, has argued that such regulatory changes have led to the creation of a more competitive and rating driven broadcast culture, and that extended into all aspects of the schedule including news, current

affairs and documentaries. Lanning maintains that even the BBC, which is supposed to be isolated from such commercial strictures, was under pressure to maintain at least a 30 percent audience share in order to justify the licence fee, and this inevitably led programmers to seek material that was immediate and dramatic, at the expense of providing context or analysis. Lanning also pointed to the effects of new media monitoring technologies which allow broadcasters to ascertain the exact point in programmes when viewers switch channels:

We are coming under tremendous pressure to make the first five minutes of programmes quick, irresistible... We always used to have hooks but now you can't let the pace drop until you are well into the programme because they are really scared that people will change channel. You should ask Channel 4 to show you their meters. They can tell you where people leave the programme and where they go, and they do that for every program now. So they can tell you that after 90 seconds you mentioned the Bosnian war and everyone went to Delia Smith or something. That's what is driving it [programme production] (Interview, Greg Lanning, 2 November 1999)

The BBC's George Alagiah has also spoken of the effects that such monitoring equipment has had at the Corporation's news service. Alagiah claims that according to the BBC's meters, approximately three million viewers change channel during the first minute of BBC1's early evening bulletin. This he suggests is why editors are 'constantly' telling journalists that 'the attention span of our average viewer is about twenty seconds' and that broadcasters must seek to 'grab' them with arresting material (cited in Philo & Berry, 2004: 211). This in part explains the tendency for broadcasters to emphasise the dramatic at the expense of the analytical.

Cultural Preference, Sourcing and Public Relations

Most international journalists covering the Israel-Palestine conflict are stationed in West Jerusalem and have close links with the Israeli public relations machine. In contrast, there are very few journalists stationed in the occupied territories. Tim

Llewelyn suggests that makes it more difficult for reporters to understand the reality of military occupation and hence the Palestinian perspective:

The news people should move people out of West Jerusalem. It should base a news team in the West Bank- not just some luckless stringer but a senior, known correspondent who can force his or her way onto the main bulletins (what the BBC likes to call a 'brand' reporter). Here the reporters will get to feel what daily life under occupation is like, live it and empathise with the people crushed under it, as news crews lived the invasion of Baghdad or as we experienced the Israeli invasions and occupation of Lebanon- from the inside, not just down there on a visit. (2004: 229-230)

He also argues that the inability of journalists to cover the Palestinian perspective is partly a function of a cultural preference in that Israelis are seen as closer culturally to Europeans, and partly because state actors with their attendant prestige and trappings are seen as more important and credible sources than the spokespersons of what is still a resistance movement:

To a westerner sitting at a screen in London a dead or suffering Arab in the rubble of a bazaar is more remote than a dead or suffering Israeli in a shopping mall with a Wal-Mart in shot; studios favour good English-speakers rather than men with heavy accents; producers like quality sound and vision. It is a presenter's inclination, in many cases, to take more seriously a representative of a state and an authority, a uniform or a dark suit, than a denizen of what is, after all, not quite a state but still a national revolutionary and resistance movement, a man perhaps in a *keffiyeh* or a militia uniform, speaking in poor English or being translated or subtitled. (2004: 229)

A current senior BBC executive has also suggested that cultural preference plays a strong role in how 'London-based British journalists who are not themselves Middle East specialists' see the conflict. Their 'mind-set' he suggested could be:

Summed up like this: (i) Israel is a liberal democracy, like the UK, with a free press, freedom of speech and frequent elections in which governments are

defeated; (ii) the Palestinians say they want their own state, they were offered it at Camp David and rejected it; (iii) throwing stones at tanks is one thing, but suicide bombs on buses and in cafes is something else and places them beyond the pale. (Letter, 9 July 2004)

Some might question the characterisation of Israel as a 'liberal democracy like the UK' in light of reports produced by human rights groups and the United Nations. It is also interesting that the executive claims that journalists were likely to blame the Palestinians for not accepting what was offered at Camp David. The events of Camp David are highly contested (see Philo & Berry, 2004: 83-86), but London based journalists, according to the BBC executive, appeared far more likely to accept the Israeli perspective. Similarly the perspective on the use of violence is revealing. Human rights groups have pointed to serious breaches of international law (including war crimes and crimes against humanity) committed by both sides in the conflict but it seems that violence committed by Palestinians is viewed in a different light than that committed by Israelis.

Israel also appears to have a most more developed public relations operation. A number of journalists have commented on the professionalism and effectiveness of the Israeli PR machine. Jim Hollander, chief photographer for Reuters in Jerusalem has remarked on how 'savvy' Israeli officials are in getting their side of the story across to the foreign press corps: 'The Israeli officials are very literate and very professional in presenting their points of view and availing themselves to the media' (cited in el-Nawawy & Kelly, 2001: 102). Some journalists have also commented that the Israeli PR machine operated by the Netanyahu administration was especially forceful in getting its views across. Lyse Doucet, a Canadian reporter for the BBC, notes that the Israeli public relations machine is unrivalled in the Middle East and that Binyamin Netanyahu, whose background is in PR, is the 'ultimate spin-doctor' (cited in el-Nawawy & Kelly, 2001: 102). Likewise, Nicolas Tatro, the bureau chief for Associated Press in Jerusalem, has commented that:

Each Israeli government is different; they all flood us with information, but this current government [the Netanyahu administration] has been more aggressive in presenting its point of view. It very much has an edge to it. The

rhetorical factor is much higher than it has been since the early days of the Begin government. (cited in el-Nawawy & Kelly, 2001: 102)

This proactive approach involving ‘flooding’ journalists with information emphasising your perspective, is not matched by anything comparable on the Palestinian side. Edward Said claims that during the Al-Aqsa intifada the Israeli public relations operation was employing numerous proactive strategies to get the Israeli message across, helped by many pro-Israel supporters in publishing and the wider media:

Never have the media been so influential in determining the course of war as during the Al-Aqsa Intifada...Israel has already poured hundreds of millions of dollars into what in Hebrew is called *hasbara*, or information for the outside world (hence, propaganda). This has included ...lunches and free trips for influential journalists...bombarding congressmen- and women with invitations and visits; pamphlets and most important, money for election campaigns; directing (or, as the case requires harassing) photographers of the current intifada into producing certain images and not others...training commentators to make frequent references to the Holocaust and Israel’s predicament today; many advertisements in the newspapers attacking Arabs and praising Israel...Because so many powerful people in the media and publishing business are strong supporters of Israel, the task is made vastly easier. (Said, 2001)

The *Independent*’s journalist Robert Fisk has also commented on how the proactive approach involving a constant flow of information from PR professionals to journalists can help to set news agendas:

The journalists’ narrative of events is built around the last thing someone has said and the last thing, given the constraints of time and the rolling news machine, that they have heard on the agency wire. So what you would find on television in the last few weeks is that every time an Israeli statement was made, it was pushed across at the Palestinians. So the Israelis would say: ‘Can Arafat control the violence?’ and instead of the television reporters saying:

‘Well that’s interesting, but can the Israelis control their own people?’ the question was simply taken up as an Israeli question and became part of the news agenda. There seemed to be no real understanding that the job of the reporter is to analyse what’s really happening, not simply to pick up on the rolling news machine, the last statement by one of the sides. And given the fact that the Israelis have a very smooth machine operating for the media, invariably what happened is, it was Israel’s voice that came across through the mouths of the reporters, rather than [having] people who were really making enquiries into both sides and what both people were doing. (*The Message* BBC Radio Four, 20 October 2000, cited in Philo & Berry, 2004: 247)

In Britain the Israeli embassy has been a significant player in setting the media agenda. The *Independent* has reported that the ‘Israeli embassy in London has mounted a huge drive to influence the British media’, and cited comments from the embassy’s press secretary that

London is a world centre of media and the embassy here works night and day to influence that media. And in many subtle ways, I think we don’t do a half bad job, if I may say so... We have newspapers that write consistently in a manner that supports and understands Israel’s situation and its challenges. And we have had influence on the BBC as well. (*Independent*, 21 September 2001, cited in Philo & Berry, 2004: 248)

In contrast some Zionists have argued that there are problems with Israeli public relations. For instance Joy Wolfe of the Women’s International Zionist Organisation has commented on the ‘inexperience’ of representatives from the IDF who have ‘very poor communications equipment and not even a proper speaking English translator who can put out a decent press release’ (cited in Philo & Berry, 2004: 246). However most commentators suggest that that the Israelis are far more skilled in this department than the Palestinians. A number of journalists have commented that the Palestinian public relations apparatus is amateurish and confused in comparison to the Israeli operation. A US journalist who ran a Jerusalem based news agency commented that:

Palestinian spokesmen are their own worst enemy. They often come across as boorish, the message is often incoherent. Official Palestine does have a method problem. They miss the essential points. Arafat is a one man show, he is almost always incoherent. (cited in Philo & Berry, 2004: 246)

Palestinian public relations also suffers from the disadvantage that the Israeli perspective is far more easily accessible through the English language versions of the Israeli press, whilst little of the Arab press is available in English. As Dr Toine Van Teeffelen, a Dutch human rights worker who lives in Bethlehem notes:

Arab newspapers appear only in Arabic while some major Israeli newspapers (*Jerusalem Post*, *Haaretz*) appear in English, thus allowing for a daily stream of Israeli-oriented reports and analyses easily accessible through the internet. In fact, most western journalists are more familiar with the realities of occupation through the critical accounts of the Israeli *Haaretz* journalists Amira Hass and Gideon Levi than through accounts from the Palestinian or Arab press. (Van Teeffelen, 2003)

Other journalists have argued that the lack of a Palestinian perspective is not just a function of poor Palestinian public relations, but is also related to an unwillingness on the part of some broadcasters to prominently feature some of the more articulate Arab spokespersons:

The BBC has been plied with list of suitable people by organisations such as the Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding, the Arab League, individual embassies and private people, only for these lists to be ignored. Whether this is through inefficiency or deliberation, it is hard to say. I do know for example that the Ambassador for the Arab League had, between January 2003 and the end of the Iraq war in early April, appeared once on BBC TV; a colleague of mine who is one of Britain's most articulate and intelligent Palestinian spokespersons is missing almost completely from mainstream BBC television and rarely heard on domestic radio. (Llewelyn, 2004: 224-5)

There does seem to be some evidence that Israeli public relations did set the media agenda, in the manner described by Fisk above, during the coverage of the Wye Accords. As already noted, there were essentially two explanations about why the peace process was stalled. The Netanyahu administration argued that the central problem was that the Palestinians wouldn't control the 'terrorists' and disarm Palestinians. The Palestinian position was that the peace process was being manipulated so as to allow the Israelis to take more land, build more settlements, and effectively re-package rather than end the military occupation. Whilst the official Israeli perspective was featured extensively in reported statements, the Palestinian view was largely absent.

Pressure, Intimidation and Accusations of Anti-Semitism

In chapter one I discussed work by Mayhew and Adams which suggested that the BBC was under intense pressure from Israeli officials and lobby groups during the 1970s. Journalists have suggested that thirty years later little has changed. The BBC bureau chief in Jerusalem, Andrew Steele, has spoken of the extensive monitoring capabilities of the official Israeli public relations operation and the pressure this can create:

We fairly regularly get an official summons from one side or the other to explain our actions. I would say the frequency is higher on the Israeli side, but that possibly is a reflection on the size and sophistication of their publicity machine. They are able to monitor every single word that we say- someone sits at the Israeli Foreign ministry watching BBC World 24 hours a day. If they ever have an issue about a story, they have a taped transcript of what we said and they can quote it back verbatim. They are completely open about this and even give tours of their monitoring facility. One person watches Sky News, another CNN and another the BBC [the three international 24-hour news channels broadcast in Israel]. We are very aware of the pressure.

(Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture, 2003, vol. 10, 2)

Sometimes the pressure can involve attempts to have journalists removed if they produce critical coverage or fail to report stories which the Israeli press office wants covered. In April 2004 Chris McGreal reported on a letter sent by Natan Sharansky, Israel's minister for Diaspora affairs to the BBC accusing Orla Guerlin of anti-Semitism and 'total identification with the goals and methods of the Palestinian terror groups' for questioning Israeli motives in their handling of a 16 year old would be suicide bomber. He noted that this came at a time when a number of foreign news bureaus had complained about pressure from the Israeli press office:

The letter comes as several foreign news organisations complain of increasing government pressure to curtail critical coverage or to report stories Israel believes help identify the Palestinian conflict with global Islamist terrorism. Officials have presented editors with dossiers on individual reporters and singled out organisations such as Sky News for allegedly having an anti-Israel agenda. The Tel Aviv press has called for the expulsion of correspondents from Sky, the *Times* and several French papers for failing to cover a story the government mobilised embassies worldwide to get into the media last month. (*Guardian*, 1 April 2004)

McGreal also reported that 'CNN sources say the network has bowed to considerable pressure on its editors' and that 'Israeli officials boast that they now have only to call a number at the network's headquarters in Atlanta to pull any story they do not like'. This accusation was later denied by CNN. The BBC bureau chief in Jerusalem, Andrew Steele has also spoken of the pressure that the corporation is under from organised lobby groups:

The pressure is enormous. And not just from our audiences in the UK. Because the BBC is broadcast in Israel, the West Bank, Gaza and everywhere else, every pressure group in the world is on our case. I have never had as many emails as I get here. People don't just phone up to complain, they know how to get their complaint noticed in a way that means we actually have to address it, which is incredibly time-consuming. (*Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture*, 2003, vol. 10, 2)

In the United Kingdom there also exist a number of well resourced lobby groups who attempt to influence the media agenda. The Britain Israel Communications and Research Centre (BICOM) is one of the most prominent lobby groups working in the United Kingdom. In its mission statement the organisation says that its objective is ‘to bring about a significant shift in opinion in favour of Israel amongst the general public, opinion-formers and the Jewish community’. To achieve this the organisation engages in numerous activities including ‘operating a fully functioning media centre, providing real-time briefings and high quality in-depth research, publishing daily and weekly briefing of media coverage on Israel with analysis, and organising and delivering visitor programs for key politicians, academics and journalists’ (BICOM website). In October 2002 Stephen Bates reported that BICOM had hired both Stanley Greenberg, former pollster and advisor to Bill Clinton, Tony Blair and Ehud Barak, and Frank Lutz, former advisor to George Bush, Silvio Berlusconi, and Rudy Giuliani (*The Guardian*, 12 October 2002). The report cited comments from Lee Petar, the acting director of BICOM, that ‘we are looking at ways to sharpen the message and to choose the right people to do it. To get the world's best professionals - and these are the world's best professionals - you have to pay the top price.’

All of Britain’s three major political parties also have internal pro-Israel lobby groups. The Labour Friends of Israel (LFI) claims to be ‘one of the largest interest groups within the Labour party’ that can call on ‘wide support from MPs, MEPs and Peers’ (LFI website). There is also the affiliated Trade Union Friends of Israel (TUFU) which arranges trips to Israel for trade union delegates. The organisation claims that its ‘packed annual lunches at the TUC congress’ were able to attract ‘over 200 people and leaders of the largest trade unions and in particular TUC General Secretary John Monks’ in 1997 (TUFU website). The Conservative Friends of Israel (CFI) claim to have the support of many MPs including senior cabinet members, and argues that ‘much of the reason for this is due to the diplomatic and behind the scenes operation of CFI.’ The CFI organises many events at each year at the Houses of Parliament involving journalists, Peers, MPs and visiting dignitaries from Israel. The *Observer* reported that ‘for those working for organisations perceived as being biased against Israel these can be uncomfortable affairs’. Members of these lobby groups frequently claim that the media is biased against Israel. For instance the Conservative MP Gillian Shephard has argued that:

Let's not suggest that Israel feels under siege. And it literally is. That is what drives the feeling of ultra-sensitivity. They feel that there is a bias and there is a conspiracy against them. There is a perception that Israelis are portrayed as instigating the problems and that the historical context of the threat against them is forgotten. There is a feeling too that Israel- which is a tiny island of democracy amid much less democratic neighbours- never gets enough credit for what it has achieved. (*Observer*, 17 June 2001, cited in Philo & Berry, 2004: 250)

Others go further and claim that the media itself is anti-Semitic. The *Daily Mail* columnist Melanie Phillips has repeatedly levelled this charge against the British media:

Coverage of Israel is obsessive and disproportionate, and marked by a hysteria and malice not applied to any other conflict. And it cannot be divorced from the overt Jew-hatred that has now surfaced in Britain and Europe, particularly the give-away calumny of world Jewish power. The claim that Jews conspire to dominate the world is one of the oldest tropes of classic Jew-hatred. Astonishingly, claims made by the European Left are not far removed. It repeats claims that the 'powerful Jewish lobby' is now running American foreign policy. (*The Observer* 22 February 2004)

Tim Llewelyn has suggested that the BBC is particularly sensitive to accusations of anti-Semitism, and would rather avoid having to answer the charge. The pressure from lobby groups, he maintains has led the corporation to tone down any criticism and avoid using terms like 'ethnic cleansing' which could generate pressure:

They [the BBC] know that in the case of Israel the use of the term ethnic cleansing would bring down hell on their heads and the BBC are extremely nervous about Israel. They have a big bureau there, they've been threatened already by the Israelis with being turfed out. They're under constant pressure, the phones ring all the time, the Israeli lobby here know exactly who to ring

and how to pester, how to persist and who to get at and of course people in positions like that, executives in public service corporations like the BBC are extremely nervous they don't like this and they don't want to be accused of anti-semitism however false the charge may be...and so they play it safe they play it carefully. They are public servants and that's the way they respond. (Interview, 16 April 2004)

Journalists have also been personally targeted for abuse by lobby groups. Some have spoken of the hate mail they receive, after they have written stories, questioning Israeli policy. It has also been suggested that the quantity of hate mail received by journalists has increased greatly with the advent of electronic mail. The *Guardian's* reader's editor Ian Mayes has commented on the rise of the 'electronic lobby' and noted how organised email campaigns 'can mean two or three hundred organised emails piling into a queue in the paper in the space of a few hours and threatening to clog up the works.' (*Guardian*, 31 March 2001). He suggests these organised campaigns 'are perceived by most of those on the receiving end, not as the bearers of reasonable argument but as bullying and inhibiting to real debate.' Mayes points out that although there is an organised pro-Arab or pro-Palestinian lobby it 'is not on anything like such a large scale' as the pro-Israel operation. The *Independent* journalist Robert Fisk has also spoken of the hate mail addressed to both himself and the newspaper:

The *Independent's* web-site received an e-mail suggesting that I was a paedophile. Among several vicious Christmas cards was one bearing the legend of the 12 Days of Christmas and the following note inside: 'Robert Fiske (sic) – aka Lord Haw Haw of the Middle East and a leading anti-semite & proto-fascist Islamophile propagandist. Here's hoping 2002 finds you deep in Gehenna (Hell), Osama bin Laden on your right, Mullah Omar on your left. Yours, Ishmael Zetin.'...Almost anyone who criticises US or Israeli policy in the Middle East is now in this free-fire zone. My own colleague in Jerusalem, Phil Reeves, is one of them. So are two of the BBCs' reporters in Israel, along with Suzanne Goldenberg of the *Guardian*. (*Independent* 14 May 2002)

In these campaigns Jews who criticise Israel appear to have been subjected to particular abuse. In early 2004 Brian Whitaker reported on the case of Deborah Fink, a singer and music teacher living in London. Fink, who was a member of Just Peace UK, a predominately Jewish group which campaigns for an end to the Israeli occupation and the creation of an independent Palestinian state, had organised an alternative Christmas carol concert in which traditional carols were sung with new words, some questioning the occupation. There followed a 'deluge of hateful emails':

One came from a rabbi in New York, informing her: 'Your soul, my dear, is petrified and lost.' Another said, menacingly: 'Hitler killed the wrong Jews.' Yet another - ostensibly from a Jewish doctor of medicine in the US - elaborated on the Holocaust theme. 'Too bad Hitler didn't get your family,' it said. 'With six million Jews dieing [sic] 60 year [sic] ago it's a shame scum like you somehow managed to survive.' (*Guardian*, 19 January 2004)

Many of the letter writing campaigns are organised via the internet by activists. One organisation honestreporting.com, which claims to have 12,000 subscribers, has claimed that its letter writing campaigns have directly influenced newspaper coverage. After the *Evening Standard* art critic Brian Sewell had written an article calling on Israel to 'become a multicultural society' and stop using the Holocaust to justify unacceptable behaviour, honestreporting.com mounted a campaign. 'The next day, [we] sent out a letter to subscribers.' Standard articles recorded 'a wave of complaints... hundreds of Jewish readers have written in'. Then 'after more pressure' there followed a pro-Israel article by Simon Sebag-Montefiore. 'This is an example of what we can do.' (cited by David Leigh in the *Guardian*, 22 February 2001). Other attempts to influence the media agenda have been carried out in a more subtle manner. David Hirst has written of the Middle East Media Research Institute (Memri) which distributes its Arab and Jewish translations from the Middle East to thousands of journalists, diplomats, politicians and activists. The organisation which presents itself as an impartial translation service is run by Colonel Yigal Carmon, a former advisor on terrorism to two former Israeli prime ministers, and half Memri's staff are former Israeli intelligence agents. Hirst notes that Memri is highly selective in its

choice of translations choosing the most ‘rabid and outrageous’ anti-western and anti-semitic statements from Arab speakers. Hirst claims that that Memri never produces translations of extreme statements from fundamentalist Jewish groups and that ‘its tendentious choice of material casts the Arab world in a much worse light than that discourse taken as a whole could reasonably justify’ (2003: 77).

