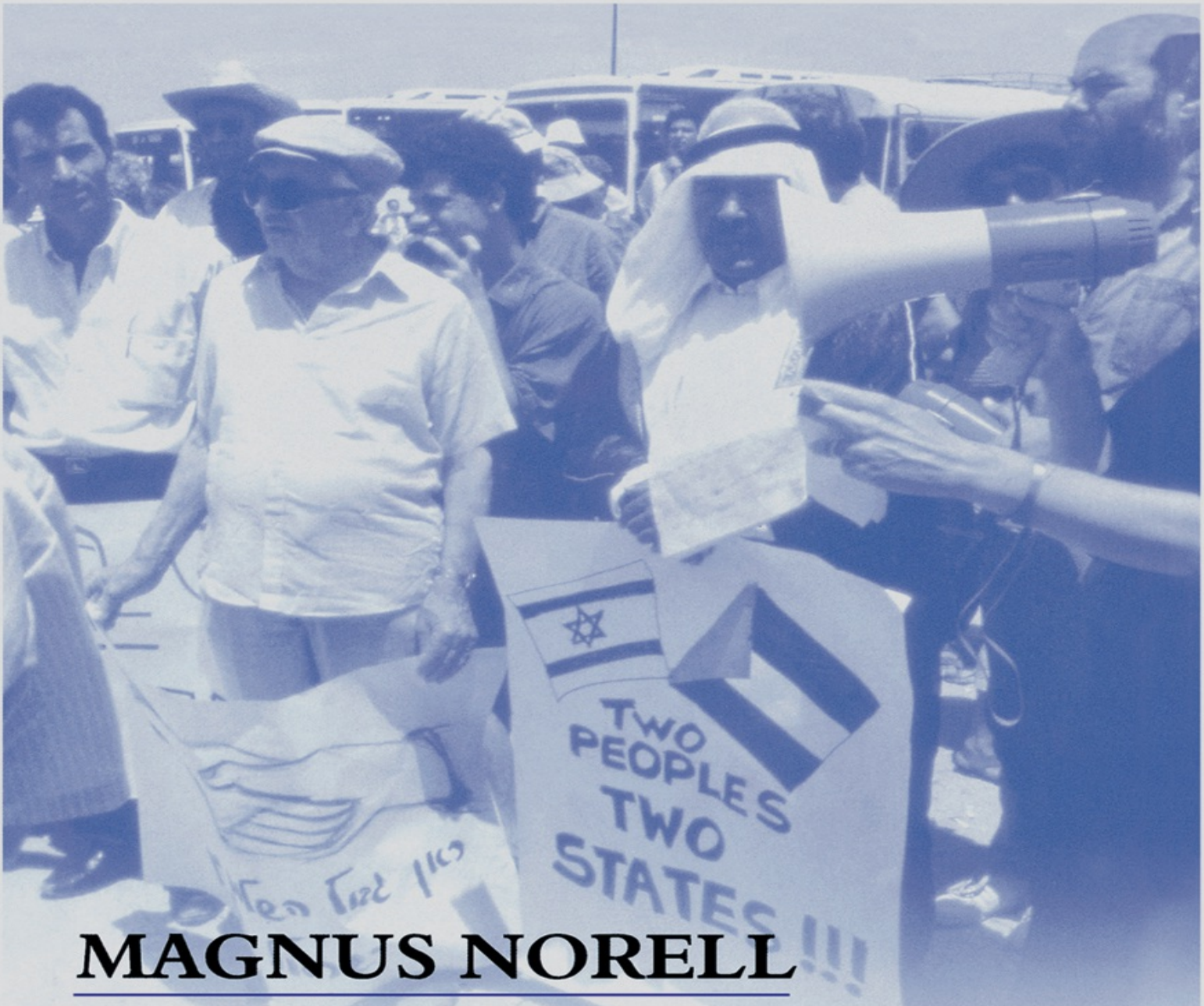

MAGNUS NORELL

A DISSENTING DEMOCRACY

THE ISRAELI MOVEMENT 'PEACE NOW'

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The Israeli Movement 'Peace Now'

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The Israeli Movement 'Peace Now'

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For Maya

A Jew came to his rabbi and asked: 'Rabbi, will there be war?' The Rabbi answered: 'There will not be war, but there will be such a struggle for peace that not even the stones will be unmoved'.

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Abbreviations

CIC	Commander in Chief
CRM	Citizens Rights Movement
CSM	contemporary social movement
DMC	Democratic Movement for Change
FLN	Front Liberation National
ICPME	International Centre for Peace in the Middle East
IDF	Israeli defence Forces
IKV	Interkirkelijk Vredesberaad [Interchurch Peace Council]
LEHI	Lohamei Herut Israel (Freedom Fighters of Israel)
MK	Member of the Knesset
NRP	National Religious Party
NSM	new social movement
NUG	National Unity Government
PA	Palestinian Authority
PAY	Po’alei Agudah Yisrael
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PNC	Palestinian National Conference
PRIO	Peace Research Institute of Oslo
PSM	political social movement
SLA	South Lebanese Army
WZO	World Zionist Organization

Author's Note

Since September 2000, when Palestinian rioting soon escalated into a full-blown uprising, close to 1,200 people have been killed. Of those, nearly three-quarters have been Palestinians. The fighting and the violence has pushed the prospects for a solution farther and farther into an unknown future.

Apart from all the dead and wounded, a very early victim of the fighting was the Israeli peace movement, or so it seemed for a long time. During the Fall of 2001, and in the aftermath of the terror attacks in the USA on 11 September, a flurry of activity briefly renewed some efforts to create a diplomatic initiative to break the deadly cycle of violence in the Middle East. The 'War on Terrorism' created, for a while, a strange coalition where Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian President Yassir Arafat, ended up on the same side, both pledging support for US President Bush and his global struggle to eradicate terrorism. Seizing the moment were also supporters and activists of the 'peace camp' in Israel (both inside and outside of the *Knesset*), yet again pushing forward ideas on a peaceful, diplomatic solution to the conflict without endangering Israeli society.

This strange 'fellowship against terrorism' did not last too long, however, with Sharon and Arafat trading accusations, and with a renewal of hostilities, including several suicide-bombings.

But the obvious was still there: no amount of terror or fighting had resolved the underlying questions of peace and security, least of all for the Palestinians. For the Israeli peace movement it was proof, if proof was ever needed, that the basic, existential questions of the future shape of Israel were still around. Taking this into account, the resurgent peace movement has rallied around the slogan, 'get out of the territories, get back to ourselves.' In this they are not alone; several hundred Israelis from the IDF (including reserve generals and colonels), high-ranking veterans of the security services and from across the political spectrum, are pushing for an immediate, unilateral, Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and most of the West Bank. In addition, in late February, close to 300 army reservists – mostly from combat units – have publicly refused to serve in the Palestinian territories. This list is growing and the move is reminiscent of the letter that launched the 'Peace Now' movement in 1978.

It is, of course, too early to know where this initiative might lead. But it is a clear sign that the issues that the Israeli peace movement have pushed for a long time are still around and that they will not go away easily Whatever the future of the peace movement will be, its impact on the Israeli political agenda cannot be dismissed.

Stockholm, 2002

Preface

In 1985, the doyen of Israel's military correspondents, Ze'ev Schiff, wrote an article for the *Middle East Journal* in which he outlined the possible danger of an internecine conflict engulfing the Jewish State sometime in the near future.[1] Writing at a time when ethnic, religious and social cleavages defined Israel's political landscape, Schiff's article painted a picture of a state that appeared to have lost sight of the key values, goals and dreams enshrined in a Zionist ideal that had resulted in the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. It was a time when emigration seemed set to outstrip immigration, when massive inflationary pressure, fuelled in no small part by the costs of the ongoing Lebanese war, threatened to undermine the very fabric of daily life for ordinary Israelis. The title of a three-hour documentary, 'Shattered Dreams – Picking up the Pieces', by the renowned filmmaker, Victor Schonfeld, summed up a sense of frustration and despair that appeared to have no end.

The pessimism of Schiff's article has, however, yet to be realised. True, many of the cleavages that Schiff identified still bedevil inter-communal relations throughout Israel. One cannot explain what occasioned the assassination of premier Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995 without reference to those who espouse a religious nationalism that remains inimical to Israel's democratic tradition. More recently, the outbreak of the *Al-Aqsa Intifada* in October 2000 exposed a growing bifurcation in inter-communal relations between Israel's Arab citizens and Jewish Israelis.[2] Israel is not a perfect democracy, and indeed, given its often ambivalent attitude towards Arabs residing both within its borders and in the Occupied Territories, some Israeli academics prefer to define Israel as an 'ethnocracy'.[3] Whatever its flaws, however, Israel, at least within its pre-1967 boundaries, continues to display the hallmarks of a vibrant democratic culture. Universal adult suffrage, freely contested elections, the independence of the judiciary and press, freedom of assembly and association all define Israel's political system. Moreover, since the 1970s, the gradual demise of *mamlachtiyut* – Statism, Israeli style – has allowed a vibrant civil society to emerge, with associations and groups allied to a myriad of causes and persuasions dotted throughout Israeli society.

Shalom Achshav ('Peace Now') is perhaps the best-known manifestation of Israel's civil society and forms the basis of this important new work by Dr Magnus Norell. Previous studies of 'Peace Now' and other Israeli peace movements have been published, but Dr Norell's book breaks new and important ground. Rather than analyzing the emergence of 'Peace Now' as a reaction to both external threats and internal challenges, Dr Norell argues that the evolution of 'Peace Now' is in some respects a natural outcome of a political culture that has always encompassed, indeed encouraged, diversity in thought and expression.[4] He reminds us that this culture manifested itself in the political organization of the *Yishuv*, where groups such as *Brit Shalom* established a nascent tradition of advocating territorial compromise as the means to reach an accommodation between competing national movements over finite land and resources. This is not to suggest such opinions enjoyed popular support. The fact, however, that such views could be aired among a community yet to achieve statehood underlines a recognition that tolerance of dissent remained crucial to the democratic foundations of Israel and its survival as a

coherent political entity.

Dissent has marked both Israel's democratic tradition and the continued development of its political culture. Dr Norell's book, therefore, is an indispensable guide to understanding perhaps the two most pressing issues in contemporary Israeli politics: identity and peace. It makes no claims to be a comprehensive study of 'Peace Now' as a movement. It does, however, perform an indispensable function in highlighting the historical, political and cultural settings that have informed and continue to influence Israel's search for peace and security in the twenty-first century.

DR CLIVE JONES
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NOTES

1. Ze'ev Schiff, The Specter of Civil War in Israel', *Middle East Journal*, 39, 2 (1985), pp. 231–45.
2. See Badi Hassi and Ami Pedahzur, 'State, Policy, and Political Violence: Arabs in the Jewish State', *Civil Wars*, 3, 4 (2000), pp. 64–84.
3. Oren Yiftachel, 'Israeli Society and Jewish-Palestinian Reconciliation: "Ethnocracy and its Territorial Contradictions'", *Middle East Journal*, 51, 4 (1997).
4. Some scholars have argued that political tolerance of dissenting views was a key factor in ensuring the survival of Jewish communities (*Kehilla*) in the Diaspora and in particular Eastern Europe. See Alan Dowty, *The Jewish State: A Century Later* (London: University of California Press, 1998).

Foreword

Dr Norell argues that modern Israeli politics are played out within the context of an age-old conflict between individual conscience and the collective will (which, in the Israeli system, comprises a democratically elected representative government). This dilemma is not unique to Israel, but the circumstances in which it is enacted are. From its beginning, Israel has faced an on-going military threat from neighbouring states. This – together with a fierce political and diplomatic onslaught on its legitimacy played out in the international arena – has challenged the very physical existence of the State.

It might be supposed that these factors would militate against the organisation and survival of a movement bent on challenging the orthodox consensus; however, 'Peace Now' – the subject of this book – was born out of this ethical dichotomy. The movement has a long lineage but its size, the varied background of its members, and its influence, grew out of a spontaneous desire to keep open a rational dialogue with the Arab States, specifically with Egypt. However, the movement evolved to embody a public mood that could not find expression within the organised political parties, or share in the political discourse of the late 1970s. In a political culture dominated by party patronage it became, in a very short time, not only the largest peace movement ever to appear in Israel, but also the biggest extra-parliamentary movement, as it came to epitomise a public desire to end the occupation and daily confrontation within the territories captured in the Six-Day War.

Dr Norell gets under the very skin of politics in Israel. Ostensibly about the history of 'Peace Now', this book unfolds the complexity of Israeli political institutions and reveals the diversity and divisions within Israeli society. The book contains substantive material on the make-up and ethnic and religious affiliations that the diverse membership brought to the movement, as well as the geographical spread of its support.

The impact that 'Peace Now' had on Israeli society lay in the organisation's ability both to use and adapt western democratic traditions to Israeli circumstances, and to integrate these essentially modern and secular ideas into a broader, more visceral code of values. The disparate ethnic and cultural groups in Israeli society, with their resultant diversity of customs and traditions, have been kept together by a common body of ideas and concepts, central to which is the obligation upon the individual to obey his conscience. Thus, Israeli political culture fosters dissent as a value in itself and as a legitimate and creative means of resolving conflict and dissipating communal strife. It was this value, combined with the contingencies of war, that gave rise to the 'Peace Now' movement.

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1

Introduction

‘So foul a sky clears not without a storm.’

(William Shakespeare, *King John*)

On 17 May 1999, the Israelis went to the polls to elect a new parliament, as well as a new prime minister, who would lead them into the twenty-first century. The decision to hold elections a year earlier than scheduled came as a result of a political impasse, created by several political defections from the ruling coalition.

As was the case in 1996, elections were held both for the parliament (*Knesset*), and for the direct election of a new prime minister. This reform (where the prime minister is elected separately from the *Knesset*) was implemented for the first time at the elections in 1996.[1]

The new government, with ‘One Israel’ leader Ehud Barak as the new prime minister, was created under some basic principles such as: the restart of the peace process; the institution of a proper written constitution; the scaling down of the draft exemptions of *Yeshiva* students (thus curtailing the influence of Ultra-Orthodox parties in budget allocations); and the shifting of monies and energy away from investments and expansions of settlements on the West Bank and in Gaza.

Ehud Barak received 56.08 per cent, as against 43.92 per cent for the incumbent Premier Benjamin (Bibi) Netanyahu. In Israeli terms, this was a landslide victory. This was an impressive show of confidence for Barak, giving him a stronger position from which to conduct the coalition talks.

Less than two years later, on 6 February 2001, new elections were held. As was the case in 1999, the decision to hold elections more than two years ahead of schedule came about as a consequence of political defections from the government. Again, the outcome produced a landslide victory for the opposition leader. Barak was ousted (receiving 40 per cent of the votes against 60 per cent for Sharon), and *Likud* leader Ariel Sharon became the new prime minister. After several weeks, a new ‘National Unity Government’ was formed, including Labour under its new leader Shimon Peres,[2] who became the new foreign minister.

Both Barak and Sharon received a vote of confidence in themselves as individuals from the voters. At the same time the real strength of the government came from its *Knesset* seats, and there the picture looked different. A large number of people gave their vote to Barak and Sharon, without voting for their respective party list, thus creating a situation where the prime minister was given significant personal support, but at the same time was forced to take into consideration

various other opinions on those matters which constituted the top priorities for the new government.

The election results in 1999 and 2001 point to some interesting – and even contradictory – features, when it comes to the outlook of the political culture of Israel.

The two major results stemming from the elections represent two sides of the same coin: first, a major set-back for the two largest parties and the two-party dominance that has existed since 1977; second, another proliferation of smaller parties eating away at the edges of the two largest parties, Labour and *Likud*. These trends have been rather consistent since the 1977 election. In a way, Israel can be said to have entered a third period of 'multi-partyism' after an initial period of virtual one-party dominance (Labour) for 30 years, followed by 20 years of two-party competition.

The situation created, in which the prime ministers and party leaders received significant personal backing while many of their voters chose to support other parties, decided the outlooks of the new governments. Barak's and Sharon's mandates from the people came with a clear message that support was conditional upon their performance in the months and years to come.

Pledges of unity and inclusive government (demonstrated by the way both Barak and Sharon choose their coalition partners) were also closely scrutinized. The pressure to 'deliver' on election promises, without too much delay, is constantly present. In addition, Sharon – as Barak before him – also has to contend with external Arab demands concerning every aspect of the peace process. After several years of a very sluggish peace process, and with the *Al Aqsa Intifada*[3] raging, Sharon's 'period of grace' was short indeed.