Press Coverage

Many studies examining the operation of broadcast news organisations have noted that much news gathering is not proactive but structured around various pre-determined routines. For instance all news organisations utilise what is known as a ‘news diary’ where significant future events such as state visits, elections, legislation, and the release of official reports are pre-logged and anticipated. Similarly what appears in the broadsheet press is also important in determining the content of television news. If a story or perspective is reported in the broadsheets it acts as a marker highlighting it as a potential area of coverage for television news. It also imparts the story or perspective with a sense of legitimacy and credibility. If it has been reported in the broadsheets it becomes a story ‘worth covering’. Conversely if a story or perspective has not been covered by the broadsheet press, it may be more difficult for a journalist to convince his editor that it is a legitimate piece of news. As the Glasgow Media Group have noted:

Two other key factors in routine journalistic practice are the general reliance on the press to define the parameters of an ‘acceptable’ story plus the reliance on news services such as the Press Association to supply a large amount of basic news material. Journalists in television news to whom we spoke complained of the difficulties of initiating news stories unless something like them had already appeared in the press. Attempts by journalists to initiate new themes were met by the question, ‘where are the press cuttings on this?’ (Glasgow Media Group, 1985: 2)

There have been claims in the media that the two highest circulation British broadsheets employ editorial policies which are strongly supportive of Israel, and that

journalists have been discouraged from airing the Palestinian perspective. In September 2001 Sam Kiley a journalist at *The Times* resigned from the publication, claiming that his reports had been subject to pro-Israeli censorship. In an interview in the *Evening Standard* he pointed to the friendship between Rupert Murdoch and Ariel Sharon and the press baron's extensive investments in Israel. He maintained that this led executives to rewrite copy so as to be favourable to Israel:

The Times foreign editor and other middle managers flew into hysterical terror every time a pro-Israel lobbying group wrote in with a quibble or complaint and then usually took their side against their own correspondent (cited in *The Guardian*, 5 September 2001)

He also claimed that he was told 'not to refer to 'assassinations' of Israel's opponents, nor to 'extra-judicial killings or executions'. On one occasion when he interviewed an Israeli army unit responsible for killing a 12 year old Palestinian boy, he claimed that he was told to file the report without mentioning the dead boy. He concluded that 'no pro-Israel lobbyist ever dreamed of having such power over a great national newspaper'.

Similar claims have been made in relation to Britain's highest circulation broadsheet, *The Daily Telegraph*. In a letter to the *Spectator*, three writers from Conrad Black's Telegraph group argued that Mr Black's strong pro-Israeli views made it impossible for any journalist to cover the Palestinian perspective (cited in the *Guardian*, 16/3/2001). They pointed to a strongly worded attack by Black on a *Spectator* journalist who had criticised Israel, as well as a blanket condemnation of the *Independent*, *Guardian* and BBC, who according to Black were guilty of propagating pro-Palestinian propaganda. The writers argued that such attacks made it difficult for editors or journalists on his publications to air opposing views.

Lack of Specialist Knowledge

To produce critical informed journalism requires journalists with a deep knowledge of the issues they are writing about. However in an area such as the Israeli-Palestine conflict, which is complicated and contested, it has been suggested

by a senior BBC executive that many of the Corporation's London based journalists may lack a firm grounding in the history of the conflict, and that this can adversely affect coverage:

My hunch is that you would find that many of the words, phrases, etc that reflect either ignorance or lack of balance were written in London, rather than by correspondents in the field. It might be an interesting exercise one day to seek to analyse the historical knowledge and understanding of TV newsroom writers and sub-editors, which I fear may not always be much greater than that of the viewers in your focus groups. On a matter of weeks ago, a senior BBC programme editor asked me if I could recommend a good Middle East history book, as how felt he had an inadequate grasp of the issues and background.
(Letter, 9 July 2004)

This certainly seems to back up the comments made by Kevin Williams in chapter one concerning the need for journalist training to incorporate in its remit some knowledge of world politics and history. If senior editors are worried about their grasp of one of the most covered stories in international news, this is likely to present problems.

Britain's 'Special Relationship' with the United States

Though it is sometimes argued that the Foreign Office is more pro-Arab than Israeli, the close political, economic and diplomatic links between the US and Britain, often referred to as 'the special relationship', are likely to have an effect on how journalists report the conflict. There was little in the coverage of the Wye Accords about the more controversial aspects of America's role in the conflict, such as its financing and diplomatic support for settlement building in the occupied territories. There was also no information about its supply of weaponry to Israel, much of which is provided free of charge. More recent research examining news coverage of the Al-Aqsa intifada also found that journalists tended to avoid discussing the more controversial aspects of America's role in the conflict (Philo & Berry, 2004). This appeared to leave viewers confused about motives. For instance, few understood that Palestinians might

be hostile to American involvement, because the US supplies Israel with weapons. Philo and Berry also found that ‘even those people who were concerned about how much explanation could be included in news programmes said that this was ‘the least’ they should be told (2004: 211).

So why do journalists avoid discussing the ‘American connection’? Previous research suggests that the tone of BBC journalism is partly shaped by pressures filtering in from senior politicians. In his ethnography of BBC news gathering in the 1970s Philip Schlesinger (1978) examined how the Corporation’s news output was ideologically tuned to conform to British foreign policy, through the editorial system and the vetting of personnel. The corporation, which had always had close links with MI5, employed an ex-army officer Ronnie Stonham, whose task was to weed out journalists with ‘subversive’ views who were then blacklisted. The vetting process was conducted in strict secrecy with no right of appeal (see also ‘Revealed how MI5 vets BBC staff’, *The Observer* 18 August 1985). Schlesinger also revealed how the minutes of meetings involving senior editors and the Director General demonstrated the pressures feeding into the top BBC hierarchy from politicians and organised lobby groups. Decisions taken in response to these pressures were then diffused downwards through the editorial system. Schlesinger notes that this top-down system of control is rarely perceived in this way by journalists because of a desire to maintain an image of autonomy and because decisions taken by upper management become taken up as personal decisions by those lower down the hierarchy. Coverage of certain ‘sensitive’ areas such Northern Ireland or official secrets were delegated to senior sub-editors who had shown conformity and could be trusted as a ‘safe pair of hands’. In contrast those who took controversial positions such as a sub-editor ‘who had insisted on damning the American presence in Vietnam’ were subject to a range of official or unofficial sanctions (1978: 151).

Tim Llewelyn suggests that the BBC will have picked up on New Labour’s attitude towards the conflict, and shaped the ‘tone of its correspondents’ and reporters’ coverage, and its presenters’ and producers’ attitudes accordingly: very cautiously, in lockstep as close as can be with the government and the policymakers at No.10 Downing Street’ (2004:228)

It is no secret that Blair is very close to Israel. His old crony and party financier, Lord Levy, has been rewarded with the post of special adviser on

Middle East matters. Lord Levy is a peer who has close contacts with Israel and a multi-million pound villa near Tel Aviv- his son David Levy worked in the office of Israel's former Justice Minister Yossi Beilin... The Blair vision of the Middle East- that the Americans have all the answers, but need a little gentle coaxing from Whitehall, that the Israelis are victims of terror, and 'terror' is our main universal enemy, that the Palestinians are their own worst enemies and must do what they are told- will have been sensed at the BBC and passed on down the line... The process of getting the boys in the front-line *into* line does not work by diktat from above but by hint and nudge and whispered word, almost, in such a very *English* way by extra-sensory perception (2004: 225-226)

The pressures that I have highlighted in this chapter have not created a situation where no criticism of Israel is possible in the media. Critical documentaries such as Channel Four's *The Killing Zone* (19 May 2004) and BBC's reports on Israel's nuclear weapons (*Correspondent*, 17 March 2003) and the Sabra and Shatilla killings (*Panorama* June 17, 2001) continue to be made and broadcast. However the complex mixture of economic, political and cultural factors indicated above do help to explain why journalists tend to find it easier to present the Israeli perspective.

Chapter 5 Conclusions

Six months after the start of the September 2000 al-Aqsa intifada Harpers magazine featured an article examining the public relations strategy employed by the Israelis. The piece featured comments from the Israeli government spokesperson Nachman Shai and Danny Yatom, the national security advisor under Ehud Barak. The title of the article was 'Fighting the Media War' and in it Shai commented that:

Prior to the Sharm el-Sheikh summit I put together a committee of ten to twenty Israelis to plot our media strategy in the United States. And I told them: we are losing the media battle and it is our job to put each of you on television to call the Palestinians liars. We have to win the media war to win the larger war. We designated one week for planning, rebutting the Palestinian position, and giving assignments to people. These were the top people - Itamar Rabinovich, Peres's top aides, former Rabin people, you name it - and we gave out assignments. Our purpose was to turn around American public opinion. We were very fortunate, because we aimed at putting our strategy into effect at Sharm el-Sheikh. And we succeeded, but like I said we were lucky. There were no Palestinian media people at Sharm el-Sheikh, and so we had the American media to ourselves. We gave interview after interview and they [the Palestinians] were very under-staffed. We should not underestimate our victory, in many ways, the media war will decide who is wrong and who is right in this struggle, and we must convince people that we are right. We have some major problems with the American media. There are many media outlets that understand our position, but there are others that are completely against us. We are especially upset at CNN. They have two Palestinian reporters, and they are very anti-Israeli. And we are putting real pressure on the heads of CNN to have them replaced with more objective pro-Israeli reporters who are willing to tell our side of the story. You know the importance of the media in molding public opinion, so we need your cooperation. We need our friends in the United States to counter the Palestinian allegations. We need to get our story out. (Harpers Magazine, May 2001)

Shai's comments reiterate some of the important themes and issues long highlighted by media researchers in discussions over the power and influence of the mass media. These include the importance of systematic propaganda and public relations as well as the significance of attempts to intimidate and pressure media outlets to toe a particular line. Shai certainly sees the public relations campaign as vital as evidenced by his comment that 'we have to win the media war to win the larger war'. The media thus serve as a site of ideological struggle where parties seek to win public consent for their own policies and perspectives, as well as to degrade the arguments of their opponents. In the midst of these propaganda wars stand journalists and news organisations whose job is it to somehow pick their way amongst the minefield of competing explanations and simplify a fractious and complicated reality for the viewers at home. The purpose of this research was to address how journalists approached this task when reporting on the Wye River Peace Accords signed in October 1998. Although the Oslo peace process was widely seen to be in crisis there were a whole series of competing explanations for the breakdown. The Israeli government stressed that the problems were related to 'terrorism' and the failure of the Palestinian Authority to prevent incitement and attacks against Israelis. The Palestinian delegation, on the other hand, were keen to stress that they had grave doubts about Israeli intentions. As one delegate interviewed on BBC1 had put it 'it is very clear there is no commitment to a genuine peace and that the process is being manipulated to continue Israeli control and to undermine Palestinian rights' (BBC 1, Evening News, 19 October 1998). There was also the position of the various groups both Israeli and Palestinian who opposed the Oslo process for a variety of reasons, and the somewhat ambiguous position of the United who was ostensibly acting as a peacemaker.

The results of the content analysis reported in chapter three indicated that there was a strong emphasis, especially on BBC1, on the security concerns of the Israelis at the expense of reporting on issues which were important to Palestinians. The Palestinian view that the security issue was being used to avoid returning occupied land, although expressed by Palestinian sources when given an opportunity to speak, was not picked up and elaborated on by journalists. In contrast the Israeli argument that the central problem was the Palestinian failure to curb 'terrorism' was frequently picked up on and explained to viewers. Palestinian 'terrorism' was presented by journalists on a number of occasions as the 'key issue' or 'stumbling blocking' to the

attainment of a peace agreement. Furthermore the highly controversial aspects of the 'security clampdown' which were heavily criticised by human rights groups at the time were not highlighted by journalists. The central issues for Palestinians including ending the occupation, curbing human rights abuses and resolving the status of Jerusalem and the future of the refugees were barely mentioned in coverage. This also ties in closely with previous research (Philo & Berry, 2004; Ackerman, 2002; Lowstedt & Madhoun 2002; Chomsky, 2000, 1999, 1996a, 1996b, 1993, 1992, 1991, 1988; Mayhew and Adams, 1975). Compounding this problem was the absence of historical context or information about the origins of the conflict in news bulletins. All of the major issues: Jerusalem, the military occupation, the settlements, refugees etc. are tied in to the events of 1948 and 1967. Without any knowledge of what occurred in these years it is very difficult to understand the motivations of Israelis and Palestinians. As Lindsey Hilsum noted in chapter four this is made especially difficult when the historical record is so fiercely contested and journalists are working under time constraints.