All these, often contradictory, demands will be a tough challenge for the new government. In fact, it is difficult not to make a comparison with one of the more widespread theories as to why Netanyahu lost his election in 1996; namely that he tried to be 'all things to all men'. When all things are considered, Sharon is also under pressure to be 'all things to all men'. This does, however, very much reflect the way in which Israelis view their political leadership. However short-lived it came to be, the direct election for the prime minister gave the electorate an opportunity to vote according to principles, and to make sure (at least in theory) that any new prime minister did not misuse the power invested in him or her. This reform was intended to strengthen the Premier and to make it easier to put together a 'strong' government (that is, with less pressure from small, one-issue parties, and such like). It did not work out that way (something that the critics of the reform pointed out even before the reform was implemented). Often, this sort of criticism was tied to the problems arising from the 'pure' proportional system that makes it so easy (compared to other democracies) for new parties to develop, hindering 'strong' governments (that is, those consisting of one or two parties) to function. As Bernard Lewis put it:

> To make matters worse, the Israelis saddled themselves from the start with what must be one of the worst electoral systems in the free world, and then, by the direct election of the prime minister, found a way to make it even worse.[4]

Nevertheless, the reform ties in well with the underlying principles of the country's political culture.

Whatever the outcome (Sharon will, as has Premiers before him, retain the possibility to

include more parties in the government at a later stage, and in late July 2001 the 'Center Party' entered the coalition), it is perhaps too soon to write an obituary for the two-party system. Political history shows that earlier political upheavals, which created new parties, have been followed by periods where these parties have, once again, coalesced around the bigger ones. The major question here today is perhaps not so much whether this is going to happen again, as which party, aside from Labour, will fill that role: *Likud* or *Shas?*

It is therefore very likely that on this occasion (as previously), the smaller parties will coalesce around the bigger ones. This time, however, the political 'big bang' will reflect, in equal measure, the failure of the big parties and the result of a reordering of the political spectrum.

First, this is shown in the way the parties are grouped; left, right and centre. These groupings are becoming more and more obsolete. On some of the major issues – for example, the religious/secular split, the economy, and the peace process – it is sometimes difficult to see the differences between 'One Israel', *Likud* and the centre parties. Instead, these issues cut right across party divisions.

Second, the weakening of the traditional ideologies that underpin the largest parties has produced a situation in which exhaustion caused by the great political debates in Israel over peace, security, religious matters and economy, has seen Israeli society return to its old constituent parts: religious and secular; Ashkenazi and Sephardi; and the various ethnic groupings, depending on ones *Edah*.[5]

To a large extent this political spectrum is mirrored in the new *Knesset*; tension between division and unity is clearly a major feature in Israel today. It is not the first time that the stakes have been high, but they can be said to be even higher in the current fragmented Israeli political landscape. The phenomenon of political parties arising from grievances, single issues or enmity, could gain momentum or dissipate. Much will depend on the new *Knesset* itself and on how well Sharon's government can handle all the – often contradictory – matters and issues at hand.

In any case, from a democratic point of view, the new *Knesset* is truly representative of the community it is supposed to serve. The constant tension, built into the structure since independence, between individual conscience and independence and the collective 'good', is also an integral part of the new *Knesset*. In choosing to make this tension such a prominent and integral part of the political structure, the Israeli system also chooses a constant struggle to balance out the various consequences of this tension. So far the results have been mixed: on one hand, a deeper commitment and level of political activity on part of the individual; on the other, divisions and splits in society that can be hard to bridge. Still, as will be argued below, so far the system has held, and in the process showed that from a political point of view sometimes you can actually have your cake and eat it too.

This relationship between politics, politicians and the electorate, as shown in the recent elections, ties in well with the central tenets of this book: that the political culture of Israel has inherited an age-long conflict between the individual conscience and the collective will; and that this heritage has helped to develop a political culture where dissent, in a democratic setting, plays an integral part. Furthermore, the book is an attempt to show at least some of the historical (religious, social and political) roots of this structure, as well as the very independent forms these traits take in modern Israeli political culture.

Even without a direct election for the Premier, coalition negotiations would have forced Sharon's hands to some extent, thus limiting his freedom of movement. This is not unusual in

Israel, which has always had coalition governments. The various weaknesses of this system are well documented. After every election in Israel, a chorus chimes up about the (supposedly) 'weak' government that inhibits the implementation of necessary changes needed to 'get Israel back on the right track'; a track that points in every conceivable direction depending on the ideological standpoint from which the criticism comes.

At the same time, however, the system makes allowance for various opinions to be expressed on the running of the country. In Israel, where a number of rather existential issues are constantly debated, the necessity of involving as large a segment of the ideological spectrum as possible in the decision-making process is paramount. This has been shown on several occasions: during the dismantling of the settlements in Sinai following the peace treaty with Egypt in 1979; on the eve of the Oslo peace process; and with the promises of former Premier Barak that any peace agreement will be judged by the people in a referendum.

Regarding the many political cleavages that divide Israel today (see below), and the potential for political violence that these cleavages contain, it is easy to see the benefits of a structure that would make allowances for, and concessions to, a wide circle of opinions influencing policy; even at the price of 'weak' government.

A powerful argument for the strength of the structure and, ultimately – as I will argue – for the present political culture, is put forward by Ehud Sprinzak.[6] He maps the path that political and extremist violence has taken in Israel since before independence, and up to the assassination of Rabin. In conclusion, and via a discussion of various scenarios, Sprinzak argues that despite the volatile history of Israel the system has nevertheless proved its mettle without taking the road chosen by other, relatively young, independent nations, where political violence, democracy under constant siege, and a mixture of conflicting demands from ethnic and religious groups, make a volatile mix.

At the same time, however, the dangers to the system are still there: risks of outbursts of political violence; a system where various small parties or pressure groups obtain benefits (for example, in education and social services) that weaken the whole political structure to the detriment of the interests of the greater public, and continued significant discrepancies between Ashkenazim and Sephardim, between the religious and the secular, and between Jews and Arabs, respectively, concerning what kind of Israel they want. The fact that Sharon needed nearly all the time allotted (45 days) to present a new Cabinet is a good indicator of the weaknesses that the system does have.

Furthermore, Israeli society – with its complex social, economic and political structures – seems prone to discord and (sometimes violent) conflict. The divisions in Israeli society – based on class, religion, ethnicity, and economic status – are perceived as encouraging disintegration rather than integration. The conflicting political ideologies, sharpened in particular by the ethnic differences and the religious/secular animosity, have been exacerbated by the constant threat of aggression by other states, or sub-state actors in the region.

And yet, so far, the system has held. In this situation – so conducive to fragmentation and dissolution – dissent, political argument and social conflict are not only tolerated, but encouraged, without fatally damaging the fundamental cohesion of the society and without threatening the basic tenets upon which that society is founded. Through its political institutions, the electoral system is still one of virtually pure proportional representation. Its legislature and executive reflect the underlying political culture where dissent has become institutionalized

through constant adaptation and change to confront new challenges. This development was no accident or freak of nature. Instead, the underlying values that support this political system have characterized Jewish political existence for thousands of years. Even in biblical times, there were strict limits placed upon the exercise of absolute power by the rulers.

Here lies, I think, the real strength of a political culture that is constantly criticized as being too 'weak'; Israel has moulded a political culture, based on an age-old political philosophy that demands individual responsibility for the whole structure, which has, at least so far, managed to incorporate continuous change into its political structure. Moreover, this political culture not only permits, but also fosters, the expressions of dissent. For this to function, as it does in Israel, during times of crisis as well as during more peaceful times, the formal existence of freedom of expression and organization is not enough. Of paramount importance is the existence of an underlying set of values that place the rights of the individual above those of the State and, paradoxical as it may seem, sometimes above those of society itself, thus creating a structure where organized dissent constitutes an essential component of Israel's underlying political culture.

Furthermore, this emphasis on individual responsibility is a powerful antidote to authoritarianism. In his introduction to *Le livre noir du communisme*,[7] Stéphane Courtois makes this point when he quotes Tzvetan Todorov, who writes:

> … De plus, la société communiste prive l'individu de ses responsabilités: ce sont toujours 'eux' qui décidant. Or la responsabilité est un fardeau souvent lourd à porter.

Fear of freedom and responsibility, as Erich Fromm[8] argues, is a danger that is at least being addressed in the Israeli political structure. I will argue that the reasons for this lie in a long tradition of Jewish political philosophy and culture, which has moulded a 'dissenting democracy' that, on the eve of the twenty-first century, looks poised to provide yet another chapter in a constanly changing political environment.