Another finding from the research was that journalists presented only one view of the peace process. This was that Israelis and Palestinians, helped along by Bill Clinton, were striving to reach a peace agreement but that extremists on both sides (the 'enemies of peace' BBC 1, lunchtime news, 24 October 1998) threatened to destroy their good work. However this was not how the peace process was regarded by many Palestinians, perhaps the bulk of the population. Some time after Wye the Israeli journalist Danny Rabinowitz reported in the Israeli press on a letter sent by Palestinian leaders, illustrating the gap between mainstream depictions of the peace process and how many Palestinians saw it:

One view, which is accepted by the majority of Israelis, considers Oslo a positive, symmetric process: an elected government in Israel is conducting peace negotiations with a Palestinian leadership that reflects the true interests of the Palestinian people. Pursuing this joint path will ultimately lead to a durable peace between the two peoples. The second view, which is asserted by the signatories to the letter, considers Oslo an inherently asymmetric process whose forgone conclusion is not only unfair, but also dangerous. The gist here is that Israel, which is strong, big, rich and backed by a superpower, is

conducting negotiations of a coercive nature with a weak Palestinian leadership that has sold out. (*Ha'aretz*, 19 March 2000)

Some Palestinians viewed the peace process as likely to lead not to an equitable settlement but to the creation of a series of South African style Bantustans, a prediction made at the outset of Oslo in 1993 (see p.113-4), and the belief gained more adherents with Israeli moves to change the demographics of the West Bank over the next five years. These included the doubling of the settler population, the seizure of more than 40 percent of the West Bank, and the creation a matrix of Israeli only roads across the West Bank which effectively cantonised the area and made it difficult for Palestinians to move any distance. It also severely damaged the economy. Journalists on a number of occasions spoke of the anger and frustration felt by Palestinians but did not, apart from on a single occasion, mention these major demographic changes that were generating resentment. This pattern of presenting Palestinians as motivated by hate or anger without explaining the factors behind their resentment was also found by Ackerman (2002) and Philo and Berry (2004) in their analyses of the al-Aqsa intifada.

The letter cited above by Rabinowitz also points to the remarkably ambivalent attitude between Yasser Arafat and the Palestinians in the occupied territories. Arafat's Palestinian Authority had been accused of corruption and human rights abuses and some Palestinians doubted that Arafat could be trusted to negotiate a fair settlement. In fact he had been declared a 'collaborator' by a number of prominent Palestinians including Edward Said (1996). More than a year before the Wye agreements the Israeli journalist Tanya Reinhardt had written in the Israeli press:

At the eve of the Oslo agreement, the PLO was in a serious crisis, whose centre was a growing resentment of Arafat's leadership, There were many reports in the press of public gatherings in the West Bank denouncing the lack of democracy, the dissociation of the Tunis group from the reality of occupation, and, especially, the complete control Arafat had over the budget and the finances. Arafat may have felt that the way to regain control is a sweeping agreement with Israel. Today it is already a public knowledge that in the circles of Rabin, the idea was formed that under these circumstances, it may be possible to extort Arafat into a complete surrender. The process in

which a brave national leader becomes a pathetic collaborating ruler, like Lahad of South Lebanon, is complex, but with a fixed script of pressure and bribery. (*Yediot Aharonot*, 4 July 1997)

However in news bulletins the only issue appeared to be whether Arafat could 'control the terrorists' amongst his people. This is certainly the official Israeli perspective. The lack of a more balanced account of how Arafat and the Oslo agreements were perceived by Palestinians was partly a result of the restricted range of sources used by journalists. As already noted Israeli and American sources were given more television access than Palestinian sources and their perspectives were more likely to be highlighted by journalists in the form of reported statements. Palestinian authority officials were the only Palestinians interviewed, apart from a single bulletin in which a young Palestinian mentioned that he couldn't move freely, and a reported statement from a Hamas leader who declared that the Palestinians 'would fight Israel until freedom or martyrdom'. The same was true in relation to Israelis interviewed by journalists. Israeli officials were most featured, followed by settlers and on one occasion Channel Four featured a representative of a British pro-Israel lobby group. The range of Israeli and Palestinian public opinion is much broader than this. Israel has a number of well developed peace and human rights organisations such as Meretz, Peace Now, Gush Shalom, Rabbis for Human Rights, B'Tselem and the Israeli League for Civil and Human Rights. However none of these were interviewed or featured in news reports. A brief interview with a member of an Israeli peace group might have offered a very different picture of the peace process. For instance nine months before Wye, Gush Shalom published a report on the progress of the Oslo process which was very different from anything featured in British news broadcasts:

The Netanyahu government has stopped the peace process and threatens to bury it altogether, putting all the blame on the Palestinians. It asserts that, while Israel has faithfully fulfilled all the provisions of the agreements, the Palestinians have systematically violated them. The Israeli media, nearly without exception, are aiding and abetting this propaganda. However, the facts are quite different: while the Palestinian violations are few and quite marginal, as clearly emerges from the pathetic document composed by government

secretary Danny Naveh, the contraventions by the Netanyahu government are systematic and substantial. (Gush Shalom, 1998)

This reliance on a narrow selection of powerful institutional sources appears a consistent feature of coverage in this area. Research conducted on the al-Aqsa intifada also found that official sources were routinely over-accessed in bulletins and this effectively meant that there was a wider level of debate featured in the Israeli media than on British television (Philo & Berry, 2004). Similarly the image of Israeli settlers also replicated the findings of Philo and Berry (2004). These tended to be presented as vulnerable to attacks from Palestinians, though journalists didn't explain why their presence might be resented by Palestinians. There was no mention that settlers had been censured by the UN and human rights groups for attacking Palestinians and taking their land, or that their presence in the occupied territories is considered by most countries as illegal under international law.

America's role in the peace process was also more contradictory than it appeared in coverage. Journalists presented an image of an American president working hard to bring two bitter enemies together and forge a peace. One journalist even questioned whether the pressure from the Americans had been so great that it might lead to a fracture in the relationship between Israel and the United States. However such coverage tends to overlook the fact that many members of the pro-Israel lobby were in senior positions in the Clinton administration including the two men who headed Clinton's Middle East negotiating team, Martin Indyk and Dennis Ross, both members of AIPAC, the most powerful pro-Israel lobby group in American politics. Some might also consider it contradictory to emphasise the American role as peacemaker whilst neglecting to mention that the US was arming one side, as well as providing economic and diplomatic support for settlement building, which many Palestinians thought was undercutting the possibility of a just settlement. Chomsky has argued that whilst reporting the conflict American journalists tend to accept at face value whatever the US claims to be doing, such as supporting peace, even when it may be actually carrying out policies which undermine that goal:

The most interesting element of the doctrinal framework is the notion of 'peace process' itself. That the U.S. and its Israeli partner have always sought peace is not in question: everyone seeks peace, even Hitler, Stalin, and Attila

the Hun. The question is: what kind of peace? In U.S. discourse, the term 'peace process' is conventionally used to refer to whatever the U.S. government happens to be doing, often undermining diplomatic efforts. That is dramatically true in the present case. For 25 years, the U.S. has stood virtually alone in rejecting two basic principles of the international consensus on a peace settlement: that Israel withdraw from the occupied territories in exchange for peace, and (from the mid 1970s) that Palestinian national rights be recognized in the West Bank and Gaza. (1996b)

However the close political, economic and military ties between Britain and the United States, meant that it was always unlikely that journalists themselves would question the dominant American perspective on what was occurring. As Philo and Berry have noted to 'explain in detail the rationale of those who oppose US policy is to court controversy. It is simpler to avoid explanations or to leave them to the margins of television and radio' (2004: 107). The problem with this approach is that viewers are likely to receive a partial and sometimes misleading account of events.

A final point to make about coverage was the tendency for journalists on all channels except Channel Four to go beyond merely reporting the Israeli perspective on 'Palestinian terrorism', but to actually endorse it. Groups such as Amnesty International have suggested, that the use of the expressions 'terrorism' or 'terrorist' can create problems. The organisation's view is that the terms are imprecise, emotive, politically loaded and employed selectively. For instance some Palestinians regard a number of Israeli actions such as extra-judicial killings and torture as 'state terrorism' but journalists do not endorse or even report on this perspective. An alternative course of action would be for journalists to report but not to endorse the use of such terms, and indicate when international law has been violated. This approach is more impartial and allows for a clearer legal and moral accounting.

News Coverage and Public Belief

The results from the content analysis indicated that television news was largely devoid of history and context, featured a preponderance of official Israeli perspectives at the expense of providing the Palestinian point of view, and tended to avoid explaining the ambivalent and contradictory position of the United States. How might

such coverage influence public knowledge in this area and can direct parallels be drawn between how the conflict is presented by journalists and how it is understood by viewers? Focus group and questionnaire research reported by Philo and Berry (2004) suggests there is evidence that it can. The authors found that television news was the key site on information about the conflict for over 80 per cent of those questioned and that those who were comparatively well informed (and tended to come from middle-class and professional backgrounds) augmented their knowledge of the conflict by reading books and broadsheet newspapers. Some viewers interviewed were openly disparaging about the lack of context in television news. One commented that:

There is no depth to it – television news more or less covers everything superficially. I think we are dumbing down. Someone has told the BBC that the average person has an attention span of less than two minutes and that is rubbish but they are buying into it. More and more it's all about 'How can we keep them watching – whether we are giving information or not?' I certainly wouldn't rely on BBC television news for anything that I thought was really important. (Middle class male focus group, cited in Philo & Berry, 2004: 210)

Some news editors have reacted defensively to accusations that television news fails to provide enough context when reporting on the conflict. For instance Roger Mosey, the head of BBC television news has argued that too much is expected of the medium:

Television is still the dominant medium of our age, and 36 million people a week watch BBC news. But if you printed a transcript of the Ten O'Clock News it would not fill one page of a newspaper like this: it is, inevitably, a brief digest of the day's events with as much analysis as we can manage. For the complete background you may need to go to a website or a newspaper or a book...news is an account of the world as it is and not as we want it to be, and television news is a starting point for our exploration of it and not the last word. (*Guardian*, 27 July 2004)

In an ideal world people most people might seek out information from alternative information sources but for the great bulk of the population television news remains their primary window on the world. This can be seen very clearly by comparing the

lack of context in news bulletins to audience understandings of the key events and issues in the conflict. The absence of historical background found in television news reports was strongly mirrored in the audience research studies. Philo and Berry (2004) found that few viewers were aware of the historical origins of the conflict or could name any of the region's wars. In the focus groups only 19 per cent were aware that the Palestinian refugees were related to the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. The lack of historical knowledge made it very difficult for viewers to understand the key issues in the conflict. So for instance, whilst a number of viewers expressed the opinion that 'land' was an issue, in practice there was a great deal of confusion about what this actually signified. One viewer expressed his surprise that the Palestinians had actually had land taken from them in the conflict:

The impression that I got was that the Palestinians had lived around that area and now they were trying to come back and get some more land for themselves – I didn't realize that they had actually been driven out, I just thought that they didn't want to live as part of Israel, and that the places they were living in they decided they wanted to make self-governed – I didn't realize that they had been driven out in wars previously. (Student group, Glasgow, cited in Philo and Berry, 2004: 216)

What this illustrates is that without some kind of understanding of a narrative structure viewers lack the ability to fit the major issues into an interpretive framework to help them understand what is occurring in the conflict. When for instance during the Wye Accords a BBC journalist stated that 'they haven't even started to tackle the most serious issues yet those include the future of Jewish settlements like this one, the future of Jerusalem, of Palestinian refugees and the shape of Israel's final borders', most viewers would not understand such a statement because they lack the historical knowledge to appreciate the salience of each issue in the overall context of the conflict. Philo and Berry (2004) found the absence of historical background left many viewers bewildered by the conflict and how it might be resolved. The lack of historical context also had another important and deleterious effect in that it led people to avoid news bulletins dealing with the conflict. Ironically broadcasters' desire to maximise audiences by prioritising dramatic scenes of violence and conflict over analysis, actually had the opposite effect in that it led many viewers to turn away

from what was perceived as an endless and incomprehensible procession of death and suffering.