The Choice of Dissent

At the beginning of the Lebanese War in June 1982, one of the first objectives of the Israeli Army was to neutralise the old crusader castle of Beaufort. Situated on a hilltop in southern Lebanon, the castle – turned into a stronghold by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) – had a commanding view, and controlled the surrounding areas on both sides of the border. Apart from being an excellent observation post, it was also used as a staging area for many of the raids directed against Israel, or at targets within the security zone.

The unit selected to take out the Palestinians at Beaufort was from the élite Golani Commandos. The former officer in charge of the Golani Commandos, Guni Harnik, took part in the attack. Known for his strong dovelike views, Harnik had made no secret of the fact that he opposed a deliberately instigated war, like the one planned against the Palestinians in Lebanon. He also happened to be one of the early activists of the *Shalom Achshav* ('peace Now') peace movement. During the attack, which was successful from an Israeli point of view, Guni Harnik was killed, together with several of his fellow commandos.[9]

The death of Guni Harnik, a peace activist killed in a war he opposed, points to a dilemma that has faced not only the Israeli activists of 'Peace Now', but also young men and women facing other wars in other places: how to choose when the individual conscience is at odds with the demands of loyalty to one's country (or group, family or any other social context to which one belongs); and, if one chooses to protest, how to do so?

For Guni Harnik, the issue was quite clear. Together with the majority in 'Peace Now', he decided that the decision of their freely and democratically elected government ought to be honoured. He knew the risks and took them. Other Israelis decided otherwise and some of them split from 'Peace Now' and created a new group called '*Yesh Gvul*'[10] (There is a Limit/Border). They felt that the war in Lebanon was morally wrong and should be opposed at all costs. Many of their members joined the group after their first stint in Lebanon, when details of the conduct of the war, and the even-handedness of Defence Minister Ariel Sharon, became more widely known. The group also produced what can be seen as the first conscientious objectors in Israel.[11] Eventually, resistance to the war grew and 'Peace Now' – adding considerable weight to the protest as the largest peace movement in Israel – also decided that the war had gone too far, especially after the massacres in the refugee camps at Sabra and Shatilla in September 1982.

Opposition to the war eventually became so powerful that the Cabinet had to resign. The conclusions of the commission investigating the incidents at Sabra and Shatilla – which also drew upon material provided by *Yesh Gvul* – led to the resignation of Sharon and, eventually, of Prime Minister Begin. The 'National Unity Government' was then formed with its first priority to extract Israel from the war.

The tension between the will of the collectivity or nation, as interpreted by a representative government, and the prerogative of the individual conscience, together with the mechanisms that trigger and allow that dissent to function as exemplified by 'Peace Now', are the core issues of this study. This tension also lies at the heart of the reasons behind the creation of the Israeli peace movement. However, this book is not about the ethical dilemmas facing individuals like Guni Harnik, even if the subject is touched upon occasionally It is concerned rather with the structural outcomes of these dilemmas, that is, the creation of a dissenting and protesting peace movement.

The Case of 'Peace Now'

This book focuses on a peace movement within a democratic country involved in war/conflict. It is suggested that the role of this movement, and its impact on social cohesion, increases in such extreme situations when society is under great strain. The strain, or conflicts, generated in society by the interaction between (in this case) a peace movement and other political actors can be seen either as dysfunctional and disruptive, or as positive and normal.[12]

How a conflict is perceived and the impact it has on social cohesion is dependent on the general political and social tenor of the society Coser[13] points to two requirements for a society to handle simultaneous internal and external pressure:

- On the one hand, a strong, rigid and inflexible system.
- On the other, an open, flexible system able to compromise and to adapt to a changing

environment.

Where they are seen as disruptive, conflicts lead to less cohesion and a disintegration of the norms and values hitherto seen as the basis of society; their severe effects result from perceived threats to the basic values of society. Politically, this is often followed by lower tolerance in political debate, and a need to identify and neutralise the political actor perceived to be the cause of the threat. Furthermore, the more the external conflict is perceived as being central to the very survival of the group, or state, the greater the strain that is put on society.[14]

In Israel, this line of reasoning is often used by the political opponents of the peace movement when they are criticizing its work and ideological position. A case in point was the law, passed in 1986, against contacts with the PLO. This law made it illegal for Israelis, and Palestinians under Israeli administration, to meet with officials of the PLO.[15]

Where the occurrence of a conflict is seen as positive, or at least normal, conflicts are regarded as signs of health and as 'safety-valves'. According to Coser,[16] all kinds of societies have safety-valves, but in cases of rigid and inflexible systems these safety-valves are artificial (for example, anti-Semitism), and cannot hide or mitigate the underlying reasons for the conflict. In a healthy society, conflicts are not only normal, but also a way for actors to adapt to changing circumstances, and thereby better handle new challenges. In such cases, conflicts 'criss-cross' society, characterizing the contradictions inherent in all social systems;[17] and because various conflicts exist simultaneously it is impossible for one single difference to emerge. Coser considers this to be an important factor, since a conflict becomes more dangerous when it leads to a questioning of the very values upon which a society has been built. This can happen much more easily when *one*, dominant, rift divides a society. Such a fissure in the social fabric of a society poses a greater threat than several smaller conflicts.[18]

A pluralistic society with several political actors is helped by a number of cross-conflicts, which can be seen as a balancing mechanism. Furthermore, the absence of conflict is not necessarily a sign of stability and strength in a society. On the contrary, conflicts can be seen as a way of allowing the political actors to act out their differences safely, since the underlying basic values are sufficiently stable to withstand the pressure of conflict.

In a democracy such as Israel there are arguments for both these models. To varying degrees, political action and the political debate in Israel can be based on the assumptions made above. The case of Israel, and what it can tell us about peace movements in democracies involved in external war/conflict, will therefore generate answers that may also be valid on a more general level.

During the period in which 'Peace Now' emerged and took its place in the political landscape of Israel, the country changed politically, in that a long and rather stable political consensus (in place since the birth of the State) on the conflict with the Arabs broke down. The result was a growing polarization within Israel; a polarization mainly evident in perceptions about this conflict. This change occurred in connection with the start of the peace process with Egypt (resulting in the 1978 Camp David Agreement and the March 1979 peace treaty) and the subsequent discussions about an overall solution to the conflict.

The Israeli peace movement was part of this development. It was politically active during this period of polarization in Israel when the various fundamental and basic values upon which the

country was built were pitted against each other; when the political truths and coalitions of the day suddenly changed; and when the role of the political parties, traditionally the dominant political players in Israel, diminished in favour of growing extra-parliamentary activity.

The emergence of extra-parliamentary peace movements, particularly during the political upheavals in the 1970s, indicates the development of pacifist perceptions independent of the ideology of a religious imperative, or of a theological framework that negates war[19] (as was the case with some of the peace movements developing in Europe and in the USA in the same period).

One difference, however, between the Israeli situation and that of Europe and the USA, is that the Israeli movements evolved within a collective with a long and persistent history of persecution and subordination. The national revival of that collective involved the establishment of a military defence force whose standing within the collective remains very high.[20] The standing of the military also made the chance of peace movements emerging seem rather slim.

According to conventional wisdom, another factor that worked against any peace movement developing at all – let alone an influential one – was the fact that since independence, Israeli society has existed in the midst of a hostile environment and under the continuous threat of military confrontation. For many years, this conflict with the Arabs fostered a rather high degree of unity on issues concerning defence and foreign policy matters. This unity did not mean consensus. It was founded on a rather *ad-hoc* basis with the lowest common denominator binding it together: that is, the need to gather the necessary forces simply to survive in the face of external threat. Debates on how to achieve this were continuous.

Studies on the issue of the role and impact of social movements[21] in society have perhaps focused, for the most part, on their successes and failures.[22] The concern here, is how a social movement, 'Peace Now', evolved and gained influence in a specific setting in Israeli society The issue of Israeli peace movements and their place in Israeli society is interlinked with the broader issue of Israeli politics in general. It is also related to the inter-state conflicts that Israel has with her Arab neighbours. From the perspective of conflict resolution,[23] this means that the Israeli peace movement acts within a political field in which two parallel conflicts exist:

1. The primary conflict for the peace movement is the one with the Palestinians. It is this conflict that decides much of what the peace movement does and aims for, and provides the backdrop to its work. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and its development, also sets the immediate, internal, political parameters for the peace movement.

2. The secondary conflict for the peace movement is the broader one between Israel and the Arab States. This conflict sets the external political parameters for the peace movement.

The conflict with the Arab States has implications for the manoeuvrability of the peace movement, within the specific Israeli political milieu. Issues such as the Arab boycott, relations with the USA and Europe – especially with the EU countries – and the latest peace process (or rather the demise of it), are determined by the inter-state conflict.

Developments in this arena help to determine much of what the peace movement can and cannot do politically. It was such a development that triggered off the peace process in 1977 – when Sadat went to Israel – and made it possible for the peace movement to reach its zenith as

an extra-parliamentary force in Israel.

The Israeli peace movements grew out of a changing political climate. In turn, the movements were also a factor in bringing about the changes[24] that resulted from growing frustration on the part of the public with the way in which politics were conducted.

During most of its independence, politics in Israel have been synonymous with party politics, and party politics has meant elitist politics. The system is still rather centralized and dominated by the political parties with few points of access to the system.[25] The political élite in Israel have also been good at handling and co-opting new ideas introduced by groups outside the party system. Whether a policy initiated by the ruling élite is the result of pressure from outside the system, or a successful adaptation on the part of the élite, is perhaps a moot point if one is mainly concerned with the outcome of that policy. Nevertheless, the visible changes in the Israeli political landscape in the late 1970s and the 1980s, with the rise of extra-parliamentary interest groups, have added a new dimension to the modes of behaviour concerning policy-thinking and, as a result, policy-making.

As Israel matured from the early decades of nation-building to contemporary issues (which often concern fundamental notions of where the country is heading), the centralized, party-dominated system could not cope. The multitude of issues and the changing political environment led the Israeli polity to become overburdened.[26] The political changes and the rise in extra-parliamentary activity are to be seen as a way of asserting pressure when the traditional channels are clogged up or overloaded. This overburdening has both impaired Israel's ability to carry out the collective tasks it has set for itself, and limited the ability of the political centre (that is, the political parties and governmental institutions) to respond to the demands of the periphery – demands that point to a more vocal, action-oriented attitude to politics on the part of the Israeli public.

This alienation between the public and the 'old' political élite is also the result of developments within the political system that Israel built up before, and after, independence. The outlook and shape of that system determined many of the changes which led to the emergence of the peace movements.

Another key feature of the Israeli political context in which 'Peace Now' evolved – and one that determined much of the shape of the movement – was the two-tiered, partially contradictory, edifice on which the State was built. On the one hand, there was the particularistic imperative of nation-building through settlement;[27] and, on the other, the universalist imperative of political and democratic state-building. This contradiction, however, ties in with the history of the Jewish people in general – that is, as a distinct people constituting a nation, and at the same time as a universalist people dispersed to all four corners of the earth, belonging to, and being apart from, wherever they went, or were forced to go.

The transition from the era of the pre-state Jewish community in Palestine (*Yishuv*) to the era of the Statehood *mamlachtiyut*,[28] also meant that a shift occurred from sectoral to general interests, from voluntarism to binding obligation, and from foreign rule to political independence. This shift also tied together the above-mentioned contradictions into a regulated 'deviationism' – on the one hand, emphasizing the collective responsibilities of nationhood; and, on the other hand, continuing to infuse the notion of activism and pioneering (*chaluziyut*), thus paving the way for the political activism that would create 'Peace Now'. The foundations for all

this were laid with the construction of the political system that emerged before, during, and after, political independence.

The factors mentioned above point to the existence of certain traits within Israeli society, powerful enough to overcome obstacles normally hindering the development of peace movements, or at least giving them a hard time in gaining even marginal influence. These traits also helped the Israeli peace movement to gain a respectable position despite – or maybe because of – the seriousness and existential nature of the issues involved.

In Israel, the argument is sometimes heard that neither Israelis nor Jews in the Diaspora should criticize Israeli political behaviour in public, since this could weaken Israel's position *vis-à-vis* the Arabs, and would divide the nation. Arguments used by the peace movement, and by their adversaries, are in many ways similar to the debate in France during the Algerian War of Independence, and show how politically sensitive the issue of dissent is when discussing the peace movement and the debate concerning its rise and political impact.

An example of similar, though less radical, political activity is that of the Israeli journalists who met with representatives of the PLO in Lebanon and in Europe when it was still illegal. The hostile reaction they encountered at home was in many ways similar to what Jeanson[29] and his supporters encountered. Although acting illegally and underground, the French supporters of the Algerian Front Liberation National (FLN) could get their message out; as, of course, could those who openly opposed the war. Similarly, the Israeli journalists could print their stories, and the subject could be discussed in Israel.

Finally, this shows that as long as there is some sort of open information channels (in this case a free press), even groups that are regarded as illegal by the government, and perhaps by a large portion of the public as well, can get their message out. The bottom line is, that this feature of a democracy is essential for dissent to survive in an otherwise hostile environment and grow to make an impact on wider society.

During the time when the 'Peace Now' movement emerged and started to make a political impact, the activists frequently argued their case from an ethical standpoint, based on a Jewish interpretation of political activism. From the beginning – in 'The Officers' Letter',[30] through public debates, and newspaper articles – there was a conscious effort to 'prove' (to the public at large) that the movement had a place squarely in the midst of Jewish Israel; something deemed essential in order to make an impact on society at large. By arguing, and showing through their political acts that the movement was Jewish, it was hoped that political legitimacy would follow.

This tactic proved successful in so far as 'Peace Now' did gain legitimacy and was able to take its position on the Israeli political field. The major achievement by 'Peace Now' was in raising the profile of dissent on sensitive issues – such as national security and peace with the Palestinians – and showing it to be a legitimate tool in the political debate. The Israeli tendency to not only suppress internal dissent, but to actively discourage it in the face of the constant external dangers to the State, was shattered. That this was achieved by evoking a Jewish political past, made the arguments used all the more solid and valuable.

In changing the argumentative basis of political activism, 'Peace Now' also reconnected secular Israeli politics with its – as they saw it – natural political history. So far the connection between modern and ancient Israel, political and otherwise, had been in the hands of the religious Zionists, especially in the *Mafdal* Party and its various organizations. The ruling Labour establishment emphasized the difference between the 'new', modern and progressive Jew

in Israel, and what they saw as the 'old' persecuted Jew in the European ghettos. However important this history was for traditions and in civil affairs,[31] the main goal was to present the Jewish people as a people among others, in a state among others. By doing this, however, some essential features of modern Jewish Israeli politics were overlooked, features that (as will be shown), nevertheless made an impact on the 'new' modern-day Israeli political culture.

1. The Case of Peace Now in Israel

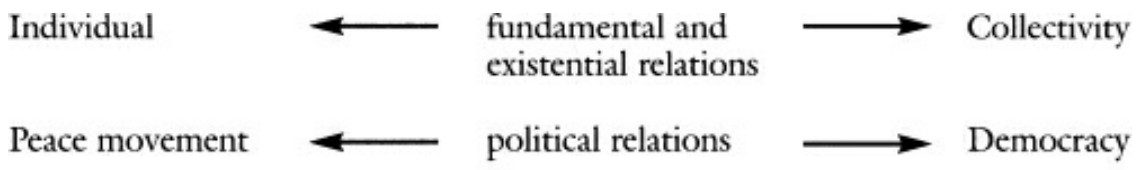

Figure 1 both summarizes the discussion so far and sketches the outline of the argument. As indicated above, the focus is on relations: relations between the individual and the collectivity; and between the peace movement and a democratic structure. These relations and the interactions between them are discussed through the reconstruction of the 'Peace Now' movement. This is done – both on a theoretical and methodological level – by using the concept of political culture; in this context, in its Jewish Israeli setting. The key concept used in showing and explaining these relations and how they interact is *democratic dissent*. This concept is the tool for illustrating the nature of the relation between 'Peace Now' and democracy.

The choice of 'Peace Now' as representative of peace movements in Israel is based on several factors. First and foremost, it is the largest peace movement ever to have appeared in Israel. This fact has also led the movement to become more influential than any of its predecessors or later movements. Furthermore, the size of the movement also made it into a hub of activity from which newer, although smaller, peace movements evolved. Finally, in Israel, 'Peace Now' is frequently used to illustrate not only peace movements in general, but also the opposition to continued Israeli rule over the Palestinians. In many ways 'Peace Now' has become synonymous with the peace movement.