There were also other areas where audience understandings closely mirrored the presence or absence of issues within news coverage. For instance, during coverage of the Wye Accords journalists did not explain the nature of the military occupation that the Israelis were imposing on the Palestinians or its consequences such as restrictions on movement and lack of access to clean water. There was also no mention of human rights abuses such as torture and extra-judicial killings that have been committed by the Israelis or the large number of United Nations resolutions condemning these and the illegality of the occupation. Since so many viewers rely on television news as their main source of information on the conflict it is perhaps unsurprising that so few were aware of such issues:

Given that so many did not know there was a military occupation, it is not surprising that the consequences of it for Palestinians were little understood. Even in groups that were comparatively well informed, such as middle class males in Glasgow, there was little knowledge of economic consequences such as those caused by the Israeli control of water. In the focus groups as a whole only 9 per cent were aware of this issue. There was little understanding of areas such as human rights – only two people in all the focus groups raised these as an issue. Even in groups that tended to be sympathetic to the Palestinians (such as low income males in London) there was some surprise when they heard that there were pass laws and identity cards which restricted movement. There was also no knowledge of the large number of UN resolutions, which have been passed, either those relating to the legality of the occupation or to human rights abuses in the territories (Philo & Berry, 2004: 218)

Strong parallels could also be drawn between media coverage and audience understanding of issues such as Israeli settlements and American mediation. Philo and Berry (2004) report that there was a strong tendency for viewers to see Israeli settlements in the manner in which they were presented in news bulletins, as small embattled communities subject to attack from Palestinians for no clearly identifiable reason. Few viewers interviewed in the focus groups saw the settlements as serving a

critical strategic role as part of the military occupation or were aware that they are widely seen as illegal under international law. Similarly only a minority of viewers were aware that the United States supplies Israel with economic and military support. Whilst many saw the United States as fulfilling a peace-brokering role, far fewer understood why Palestinians might distrust this mediation.

Overall audience research tends to suggest that many gaps in audience understandings are related to specific absences in television news coverage. The consequence of this appears to be that most viewers are badly informed, lack a basic understanding of the Palestinian perspective and are confused about the ways in which the conflict might be resolved.

Media, Power and Ideological Closure

In chapter one I outlined a number of factors which affected the production of news. These included commercial imperatives, sourcing, public relations, intimidation by government or private bodies, cultural assumptions and journalism training. A number of theorists have formulated models which incorporate some of these factors in order to address the question of the relationship between journalism and economic/political power (Milliband, 1973; Althusser, 1971; Murdock and Golding, 1979; Glasgow Media Group, 1975; Herman & Chomsky, 1988). In *The State in Capitalist Society* Ralph Milliband argues that the mass media play an instrumental role in providing the ideological justification for a particular pattern of class domination. He identifies three key factors that produce this outcome: the ownership and control of media, the economic and cultural effects of the mass media's reliance on advertising and pressure from Government and other parts of the state. Milliband argues from a strong structuralist position, rooted in political economy, which leaves little space for journalists to challenge (even if they had the inclination, which he suggest they mostly do not) the assumptions of the status quo:

Given the political and economic contexts in which they function [the mass media cannot fail to be, predominately, agencies for the dissemination of ideas and values which affirm rather than challenge existing structures of power and privilege....The notion that they can, for the most part, be anything else is either a delusion or a mystification (1973: 211)

Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model takes the three factors in Milliband's model and adds an organizational dimension by pointing to way in which relationships between institutional sources and journalists tend to filter out oppositional voices. Like Milliband, Herman and Chomsky see the media as primarily fulfilling the role of reflecting and legitimizing the present social order and the activities of the state. Also like Milliband, Herman and Chomsky see this outcome not as the result of deliberate intent or a conspiracy but rather as a consequence of the interplay of various structural factors, primarily rooted in political economy.

A rather different model of media filters was suggested by Richard Hoggart in the foreword to *Bad News*. Hoggart's model is more concerned with the constraints of the medium and the practices of journalism than with political economy. It is a formulation which is far less overtly ideological and functional than those offered by Milliband or Herman and Chomsky. Hoggart suggests that the 'news selects itself by four main filtering processes' (Glasgow Media Group, 1976: x). These are time and resource constraints inherent to the medium, 'news values', 'television values' and what Hoggart describes as the 'cultural air we breathe, the whole ideological atmosphere of our society, which tells us that some things can be said and that others had best not be said' (Glasgow Media Group, 1976: x). Hoggart was also critical of what he describes as 'high conspiracy theories' of the mass media which he suggests assume too great a degree of ideological closure:

But the basic inadequacy, even of the most subtle forms of 'high conspiracy theory' is that, useful and revealing though they can be, they miss the complexity of the matter if you hang onto them for too long. For in commercial democracies such as Britain the agenda is not *wholly* structured and the deviant items are not simply 'permitted variations', the repressive tolerances of an authority which is wholly in control in the background. Something sometimes escapes, precisely because the controls, explicit or implicit, are not complete, because the claims for objectivity and neutrality by the broadcasters- though often made too smugly and blandly- do also have behind them, in some people, a belief that the *effort* at objectivity and neutrality is important beyond all outside pressure (Glasgow Media Group, 1976: xii)

Hoggart here is alerting the reader to the potential slippage between how the powerful would wish to see issues reported and how they are actually reported in practice. We are, he suggests, not dealing with a completely rigid and closed ideological system, but a more complicated situation in which political and economic power confers significant advantages in ideological struggles but does not completely determine them. Commercial imperatives, organizational priorities and the journalistic ethos of 'impartiality' can all mediate this relationship and we should be aware of the potential complexities that are involved. In many ways Hoggart's criticisms of 'high conspiracy theories' are analogous to Schlesinger's (1990) criticisms of Stuart Hall's concept of 'primary definers'. In *Policing the Crisis* Hall et. al. (1978) had argued that powerful institutional sources are consigned the role of 'primary definers' who because of their privileged access to the media are able to set the terms of debate for issues. Those who then engage in the media debate must work within the framework that has been set down by the primary definers. Hall illustrated this by pointing to a debate about social disorder and immigration where he suggested the primary definition was that it was a 'problem of numbers'. He then showed how the debates around immigration were structured around the issue of numbers rather than drawing in alternative explanations such as white, working class racism. However as Schlesinger (1990) has argued this leaves open the question of how and why the framework of debate established by the primary definers might break down. Again we are back to the argument that media are not a completely closed ideological system where the views of the powerful are handed down like tablets from Mount Sinai. Hall's model can also overstate the degree of ideological conformity amongst institutional sources, and underestimate the potential for non-institutional sources such as pressure groups to alter the terms of the debate. We can see this very clearly if we look at two other studies. In their research on the struggle over the definition of the AIDS crisis Miller et.al., suggest that although the institutions of the state were able to access promotional resources and influence media agendas, they did not completely control the debate:

Definitions of social issues do not simply emerge from the centres of political power. Campaigners did manage to influence the production and circulation of definitions around AIDS. In addition, the media can themselves contribute to

modifying the definitions of the powerful. Most importantly, we have suggested that the construction of 'primary' definitions in the media may not necessarily set the terms for policy decisions. As we saw in the discussion of the health education campaign, the ability of ministers or others to intervene in the production process was sometimes quite independent of the dominant definitions carried in the media (Kitzinger & Miller, 1998: 223-224)

Similarly in their study of how the Toronto media interacted with the state's law enforcement agencies, Ericson, Baranek and Chen (1989) point to a complex series of negotiations between journalists and source bureaucracies over how issues were to be framed in news reports. The public relations staff employed by the state's criminal justice certainly worked hard to try and get their perspective across but were not always successful, and their efforts were mediated by the commercial and organizational priorities of the media organizations they interacted with.

There is however one way in which at least a partial rapprochement can be achieved between the stronger structuralist theories such as the Herman and Chomsky propaganda model and those who advocate the existence of a more fluid, contested space. This requires an acceptance that the space for ideological openness and closure on issues is related to both the nature of the issue and the particular moment at which the issue is debated. Certain issues will have more latitude for contestation because their definition is not considered important or 'sensitive' by governments. The issue of AIDS information strategies discussed by Miller et.al. above, would appear to fall into this category. How the issue was defined and debated was not likely to significantly affect the fortunes of the Conservative party. Conversely on issues such as the reporting of unemployment or the Northern Ireland conflict, both subjects which were important for the image of the Tories in the 1980s, it was clear that significant pressure was brought to bear on broadcasters to limit dissent, though this was not always successful (see chapter one). The contours of openness and closure on controversial issues is also strongly determined by political and economic circumstances. At certain moments governments may face a potential crisis of legitimacy and the space for dissent may become constrained. This of course is particularly noticeable during wartime when the need to win public consent is probably at its peak. Those who express alternative opinions at such moments may be

particularly vulnerable to orchestrated attacks from politicians. The fate of the former BBC journalist Andrew Gilligan is perhaps the most obvious recent example.

So how does the research in this thesis relate to these arguments about political/economic power and ideological openness and closure? In many ways the research provides evidence that many of the factors identified by theorists have a crucial impact on reporting on the Israel-Palestine conflict, but it also suggests that coverage is not completely monolithic or rigid. Of particular importance appears to be three of the factors identified in Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model: 'flak', sourcing and the need to maximize profits (or audiences). The pro-Israel lobby appears able to intimidate both news organisations and journalists. The application of pressure through organised campaigns of letter and email writing, as well as complaints from Israeli officials and embassies, together with interventions from well connected Israel supporters in the media and political life appears to have created a climate where journalists and editors are sometimes reluctant to air the Palestinian perspective. There is also the charge of anti-Semitism which is sometimes levelled against journalists and broadcasters, which it has been suggested has a particularly chilling impact on dissent, especially at the BBC. According to Mayhew and Adams (1975) this is not new. Nearly thirty years ago they alleged that attempts were made to silence and discredit those who criticised Israeli behaviour. This they alleged was carried out using the same techniques, organised campaigns of letter writing and telephone complaints directed at media outlets and the interventions of influential Israel supporters in the media and political spheres. This points to the enduring impact of networks of power and influence, able over decades to fundamentally influence the climate in which journalists operate.

The obverse of 'flak', public relations, also seems to be of crucial importance. Whilst the Israelis run a slick and highly professional operation, the Palestinian effort has been rather amateurish in comparison. The proactive approach employed by Israeli PR professionals involving 'schmoozing' journalists and flooding them with the official Israeli perspective appeared effective in setting the media agenda during the Wye negotiations, as evidenced by the prominence given to the Israeli perspective on security at the expense of reporting what was of concern to Palestinians. Israeli sources with their good English, excellent presentational skills and use of soundbites are likely to come across as more credible to viewers than Palestinians representatives

many of whom are poor English speakers. It has been suggested that this is in part a consequence of the cronyism of Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority where the responsibilities for putting the Palestinian perspective has been delegated to Arafat supporters many of whom lack the necessary public relations skills.

The issue of sourcing also appears highly significant. Israeli sources were featured more often than Palestinian sources but neither were as accessed as much as American sources. Since American sources tended to support Israeli positions this magnified the imbalance. Taken together Israeli and American sources were given more than three times as much space as Palestinian sources. A similar pattern was also found in relation to the amount of space given to reported statements, where those from Israelis outnumbered those from Palestinians by a factor of nearly two to one. As previously noted there was also a pronounced emphasis on official sources. This meant that the wide variety of debate about the conflict within the Israeli and Palestinian publics was largely absent. This was particularly significant in regard to Palestinian public opinion because it meant that the highly ambivalent relationship between Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian population was missing from news reports. The theory that the media tends to 'over-access' the views of officials and other powerful institutional sources was supported in this research.

The arguments rooted in political economy, the need for media organizations to profit and hence audience maximise, also appear to have had an important effect on coverage. The need to grab audiences by injecting drama partly explain the absence of historical background and the pronounced emphasis in coverage of the latest developments of a peace process 'in crisis'. Whilst it might be assumed that the BBC as a public corporation, not dependent on advertising, would be insulated from the need to audience maximize, in reality it is obliged to seek high rating in order to justify the license fee. It could of course be argued that Hoggart's stress on the importance on 'news' and 'television' values is itself a journalistic justification for what are in effect choices structured by the need to maximize audiences and profits. In this sense two of his filters are perhaps closer to the political economy perspective than he overtly concedes.

Finally the research in this thesis points to the importance of Britain's foreign policy orientation in setting the tone for how journalists' report on the conflict. How this is

actually achieved in practice is relatively under-theorised in journalism studies. Outright censorship by government is relatively uncommon and attempts by government to gag and intimidate the media are a sign that more informal controls have broken down. But how do these informal controls operate in practice? The former BBC journalist Tim Llewelyn expressed to me the view that the BBC in effect ‘sniffed the wind’ to gauge what the British government’s position on the conflict was and then adjusted its coverage accordingly. As discussed in chapter four, Schlesinger’s ethnography of a BBC newsroom in the 1970s provided evidence that journalists whose perspectives differed widely from those of the governments on sensitive foreign policy issues such as the Vietnam War or the conflict in Northern Ireland were subject to a range of official and unofficial sanctions. In this way editors who were trusted as a ‘safe pair of hands’ could be relied upon to limit dissent on certain issues. Conversely the activities of senior members of the Government can (sometimes unintentionally) open up opportunities for discussion of perspectives that wouldn’t generally be aired. For instance at the end of October 2001 Tony Blair visited Syria and met with President Assad before continuing on to Israel. A BBC journalist reported that:

Tomorrow’s hosts are the very same people that today’s hosts regard as *bloody state terrorists*, and of course the Israelis think much the same thing of the Syrians, the Palestinians and others.

The journalist also remarked that:

Syria’s President Assad...regards Palestinian suicide bombers and assassins as *freedom fighters*. (BBC1 late news, 30 October 2001, cited in Philo & Berry, 2004: 172-3)

Philo and Berry (2004) note that this was the only time that the Palestinian perspective that they were victims of Israeli ‘state terrorism’, and were themselves ‘freedom fighters’ was reported on by journalists. This suggests that Blair’s visit to Syria in effect served to temporarily legitimize the reporting of the Palestinian/Arab view of the conflict⁴⁷. In this way, the activities and orientations of major political figures are picked up on by journalists and can affect the range of debate on issues. This is similar to the theory of primary definition, though it lacks the rigidity inherent

in Hall's model. Politicians can set agendas and legitimate and de-legitimate viewpoints, but it does not necessarily follow on that all those who later engage in the debate must work within those parameters. Furthermore the viewpoint of the primary definers may be challenged and sometimes de-legitimised especially if the arguments are contested by other high ranking politicians.

The research reported in this thesis indicated that during the Oslo peace process journalists found it much easier to present the official Israeli perspective than the views of Palestinians and the wider international community. This was the result of a host of factors creating constraints on how journalists could report on the conflict. However the research did not support the stronger structuralist models such as Hall's theory of primary definition. Some aspects of the official Israeli perspective on the conflict were challenged by Palestinian spokespersons, though these perspectives were much less likely to be highlighted and elaborated on by journalists. Furthermore the relative prominence of Israeli perspectives cannot simply be taken for granted on the basis of structural factors. The comments of Nachman Shai, which opened this chapter illustrated that winning public acceptance for the Israeli government's perspective is a constant and continuous process that requires a great deal of work. It is not as automatic and pre-ordained as some of the structuralist theories imply and it can break down. Whilst the Israelis have been much more successful than the Palestinians in getting their point of view across to viewers, this may not always be the case. For instance the death of Yasser Arafat may allow for the emergence of a new generation of Palestinian spokespersons, better equipped to contest the public relations struggle. The election of American administration inclined to adopt a more even-handed attitude to the conflict will also likely affect reporting. All of these factors should alert researchers to the contingencies and complexities inherent in the production of news.

Endnotes

¹ Chomsky maintains that it 'has been virtually an axiom of US foreign policy that these energy reserves should remain under US control;' and that 'the flow of petrodollars should be largely funnelled to the US through military purchases, construction projects, bank deposits, investments in treasury deposits, etc.' (1999: 17). He argues that to protect against the threat that indigenous nationalist movements might want to gain control of their own resources, the United States supports Israel and the region's Arab monarchies who are encouraged to act as 'regional gendarmes' in support of American interests

² These have included Idi Amin in Uganda, Mobutu in Zaire, the Contras in Nicaragua, Rhodesia, South Africa, Honduras, El Salvador and Turkey.

³In a letter dated 24 October 1915 McMahon laid out the areas that Britain planned to grant independence: 'The two districts of Mersina and Alexandretta and portions of Syria lying west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo cannot be said to be purely Arab, and should be excluded from the limits demanded. With the above modification, and without prejudice to our existing treaties with Arab chiefs we accept those limits. As for the regions lying within those frontiers wherein Britain is free to act without detriment to the interests of her ally, France, I am empowered in the name of the Government of Great Britain to give the following assurances and make the following reply to your letter: (1) Subject to the above modifications, Great Britain is prepared to recognize and support the independence of the Arabs in all the regions within the limits demanded by the Sharif of Mecca' (letter cited in Ingrams, 1972: 2)

⁴ According to the British census of 1922 the total population of Palestine was 752,048, comprised of 83,790 Jews, 589,177 Muslims and 71,464 Christians (United Nations, 1945).

⁵ In a memorandum to Lord Curzon on 11 August 1919, Balfour wrote: 'the contradiction between the letters of the Covenant and the policy of the Allies is even more flagrant in the case of the 'independent nation' of Palestine than in that of the 'independent nation' of Syria. For in Palestine we do not propose even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country, though the American [King Crane] Commission has been going through the form of asking what they are' (British Government, Foreign Office, 1919b, cited in Ingrams, 1972: 73)

⁶ The Revisionist Movement were a political rival of Ben-Gurion's Labor movement. They espoused a more militant attitude towards the Arabs and a more liberal economic policy. Much of their support came from Polish immigrants in the 1920s and 1930s. The Revisionists laid claim to all of Palestine and Transjordan and argued that conflict with the Arabs was inevitable. Their military wing Betar was formed in the 1920s. Some Betar members split

away in the 1930s to form the Irgun paramilitary group who fought the British mandatory authorities in the 1940s. The Revisionist movement later provided much of the constituency for the Herut and Likud parties.

⁷ The Oxford historian Albert Hourani described the Joan Peter's book as 'ludicrous and worthless' in *The Observer*. Ian and David Gilmour described it as 'preposterous' in the *London Review of Books*. *Time Out* described it as a 'piece of disinformation roughly the size and weight of a dried cowpat', whilst the chair of the Philosophy department at the Hebrew University, Avishai Margalit condemned Peter's 'web of deceit'. (reviews cited in Finkelstein, 2001: 45-6). McCarthy argues that unrecorded Arab immigration into Palestine during the Mandate period was 'small' and that for it to 'have had a significant effect on the ethnic composition of Palestine it would have had to have been immense'. He concludes that the 'argument that Arab immigration somehow made up a large part of the Palestinian Arab population is thus statistically untenable' (1990:34). For a discussion of the effects of improvements in sanitation and hygiene on population increase in Palestine see Friedlander & Goldscheider (1979).

⁸ The U.S. Secretary of State, James Byrnes, wrote to the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, arguing that American Jewry was not interested in the plight of the refugees in Europe, their main concern was that Jews 'ought to have a country to call their own'. Harold Beeley in the British Foreign Office complained that 'the Zionists have been deplorably successful in selling the idea that even after the Allied victory immigration to Palestine represented for many Jews 'their only hope of survival'' (both cited in Ovendale, 1999: 94).

⁹ The pressure to open up Palestine to the Jewish refugees worried the British who feared the impact on public order. Ovendale (1999) claims that the U.S. War department had estimated that it would have to send 300,000 troops to Palestine to keep the peace if the area was opened to Jewish immigration. He also suggests that the U.S. State Department was also concerned that an Arab backlash would strengthen Russian influence in a vital geo-strategic area and recommended that the British colonial Empire be maintained intact.

¹⁰ For a comprehensive overview of the case put forward by the Arab delegates see the Official Records of the General Assembly, Second Session, Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestine Question, pp. 276-279, cited in UN, 1990).

¹¹ A number of delegates including Lebanese representatives claimed during debates at the UN, that representatives from the US and USSR had used bribes and threats of economic sanctions in order to coerce smaller States to vote for the Partition of Palestine (Official Records of the General Assembly, Second Session, Plenary Meetings, vol. II, 124th meeting: 1310)

¹² For an overview of the concept of transfer in Zionist thinking see Masalha (1992). This perspective is challenged by Karsh (2000).

¹³ In 1959 the Palestinian historian Walid Khalidi went through the official records of Arab governments as well as Arab newspapers and the radio monitoring reports of the BBC and CIA and could find no evidence of broadcasts urging Palestinians to flee. This research was also independently corroborated by the Irish scholar Erskine Childers in 1961. For an overview and discussion of the controversy see Hitchens & Said (1988). Some historians such as Gilbert (1999) argue that many Arabs left voluntarily prior to the arrival of the Arab armies in May 1948 without mentioning the impact of the alleged broadcasts.

¹⁴ This controversial incident has been the subject of much debate. The Israeli authorities have always maintained that it was a 'tragic case of misidentification'. Bregman (2003: 120-122) notes that others have suggested that it was deliberately undertaken to prevent the *Liberty* from detecting Israeli troop concentrations massing in Galilee as part of the next days attack on the Golan Heights. He argues that recently declassified tapes of conversations between airforce personnel support the conclusion that the attack on the American ship was deliberate.

¹⁵ Yitzak Rabin remarked after Israel's victory that 'I do not believe that Nasser wanted war. The two divisions that he sent into Sinai on May 14 would not have been enough to unleash an offensive against Israel. He knew it and we knew it.' (*Le Monde*, 29 February 1968 cited in Hirst 1977: 211). In a 1982 speech at the National Defense College Menachem Begin stated that 'The Egyptian Army concentrations in the Sinai do not prove that Nasser was not really about to attack us. We must be honest with ourselves. We decided to attack him.' (*New York Times*, 21 August 1982).