These factors define the major problems of Israeli society and provide the point of departure for the aim and purpose of this book: to reconstruct the emergence and political impact of an Israeli peace movement (*Shalom Achsav*, 'Peace Now') in the light of the specific situation in Israel, a democracy involved in ongoing external armed conflicts.

This reconstruction is based on a different model from that of the contemporary European and American peace movements; the hypothesis being that certain specific factors in the Israeli case led to a development that was deemed unlikely to happen, given the political situation in Israel at the time. That is, a situation developed in which political opposition, political protest, and democratic dissent, became key concepts around which the political development occurred.

Opposition, as opposed to protest and dissent, is seen here as constituting part of the legal, parliamentary opposition. It is part of a given political framework that refrains from taking part in extra-parliamentary activities, except maybe as part of party-organized demonstrations. The main arena for parliamentary opposition is the *Knesset*, not the street.

Protest, on the other hand, is political activity taking place outside the institutional political framework. A protest movement reacts to, or protests against, a given political situation by

taking politics to new arenas. The reasons for this could be: frustration with a political system that does not give enough space to forcing new issues onto the political agenda; or disappointment with the inability of the present political leadership to grasp, or utilize, a new opening in the political field.

Of course, the distinction between these two concepts can sometimes be rather blurred and less clear-cut, but in general terms it holds true and helps to put 'Peace Now' squarely on the side of extra-parliamentary political activity 'Peace Now', as a protest movement, helped change the political game and, in so doing, took its burning issues to new venues in the political field. To illustrate the point that 'Peace Now' is an extra-parliamentary movement, as well as to put the movement in perspective, it is useful to compare Israel with another (European) case.

A good example of popular dissent and protest in times of war and crisis is that of France during the Algerian War of Independence. There are two main reasons why this is a suitable comparative case for this study. The Algerian struggle for independence was seen by many of the French as more than just another 'colonial war' – Algeria was perceived as part of France, albeit overseas, and the severance of Algeria from France was therefore seen as a kind of political amputation. This made debate inside France more thorough and sometimes more vitriolic than, say, that on the French departure from Indo-China. The depth of the French experience in connection with the war and the debate inside France allow parallels to be drawn with Israel during the 1970s and 1980s, when 'Peace Now' emerged. The issues at stake were of a similar penetrating kind, that is, the moral and ethical outlook of the country as well as the direction it was to take as a consequence of the policy pursued.

The second reason why France offers a good comparison is the fact that in both cases the 'other', as Martin Buber uses the term, were Muslim Arabs striving to form an independent polity. All these important differences notwithstanding, there are in both cases numerous references, on the part of dissenters and protesters, to the fact that it is wrong to subdue another people with an altogether different cultural and religious base for their struggle.

Bearing these factors in mind, it is nevertheless important to note that the comparison with France is primarily a way of better illuminating the Israeli peace movement.

A Conceptual Framework

> 'For what has been proved by a correct procedure gains nothing in truth if all scholars agree, and loses nothing if all the people on earth are of an opposite opinion.'
>
> (Moses Maimonides, *Guide to the Perplexed*, Vol. 2, ch.15)

This book falls within the wide category of idea analysis, and deals in that tradition both with political science and history. It is reconstructive in scope and the point of departure is in the confluence of the two relevant, but larger, topics of democracy and dissent. In their entirety these two topics go beyond the scope of this book, but as constituent parts of the conceptual framework, they are highly relevant.

'Peace Now' falls into the category of a political social movement (PSM).[32] It can be seen as an example of the new, or contemporary, social movements (NSM or CSM – CSM is used here)

that evolved during the 1970s and 1980s in the USA and in Europe, and of which peace movements of various kinds constituted an important part. These social movements appeared during an important and changing time in the political cultures of Western democracies. They were perhaps the most significant symptoms of the shake-up and, at least partly, the breakdown of the then current political institutions, and the evolution of new venues for conducting politics; venues that demanded other spheres of the political landscape.

The political basis, the emergence, growth, political role and impact of 'Peace Now' must, however, be reconstructed – and to some extent explained – from yet another perspective. It must be seen not only as a unique case (except in the sense that all movements are unique in themselves), but also as a case within the context of a CSM, as well as within the specific Israeli political culture.

Research on the emergence of CSMs has tried to define the political context in which they evolved, in what sense they were really new, and what their political impact has been.[33] These are also relevant issues here, namely the political context in which 'Peace Now' evolved; what was 'new' about 'Peace Now'; and the political impact of the movement.

The Israeli society, on which this book centres, has several characteristics that need to be taken into consideration:

- First, Israel is a small and comparatively new society; it was formed from an ideological movement that emphasized activism and centralism, that is, encouraging immigration from the Diaspora to form a national centre.
- It maintains a rather weak congruence between territory, citizenship and ethnic-national identity.
- It functions – and has done ever since its conception – in a protracted and prolonged external conflict.
- And, finally, its democracy operates under the combined pressure of tensions created by social and ideological cleavages, generating an imbalance between collective goals, available resources, special needs and precautions rendered by the external conflict surrounding it.

The seriousness of the external conflict, and the role it has played and continues to play, in the mind-set of the Israelis, is connected with the fact that this conflict was always considered an *existential* one. The overriding issue for the Israelis (or more specifically the Israeli Jews) is the survival of the nation. The threat of extinction was, from the start of the Zionist enterprise, a reality that has shaped the political outlook in Israel for a long time.

These characteristics are relevant both on a general, and on a more specific, level. The general level is defined here as the external conflict between Israel and the Arab States, while the specific level is defined as the internal Israeli scene. Several topics derive from this and constitute the backdrop of the book:

- The first topic concerns the *integrative and disintegrative* mechanisms operating in Israel. These processes are related to a society working under conditions of social and political pluralism, and with several tension-filled social cleavages.
- The second topic deals with the *rules of the political game*. These rules affect the shape and

form of Israel's political culture; the role of ideology; how commitments and loyalties affect various groups; and how Israel's over-burdened political institutions can deal with external pressures and internal conflicts simultaneously without losing its ability to function.

- The third topic deals with Israel's involvement in a *protracted external conflict* and its response to that conflict, which threatens its security, and the influence of that response on Israel as a democratic society

Definitions and Limitations

Peace movements have different connotations depending on the social milieu in which they originate.

During the first part of the 1980s, large peace movements arose in Western Europe and in the USA. These can be seen as examples of popular movements seeking reform within democratic countries. In the media and literature, these movements are frequently referred to as *disarmament/anti-weapon movements* or *anti-war movements* (Figure 2).[34] An important similarity between the two types is the emphasis on *one* issue.

There are a number of advantages in having one issue to pursue: it is easier to get public support; a potential supporter does not have to choose between several issues; efforts can be intensified and thereby more effective; and a possible 'victory' will be total since no compromise is needed.

There are, of course, also disadvantages to single-issue movements. First, should the movement fail to reach its stipulated goal – a rather common problem for peace movements – it could prove disastrous.[35] Second, since the movements are often coalitions of different groups – each with a different opinion of what should be emphasized – a failure could lead to disagreements on tactics, methods, goals and alignments. Coalitions also lead to factionalism – something that further weakens an (often fragile) organization.[36]

2. An Important Similarity Between the Two Types of Peace Movement is the Emphasis on One Issue

DISARMAMENT/ ANTI-WEAPON	ANTI-WAR MOVEMENTS

Another problem with having just one issue, or a lowest common denominator, is that the issue pursued by the movement could be defused by alternative policies – something that could steal the momentum of the movement. This is a general problem for social and/or political opposition movements: the danger of being co-opted or incorporated into already established movements or political parties.

If the anti-weapon movements – which evolved into the nuclear disarmament movements – are a post-Second World War phenomenon, the anti-war movements have a much longer tradition. The legacy of pacifism – which can be traced back to the tradition of non-violence in the Christian religion – is something the anti-war movements of post-Second World War Europe still carry with them. To some extent, that is also true for the disarmament movements.

The Israeli peace movements discussed here differ from the above-mentioned European movements/groups in context, social milieu, and issues pursued. However, a definition of peace movements given in the European context is also valid for the Israeli scene, since it can help to broaden our own frames of reference, making it easier to understand the Israeli movements as well as putting the Israeli movement into a broader context.

In his book *Fred i vår tid* [Peace in our time],[37] Kim Salomon defines peace movements as alternative, social movements created at grassroots level and dedicated to changes in the social value system of a society. Seen in this light, the Israeli movements (as well as the European) fit Salomon's definition of a peace movement.

In Figure 3, the Israeli movements can be defined under (b) and (d), where (d) accounts for the specific conflict with the Palestinians.[38] Item (c) [general] is defined as the opposite of (d); that is, no specific event or war forms a basis for the activism, but rather a general opposition to war as such. There are, however, two major differences between the Israeli and the European movements.

The first difference (touched upon above), is the weak position of pacifism in the Israeli peace movements. Israeli society has evolved in a hostile environment, constantly forced to use armed struggle as a tool to achieve political goals, both as a defensive mechanism in the face of annihilation, as a means for sheer survival, and as a deterrent.

3. Varieties of Peace Movements

(a) Disarmament/anti-weapon movement	(b)Anti-war
(c) General	(d) Specific

This situation has also affected the peace movement, often in the form of a tense relationship between the peace camp and the general public. This 'siege syndrome' – on the part of the public – is a result of traumatic historical experiences, and deeply rooted in the collective psyche of Israel. The establishment of the State did not terminate this situation, but merely changed the actors.

Connected to this is the religious attitude toward war. Judaism in the Diaspora (as opposed to both Christianity and Islam) never developed a clear standpoint on war. The major reason for this is the fact that Jews, again in the Diaspora, were never in a position to formulate whether war was 'just' or not. For the most part – being the victim of, and subject to, various forms of passive participation – their overall objective was to survive. Since the guarding of the soul was the supreme value, and in accordance with Jewish national interest, a doctrine developed in which sub-missiveness and resignation were considered legitimate.[39] This position also made it unlikely that the issue of the role of force to solve international conflicts would ever be of great theological significance. In general, war was considered an evil, inevitable aspect of reality. According to religious Jewish law (*Halacha*), if war becomes unavoidable it should at least never be glorified:

> 'The sword does not sanctify but desecrates.' Despite the fact that a 'passive' religious doctrine developed towards war, a pacifistic trend along the lines of Christianity never occurred. If it becomes unavoidable though, 'Judaism accepts the legitimacy of … war as a

means of accomplishing national and religious objectives.'[40]

The second major difference between the Israeli case study and the European movements concerns the way the key issues are defined. In Europe, peace movements coalesced around one issue at a time; 'no nukes' or 'nuclear disarmament'.[41] This was not the case in Israel. The specific feature of the Israeli case – the conflict with the Palestinians – brought with it discussions of other conflicts as well (both external and internal) between Jewish and Arab Israelis, between *Sephardim* and *Ashkenazim* (the ethnic dimension), and between Israel and her Arab neighbours.

These questions are closely tied to the root conflict, as perceived by the peace movement, that is, the conflict with the Palestinians. As a consequence, debates within the peace movements have widened to include these other issues as well. This complicates the position of the peace movement on several issues, but also means that the position finally reached is often based on a deeper analysis of the problem.

As an illustration, one can look at the debate within 'Peace Now' at the beginning of the 1982 Lebanese War. The issue was whether members of the organization should demonstrate against the war at the same time as other members risked their lives in battle. The decision to go to war had been taken by a democratically elected government, and for *Shalom Achsav* it was a credo to be seen as loyal citizens. At that time the truth about then Defence Minister Sharon, and his conscious attempts to keep his own government in the dark about developments in the war, were still unknown. Even before the whole story was out in the open, *Shalom Achsav* took the decision to resist the war. (For a full story of the Lebanese War see Schiff & Ya'ari.[42])

Another reason for this difference in emphasis is the nature of the conflict in which the Israeli peace movements are generally involved. The closeness of the conflict gives the involvement an emotional edge and, in a small and compact country like Israel, political involvement is a fact of life. There is hardly any choice between being part of, or outside of, society, and this intimacy forces political opponents to rub shoulders whether they like it or not.

The issues the peace movement deals with also happen to be of fundamental concern to Israel as a whole; security, peace, and the basic values determining the moral shape of Israel.[43] Since these questions have been part and parcel of the political debate in Israel ever since independence – and since the conflict with the Arabs has been equally present – the debate has, if anything, put more strain on Israeli society, making the role and impact of the peace movements even more interesting.

Another important factor here is the duration of the conflict. The peace movement still exists, and the conflict with the Arabs has been a permanent feature all along. Being at the same time a reason for, and a consequence of, change – with the conflict as the backdrop – the peace movements have needed a broader outlook in order to function at all.[44]

The above-mentioned factors are the most important in explaining the different outlook and shape of the Israeli peace movements compared with their European and American counterparts. These factors also show why the European model is not enough to explain the Israeli movements. An alternative explanation is needed – one that goes deeper than only using CSMs on the European model. These models can be used to put the Israeli case into a larger context, but they do not suffice to explain or illuminate the particularism of the Israeli case.

Understanding that particularism, or specific political context, is a necessity for the purpose of this book; to reconstruct the ‘Peace Now’ movement in order to better understand the problems of peace movements in a democracy involved in armed conflict.

In order to do this, I will argue that in Israel the reasons for the emergence of peace movements in general, and of ‘Peace Now’ in particular, are to be found by looking deeper into the specific Jewish political culture of Israel.

Democratic Dissent

As long as there have been wars or conflicts, there have been dissent and arguments on whether to fight and/or how to fight; and as long as there have been wars or conflicts there have been arguments about how to solve them. Dissent is no stranger in conflict situations.

At the height of the Algerian War of Independence, Simone de Beauvoir wrote:

> What I find physically intolerable is being forced to be the accomplice of drumbeaters, incendiaries, torturers and mass murderers; it’s my country all this is happening to, and I used to love it; and without chauvinism or jingoism, it’s pretty difficult to be against one’s country.[45]

This quote sums up a lot of the frustration and opposition felt by dissenters towards a war or policy they oppose.

The case of the French anti-war movement during the Algerian War illustrates in some ways the general problems of dissent: the reaction of the public and government towards the dissenters, and the debate within the anti-war movement on how best to protest. The political context in which the protesters were active, and the course of their debate, are of particular interest here.

From the outset, parts of the media carried protests against the war. This occurred more frequently as the war progressed and stories of atrocities became common knowledge. Massive use of draftees also made the war an intense problem for a large part of the population, adding to the protests.[46] Supported by most of the media, however, the government came down hard on whoever protested against the war, or how it was conducted. With the Second World War still vividly in mind, a useful argument for the anti-war movement was the threat of a more authoritarian regime in France that did not tolerate opposition. The abortive Generals’ revolt in April 1961 added fuel to this argument.[47]

This debate reached a peak in the spring of 1960, when it was discovered that parts of the anti-war movement were illegally and actively helping the FLN. This activity led to an almost total condemnation and increased the pressure on the anti-war movement. Charges of anti-patriotic activity abounded and were very difficult for many opponents of the war to handle, even if they did not go as far as helping the FLN. They saw themselves as acting out of an inner conviction that their country was committing crimes in their name and hurting itself in the process. The price they had to pay for saying this could be high. They not only put themselves in physical danger, but many of them also experienced severe emotional strain (see de Beauvoir’s quote above).

The example of the French activists helping their country’s combat enemy is perhaps the most

extreme form of dissent. At the core of this activity, however, lies the issue of the individual's responsibility in a democracy. The debate between the authors Claude Bourdet and Françoise Mauriac about opposition to the war in Indo-China can serve as illustration. While Mauriac took the stand that, in a democratic country, the citizens were committed by the decision of the majority, Bourdet considered that, because it was a democracy, the right of the individual conscience to refuse to take part in acts they deemed morally wrong superseded the right of the majority to impose its will or decision. Examples of both views have been present in Israel too. The differences of opinion within the Israeli peace movement at the outbreak of the Lebanese War illustrate this, with 'Peace Now' taking the view of Mauriac, and *Yesh Gvul* following Bourdet.