¹⁶ Menachem Begin claimed that in the penultimate Ministerial Committee on Defense prior to the War military leaders 'had no doubt of victory' and 'expressed their belief not only in the strength of the army but also in its ability to rout the enemy' (Begin cited in Finkelstein, 1999: 135) The former Commander of the Israeli Air Force Ezer Weizmann has claimed in relation to the 1967 War that 'there was no threat of destruction to the State of Israel but that the war was justified so that Israel could 'exist according to the scale, spirit and quality she now embodies' (*Ha'aretz*, 29 March 1972, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 100).

¹⁷ Norman Finkelstein (1999) alleges that Marshall Tito of Yugoslavia put forward a peace plan involving a full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories in exchange for 'full demilitarization and other security guarantees in the evacuated territories, as well as an 'end to the call for an Arab state of Palestine'. He alleges that this proposal was accepted by both Egypt and Jordan but rejected by Israel as 'one-sided'.

¹⁸ The British representative Lord Carodon denied any ambiguity in the interpretation 242 claiming that 'in our resolution we stated the principle of the 'withdrawal of Israeli armed

forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict' and in the preamble emphasized the 'the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war'. In our view the wording of the provisions is clear.' The French delegate emphasised that 'on the point which the French delegation has always stressed as being essential - the question of the withdrawal of the occupation forces- the resolution which has been adopted, if we refer to the French text which is equally authentic with the English, leaves no room for any ambiguity, since it speaks of withdrawal 'des territoires occupés', which indisputably corresponds to the expression 'occupied territories'. The Indian representative asserted that 'the principle of the inadmissibility of territorial acquisition by force is absolutely fundamental to our approach' and 'it is our understanding that the draft resolution, if approved by the Council, will commit it to the application of the principle of total withdrawal of Israeli forces from all of the territories- I repeat, all the territories - occupied by Israel as a result of the conflict which began on 5 June 1967.' (all cited in Finkelstein 2001: 146)

¹⁹Finkelstein points to the memoirs of the American diplomat Dean Rusk who claimed that the United States favoured omitting the definite article in the withdrawal clause because 'we thought the Israeli border along the West Bank could be 'rationalised' certain anomalies could easily be straightened out with some exchanges of territory, making a more sensible border for all parties'. (Rusk, 1992: 388-9, cited in Finkelstein, 2001: 148). However he stressed 'we never contemplated any significant grant of territory to Israel as a result of the June 1967 war. On that point we and the Israelis to this day remain sharply divided'. (Rusk, 1992: 388-9, cited in Finkelstein, 2001: 148)

²⁰ See for instance Efrain Karsh, What Occupation, *Commentary*, July 2002 or Max Singer, Right is Might, *Jerusalem Post*, 29 June 1997.

²¹ Chomsky points to an article by Yedidia Segal in the 3 September 1982 issue of *Nekudah*, the journal of the religious West Bank settlers, which stated that 'those among us who call for a humanistic attitude towards our [Arab] neighbours are reading the Halacha [religious law] selectively and are avoiding specific commandments'. Segal argues that the Gentiles are 'a people like a donkey' and that the scriptures insist that 'conquered' peoples must 'serve' their Jewish masters and must be kept 'degraded and low' and 'must not raise their heads in Israel but must be conquered beneath their hand...with complete submission'. 'There is no relation' Segal insists 'between the law of Israel and the and the atheistic modern humanism' citing Maimonides that 'in a divinely-commanded war [such as the 1982 Lebanon invasion] one must destroy kill and eliminate men, women and children' there being 'no place for any humanistic considerations' (cited in Chomsky, 1999: 123-4)

²² United Nations General Assembly resolution 54/37 adopted 1 December 1999

²³ Hirst claims that 'In Israel's Arab schools children have always had to see their own Arab culture, history and religion through Israeli eyes: they saw it deliberately mocked and falsified. Arab history became little more than a series of revolutions, murders feuds and plunderings, whilst everything in the Jewish past was ennobled and glorified. It was always the Arabs in decline they learned about, never in their greatness; the heroes of the past, the Prophet, the Caliph Harun al-Rashid and Saladin, got perfunctory mention. In four years of secondary education Arab children had 384 periods of Jewish history as against only 32 of their own. The study of Old Testament was compulsory, while the Muslim and Christian religions were not taught at all. (1977: 238)

²⁴ For instance General Assembly Resolution 53/56 passed 3 December 1998 by 151 votes to 2, Resolution 52/67 passed 10 December 1997 by 151 to 2, Resolution 51/134 passed 13 December 1996 by 149 votes to 2, Resolution 49/36C passed 9 December 1994 by 145 votes to 2, Resolution 47/70D passed 14 December 1992 by 142 votes to 2.

²⁵ In the late 1970s a *Sunday Times* report (19 June 1977) found that torture was so widespread and systematic that 'it appears to be sanctioned at some level as deliberate policy' perhaps 'to persuade Arabs in the occupied territories that it is least painful to behave passively'. More recently Amnesty International has issued annual reports cataloguing the use of torture by the Israeli authorities (e.g. Amnesty International: 2001a, 2000, 1999b, 1998, 1997) A report (Amnesty International, 1999a) entitled *Flouting UN Obligations in the Name of Security* concluded that Israeli 'interrogation methods, such as violent shaking, or hooding and shackling detainees to low chairs with loud music playing, constituted torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and thus contravened Article 1 of the Convention against Torture' and that torture is 'officially authorized at the highest level and indeed effectively legalized.' In the same report it was noted that the 1600 Palestinians detained by Israeli security forces in 1998 were 'routinely tortured or ill-treated during interrogation' The *Independent* journalist Robert Fisk has produced a number of reports from the Israeli controlled Khiam detention centre in Southern Lebanon detailing the use of electric shock torture applied to the genitals. (*Independent*, 20 May 2000). A BBC *Correspondent* documentary (4 November 2000) also reported from Khiam, claiming that torture had also been used against children and pregnant women, and that prisoners had been tortured to death, in what Amnesty International described as 'war crimes'

²⁶ The use of 'administrative detention' involved detaining Palestinians for long periods without trial or legal recourse. In the 1970s Hirst alleges that many Palestinians suspected of involvement with opposition movements were interned in camps in the desert: 'At its worst it meant the establishment of veritable concentration camps buried in remote corners of the Sinai desert. Nakhl, Abu Zu'aiman, Kusseimah were the names of places where whole

families were kept in isolation from the outside world. They were there because relatives of theirs were suspected, no more, of working for the resistance. Crowded into tents surrounded by barbed wire, they were denied radios, newspapers or the most basic amenities from their homes, which were frequently destroyed during their captivity. Women and children would be put in one camp, male relatives of 'wanted persons' brother, nephews, cousins- in another' (1977: 248). By 1980 the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* estimated the number of security prisoners or detainees passing through Israeli jails since 1967 at close to 200,000 people or 20% of the population leading to a situation of 'horrendous overcrowding' and 'appalling human suffering and corruption'

(8 August 1980, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 128). For more recent reports on detention without trial see Amnesty International (1999a).

²⁷ Collective punishment could involve curfews where the local population is not allowed out for more than a hour or two a day for weeks or months at a time, schools are closed and there is no employment. Israel has justified the use of curfews on the basis that confining the Palestinian population to their homes for long periods prevents militants from attacking Jews. The use of collective punishment is illegal under international law and Israel has drawn repeated censure from the United Nations: 'The United Nations Commission on Human Rights calls upon Israel to cease immediately its policy of enforcing collective punishments, such as demolition of houses and closure of the Palestinian territory, measures which constitute flagrant violations of international law and international humanitarian law, endanger the lives of Palestinians and also constitute a major obstacle in the way of peace' (United Nations, 1999). A report by the Israeli journalist Aharon Bachar in the Israeli daily *Yediot Ahornot* described a meeting where Labour Alignment leaders presented Menachem Begin with 'detailed accounts of terrorist acts [against Arabs] in the conquered territories' They described the collective punishment in the town of Halhul where: 'The men were taken from their houses beginning at midnight, in pyjamas, in the cold. The notables and other men were concentrated in the square of the mosque and held there until morning. Meanwhile men of the border guards broke into house beating people with shouts and curses. During the many hours that hundreds of people were kept in the mosque square, they were ordered to urinate and excrete on one another and also to sing Hatikva [Jewish National Anthem] and to call out 'Long Live the State of Israel' Several times people were beaten and ordered to crawl on the ground. Some were even ordered to lick the earth. At the same time four trucks were commandeered and at daybreak, the inhabitants were loaded onto the trucks, about 100 in each truck, and taken like sheep to the Administration headquarters in Hebron.' (3 December 1982, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 131) The report further alleged that prisoners were beaten, tortured and humiliated and that settlers were permitted into prisons to take part in the

beatings. For more recent reports on collective punishments see Amnesty International report (2001b; 2001c) or Human Rights Watch (1996).

²⁸ Hirst cites evidence from the Israeli League for Civil and Human Rights, that searches 'were often carried with great brutality and violence'. During night time raids, Hirst claims that it was a 'regular practice to...carry men off to prison without any good reason, beat them up and torture them' (1977: 249)

²⁹ After 1967 there were numerous diplomatic efforts to break the deadlock, all of which were fruitless. King Hussein's issued a six point peace plan in early 1969 at the National press club in Washington. Speaking officially in conjunction with Egypt's Nasser, Hussein offered a comprehensive peace treaty and recognition of Israel in exchange for 'the withdrawal of its armed forces from all territories occupied in the June 1967 war, and the implementation of all the other provisions of the Security Council Resolution (242)', adding that Israel may have either peace or territory-but she can never have both' (*Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, 2 April 1984) This proposal was rejected by Israel. In December 1969 the American Secretary of State William Rogers put forward another peace agreement based on UN Resolution 242, specifying that Israel would return to the pre-1967 borders (with minor border modifications) and a solution to the Palestinian refugee problem would have to be found, in exchange for a comprehensive peace treaty. The proposals were rejected by the Israeli cabinet who declared that 'if these proposals were carried out, Israel's security and peace would be in grave danger. Israel will not be sacrificed to by any power policy, and will reject any attempt to impose a forced solution upon it.' (cited in Shlaim, 2000: 291). In 1971 the Swedish diplomat Dr. Gunnar Jarring reported that Egypt had offered Israel a full peace treaty based on resolution 242, with the stipulation that Israel also had to withdraw from the Sinai and Gaza Strip, settle the refugee problem in line with UN resolutions, and establish a UN force to keep the peace. Israel's reply though positive insisted that 'Israel will not return to the pre-5 June 1967 lines' (Shlaim, 2000: 300). This, Shlaim (2000) suggests, doomed the Jarring Initiative. It also drew repeated criticism from the United Nations. The Jarring Initiative was followed by attempts at achieving an interim solution which Shlaim suggests floundered on Israel's refusal to accept a timetable for a permanent settlement, and its desire for territorial revisionism. There followed in 1972 and 1973 a number of openly annexationist pronouncements by Israeli leaders. Moeshe Dayan told *Time* magazine in July 1973 'there is no more Palestine. Finished' and in April 1973 interview he talked of 'a new state of Israel with broad frontiers, strong and solid, with the authority of the Israeli government extending from the Jordan to the Suez Canal.' (both cited in Shlaim, 2000: 316). Shlaim suggest that this together with the later publication of the Galilee document detailing a large expansion of

settlement building in the occupied territories, left Sadat little choice but to use force to try and regain the Sinai.

³⁰ Boyle (2002) argues that when the Israeli forces started advancing the Soviets had considered inserting their own force into the conflict leading the Americans to raise their nuclear alert to Def Con Three, the highest state of preparedness. He claims that in the face of this the Soviets backed down but that the World had come perilously close to a nuclear confrontation between the superpowers. Three Israeli and American analysts have also claimed that Israel threatened to use nuclear weapons against Egypt and in fact prepared to do so at the beginning of the 1973 war in order to force America to provide a massive consignment of conventional weapons, which was forthcoming (Perlmutter, Handel & Bar-Joseph, 1982).

³¹ In March 1977 the Palestinian National Council called for an 'independent national state' in Palestine and an Arab-Israeli peace conference. Prime minister Rabin's reply was that 'the only place the Israelis could meet the Palestinian guerillas was on the field on battle' (*New York Times*, 21 March 1977) In 1977 the PLO leaked a 'peace plan' in Beirut that stated that the (explicitly rejectionist) Palestinian National Covenant would not serve as the basis for a interstate relations and that any progression beyond a two state solution 'would be achieved by peaceful means' (*Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 7 August 1977). In November 1978 Tillman claims that Yasser Arafat in requesting a dialogue with American representatives issued the following statement: 'The PLO will accept an independent Palestinian state consisting of the West Bank and Gaza, with connecting corridor, and in that circumstance will renounce any and all violent means to enlarge the territory of the state. I would reserve the right, of course, to use non-violent means, that is to say diplomatic and democratic means, to bring about the eventual unification of all Palestine... we will give de facto recognition to the State of Israel' (Tillman, 1982: 215-8) In April 1981 after PLO acceptance of the Soviet peace plan, the PLO representative Issam Sartawi declared that 'from this it follows that the PLO has formally conceded to Israel, in the most unequivocal manner, the right to exist on a reciprocal basis'. A week later Sartawi issued a joint statement with the former Israel general Mattityahu Peled: 'the PLO has made its willingness to accept and recognize the state of Israel on the basis of mutual recognition of each nation's legitimate right of self-determination crystal clear in various resolutions since 1977' (all references cited in Chomsky, 1999: 68-78)

³² Testimony of Dr. Chris Giannou before the House Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East, 13/7/1982 (cited in Chomsky, 1999: 229)

³³ For other reports on ill treatment of detainees see *Der Spiegel*, 14 March 1983; *Haolam Haze*, 15 December 1982; or *The Times*, 18 March 1983

³⁴ On the subject of Palestinian weaponry see Ze'ev Schiff, (*Ha'aretz*, 18 July 1982) or Hirsh Goodman (*Jerusalem Post*, 9 July 1982) who suggested the Palestinian 'army' and weapons posed no significant threat to Israel and that many of the claims regarding the scale of weaponry were exaggerated. With regard to cease-fire violations the *Christian Science Monitor* (18 March 1982) reported that the PLO had observed the ceasefire despite many Israeli provocations. The Abu Nidal group who attempted to assassinate the Israeli ambassador were sworn enemies of the PLO leadership and had previously tried to assassinate Yasser Arafat. All above references cited in Chomsky, 1999: 210).

³⁵ All extracts taken from *Do Not Say That You Did Not Know*, a report by the Israeli Committee for solidarity with Bir Zeit, June 5 1982, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 60)

³⁶ See for instance Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories, A/RES/38/79, 15 December 1983 or Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories, A/RES/39/95, 14 December 1984 or UN Commission on Human Rights: Question of the violation of human rights in the occupied Arab territories, including Palestine, E/CN.4/RES/1985/1, 19 February 1985.

³⁷ A B'Tselem (Israeli human rights group) report on the treatment of children detained by Israeli forces found that 'illegal violence against minors, ... many [of whom] are innocent of any crime, ... occurs on a large scale.' It found that violence directed against minors including 'slapping, punching, kicking, hair pulling, beatings with clubs or with iron rods, pushing into walls and onto floors,' was 'very common'. It also detailed more severe forms of ill treatment: 'Beating the detainee as he is suspended in a closed sack covering the head and tied around the knees; tying the detainee in a twisted position to an outdoor pipe with hands behind the back for hours and, sometimes, in the rain, at night, and during the hot daytime hours; confining the detainee, sometimes for a few days, in the 'lock-up' — a dark, smelly and suffocating cell one and a half by one and a half meters [five by five feet]; placing the detainee, sometimes for many hours, in the 'closet' — a narrow cell the height of a person in which one can stand but not move; and depositing the tied-up detainee for many hours in the 'grave' — a kind of box, closed by a door from the top, with only enough room to crouch and no toilet.' The Israeli daily *Hotam* (1 April 1988) reported the beating of a ten year old during an army interrogation who was left 'looking like a steak', noting that soldiers 'weren't bothered' when they later found out that the boy was deaf mute and mentally retarded. Reporting on the treatment of Palestinians as young as 14 arrested 'on suspicion of stone throwing' the Israeli daily *Hadashot* (24 February 1992) cited the testimony of a insider at the Hebron detention centre: 'What happened there ... was plain horror: they would break their clubs on the prisoners' bodies, hit them in the genitals, tie a prisoner up on the cold floor and

play soccer with him — literally kick and roll him around. Then they'd give him electric shocks, using the generator of a field telephone, and then push him out to stand for hours in the cold and rain.... They would crush the prisoners, ... turning them into lumps of meat' All above reports cited in Finkelstein (1996: 47-9).

³⁸For other references on Hezbollah's influence on Hamas see *Ha'aretz* (21 April 1994) or *Nida' al-Watan* (15 November 1996)

³⁹Amongst others the poet Mahmoud Darwish, the PLO's Lebanon representative Shafiq al-Hut (both of whom resigned from the PLO executive committee in protest), the leader of the Palestinian negotiating team and Gaza Red Crescent Society, Haidar Abd al-Shafi, the Palestinian negotiator as well as other prominent Fatah and PLO officials

⁴⁰ Hezbollah which also run a network of social services, claim they are trying to protect the local population, many of whom have been expelled from their home by Israel's proxy force the South Lebanon. Human rights groups have condemned the expulsions as 'war crimes' and demanded that they stop (Human Rights Watch, 1999). The organization has also condemned both Israel and Hezbollah for targeting civilians.

⁴¹ European Parliament 1997-8 Session. Extract of the Minutes of the meeting of 13th March 1997. Resolution on Israel's policy of new settlement and the peace process in the Middle East, B4-0198, 0219, 0224, 0233, 0248 and 0264/97.

⁴²Amnesty notes that this has been achieved by restricting residency since 'the only Palestinians allowed to live in East Jerusalem are those holding blue identity cards - i.e. people counted in the census following the 1967 occupation, and their descendants' This policy has also served to curtail 'the normal migrational flows from rural areas'. Amnesty reports that although the blue cards are supposed to grant permanent residency status in East Jerusalem 'in practice however at least 6,257 of these blue cards had been confiscated under various pretexts up to 1998, rendering the holders' continued presence in their native city illegal and aimed at expelling the holder and family from East Jerusalem'. Since 1996 Palestinians have also had to prove that their 'centre of life' is in Jerusalem using a variety of official documents. This had meant that the number of expulsions 'has increased to an average of 700 a year'

⁴³ Israel has consistently argued that a large influx of returning Palestinian refugees would present the state with serious security problems. The Israeli historian Benny Morris has argued that allowing the return of refugees to Israel would lead to the 'physical destruction' of the state:

'A country divided between Israelis on the one hand and on the other Palestinians who had returned and were filled with anger not only at the way they had been treated

in the past but also at not finding their villages or homes available—that country would quickly become ungovernable. Each individual Jew living in the country would be facing a real physical danger’ (The Right of Return: An Interview with Benny Morris, *Tikkun*, March/April 2001)

Morris also argues that the ‘state envisioned by the founders of Zionism was a state composed of a large majority of Jews’ and that ‘if you were to allow a right of return for several million Palestinians (who have higher birthrates than Israeli Jews) you’d soon have an almost balanced Arab/Jewish population—and that would soon mean that you’d no longer have a Jewish state.’ Unlike Western democracies, which are considered legally as the state of their citizens, Israel is defined as the ‘state of the Jewish people’. Israel argues that granting a right of return to Palestinians would lead to a dilution in the scale of this Jewish majority and therefore destroy the ‘Jewish character’ of the state. A few Israelis, such as Yehudith Harel, a member of the Peace Now movement, however have argued that the positions taken by intellectuals such as Benny Morris and the mainstream peace camp are self-serving and inflexible:

The attitudes reflected in [Amos] Oz’s (founder of the Peace Now movement) article, even more than the political positions expressed, are the epitome of the intellectual corruption and the emotional handicap of the Israeli mainstream peace camp intelligentsia. This has generated within Israeli circles a deep-rooted patronising, self-righteous discourse, a lack of empathy for other people’s suffering, a lack of understanding of their perspective and needs and, above all, an almost chronic conviction that the ‘other’ has to act in the best of Israeli interests.’ (Yehudith Harel, Peace Now and its ‘Other’, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, January 11-17, 2001)

⁴⁴ Some elements of Palestinian opinion such as Al-Awda, the Palestinian Right to Return Coalition, made up of grassroots activists have declared in public statements that the right of return is inalienable and non-negotiable and cannot be bartered away by Yasser Arafat or any other Palestinian: ‘We, the Palestinians undersigned below, at home and in exile, affirm once more that the Right of Return is an Inalienable Right, has no statute of limitation and does not permit concessions or delegation by others. It is a basic Human Right as affirmed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, regional Conventions and UN resolutions especially the oft-repeated UN resolution 194. It is also derived from the sanctity of private ownership which is not extinguished by occupation or sovereignty’ (Al-Awda, Press Release, 9.2.2002). Others have suggested mechanisms whereby the right could be accepted in principle, but

curtailed in practice, with significant numbers returning to a future Palestinian state, and a small number of symbolic refugees returning to Israel. For more information on these debates see Shaml: The Palestinian Diaspora and Refugee Centre website.

<http://www.shaml.org/ground/Nusseibeh/index.htm>

⁴⁵ See for example the Letter dated 16 June 1980 from the Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, UN Document A/35/299. This was the common position put forward by nine Heads of State and Government and Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the European Community in Venice, in June 1980.

⁴⁶ For instance UN resolution 3005 passed 15th September 1972: ‘The General Assembly.... affirms the Principle of the sovereignty of the population of the occupied territories over their national wealth and resource...Calls upon all States, international organizations and specialized agencies not to recognize or cooperate with, or assist in any manner in, any measures undertaken by the occupying Power to exploit the resources of the occupied territories....Requests the Secretary-General [to investigate] The exploitation and the looting of the resources of the occupied territories’

⁴⁷ It is also likely that Blair’s visit to Syria provided an opening to discuss the Palestinian/Arab perspective without attracting pressure from the pro-Israel lobby. Reporting on the perspective of the Syrian president during a visit by a British Prime Minister is unlikely to attract the degree of intimidation and pressure that broadcasters could face if they were to report that ordinary Palestinians viewed the Israelis as ‘state terrorists’, and suicide bombers as ‘freedom fighters’.

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