When de Beauvoir wrote the above lines, she was also referring to another side of the conflict with bearings on the internal situation in France. As the war progressed, and the debate in France about the conduct of the war grew, it also grew more ugly. The first stories about the widespread use of torture by the French forces, as well as by the Algerian police, emerged early on. Several dissenters to French policy in Algeria wrote about, and protested against, the use of torture. Some individual cases became famous, such as that of the young Djamila Boupacha[48] and the killing, in June 1957, of Maurice Audin, a mathematician at the University of Algiers after he was seized without warrant and tortured by French paratroopers.[49]

At first the French Government, as well as the authorities in Algeria, denied the use of torture altogether. But, as the evidence mounted, the line of argument changed, and it was argued that limited use of torture could be applied if and when there was an imminent danger of a terrorist attack. Judgement on when this was the case rested, of course, with the gendarmes and the military in Algeria. In retrospect (it was also known during the war), there can be little doubt about the widespread use of torture as a weapon in the hands of the French Army in trying to quench the Algerian resistance.

All this was amply illustrated and proved by the dissenters in France, as well as in Algeria, during the war.[50] What made the issue take on a more profound meaning for the dissenters – prompting de Beauvoir to write the lines quoted above, as well as to tell the story of Djamila Boupacha – was the fact that the policy in Algeria also infected (in the words of de Beauvoir) mainland France. Violence against members of the Algerian resistance could, on the face of it, be considered as legitimate in a war, even if it took some effort to see it that way The government could present the use of limited torture as an unfortunate, but necessary, tool in combating terrorism for the overall benefit of the population at large. However, violence against French citizens – whether in Algeria or in France – was harder to excuse. The fact that the widespread and illegal use of torture affected many thousands of young French conscripts was a constant reminder of the dangers the war in Algeria posed, when it came to influencing the behaviour of 'ordinary' French citizens. Several newspaper articles, and in time also some books, made the issue a general concern for the French people. One of the first was an article by Claude Bourdet, who had earlier been active in protesting against the war in Indo-China. It appeared in *France-Observateur* on 12 December 1951, with the provocative title 'Y-a-t-il une gestapo algeriénne?'[51]

The dangers of the illegal and inhumane use of torture affecting – and sometimes being tolerated by – a larger segment of the population, was perhaps the single most important issue in

rallying dissenters to oppose the war and its consequences for France as a whole: arguments used by the dissenters would be repeated by 'Peace Now' and other Israeli peace movements 20 years later in another political setting.

It seems clear that one of the prerequisites for the emergence of a CSM is a democratic context. For most of the movements analyzed in research into CSMs, this is clearly the case. A democratic context that gives the necessary room for political manoeuvre, even if the political means used are sometimes new, also gives the movement a chance to gain legitimacy as a political actor in wider society. It also suggests that the means of action, as well as the ends, can become binding for the wider political community.

There also ought to be inherent in society an acceptance towards, and tolerance of, new modes of political action. This acceptance is most often only found in a democratic society and in the history of CSMs it has, of course, been slow to evolve on various occasions. The crucial point, however, is that movements should be able to emerge and function without constraints that would prevent a final impact on society at large.

Second, democracy has placed self-imposed limits on the above-mentioned activism. A key point in the emergence of CSMs has been their insistence on avoiding the overload and blocking of the 'old' political system, in which political action has been dominated by the political parties, the 'Union's, and other institutional actors in this democratic, welfare society. New modes had to be developed to gain access to the political field. The result was the politicization, or rather restructuring, of civil society in order to avoid the dominance of the 'old' political structure.

This politicization of the civil society – the sphere that CSMs claim to be their area of political action,[52] and which was a novelty compared to 'old' social movements[53] – was, however, accompanied by other forms of limitations. These limitations changed not only the meaning and actual outlook of civil society, but also the way democracy is used within social movements. These self-imposed limits, which Cohen calls 'self-limiting radicalism', were based on a non-fundamentalist, pluralistic view of direct political action.[54] These attempts to renew the political culture, at the same time as accepting some basic tenets of the established democratic state in place, tie in well with the outlook of 'Peace Now'.

The difference is that, while the CSMs generally tried to build a new model of civil society and political culture, 'Peace Now' could draw on an existing political culture, even though it was hidden by years of the Israeli version of 'statism' and 'statehood' (*mamlichtiyut*) – a political culture that was both a reflection of contemporary society and rooted in pre-mandate Jewish values.

Third, there is the tenet that democratic states functioning under external pressure and/or threat of conflict, or in times of crisis, tend to become more cohesive,[55] and that this affects the political climate causing a kind of 'rallying round the flag' effect. This is often followed by a more intolerant attitude towards political opposition. The more severe the conflict is perceived to be, the more pressure will be placed on various groups in society to adapt to narrower political frames in which to act. The room for dissent narrows.[56]

In Israel, with external conflicts (combined with internal tensions) created by religious, ethnic and political divisions, the tendency to demand and expect loyalty towards the State in the face of threats is clearly visible. However, the democratic context in which 'Peace Now' emerged made room for deviant (from an 'establishment' point of view) political behaviour, as shown

above. It is shown below that this deviant behaviour – grounded in Israel's political history as well as in pre-state political culture – helped pave the way for 'Peace Now'.

Democracy in its Israeli setting is also important from other points of view. First, there is the emphasis on what can be called the everyday involvement of citizens in politics. From the outset, democracy in Israel has been based on activism, and the necessity for finding novel ways to further political goals. One result of this notion is civil responsibility grounded in the belief that the individual has not only the right, but also the obligation, to protest against what is considered bad for the whole community as well as for the individual citizen. The key point here is that the judgement on when to dissent rests with the individual. It should also be pointed out that this way of taking part (that is, 'dissenting') in politics is seen as part and parcel of the Israeli political culture. In no way does it place the dissenter outside the political debate.[57] This also explains why the 'Peace Now' activists never saw themselves as just a protest movement, but rather as being at the heart of the political debate in Israel.

This tendency to question and protest against the rules of the political game (and, as a consequence, also challenge the rules and regulations of the legal system of the nation state) is part and parcel of a phenomenon that was present when 'Peace Now' emerged, and that might very well become even more prominent in the future, both on the political right and on the left.[58] As shown here, the political system itself was built on that phenomenon.

An example of this phenomenon were the protests, by Israeli settlers and their supporters on the West Bank and in Gaza, against the Rabin government and their negotiations with the PLO on the extension of self-rule on the West Bank. These protests involved squatting and putting up makeshift buildings on grounds scheduled to be transferred to the Palestinian Authority (PA); defying government orders to cease these illegal activities; engaging in occasionally forceful confrontations with the army (sent in to remove them); and in certain cases, attacking Palestinians. This last point something that has grown in the course of the *Al Aqsa Intifada*.

These protests have continued under the new Israeli government, but at a much lower level, and with the general feeling that the Sharon government is much more sympathetic to the voice of the settler movement. The interesting point is that all these activities, past and present, are based on a notion that decisions taken by the government can, and should, be resisted if they are deemed wrong, and if the decisions reached are based on premises (that is, democratic decision-making processes) that contradict religious imperatives (in this case, not to give up 'Jewish' land).

The crisis might have reached a crescendo with the ruling by 15 religious Zionist rabbis (as opposed to non-Zionists who will have nothing to do with the State) on 12 July 1995, that evacuating military bases on the West Bank poses a threat to Jewish life; in effect, forbidding soldiers to participate in the partial withdrawal agreed upon with the PA. This 'ruling' has, of course, been challenged by other rabbis and by the political establishment. It has been compared to the *fatwas* issued by the Iranian clerical leadership against Salman Rushdie. It also underlines the seriousness of the question, in that it is a direct challenge to the State, and one of the most 'sacred' pillars of Israel: the army It is doubtful whether this crisis will reach a point at which the army will face widespread mutiny (for one thing, this opinion is still very much a minority view); but the fact that the 'ruling' was issued at all (and the grounds cited for the decision) shows a serious rift between secular and Orthodox Israelis and, again, points to a deviant, radical trait in Israeli political life – one that puts personal objectives (religious or other) before

collective objectives reached by the political institutions on which the State rests.[59]

Integration and Cleavages

Another important feature of democracy in its Israeli setting is the underlying major political, religious and social cleavages within society. In general, there are three dichotomies used to describe these cleavages in Israel: left *versus* right; religious *versus* secular; and Sephardic[60] *versus* Ashkenazic. To a large extent, these cleavages help to determine the political agenda as well as to shape the opinions of the Israeli public at large on the main political issues.

What make these cleavages so interesting are the issues that define them. The two major issues are: the question of the occupied territories; and how to achieve peace with the Arabs. These issues are seen both as domestic and foreign, as well as existential in nature,[61] and they have played a part in determining what political position is taken on all three dichotomies. This is also relevant from the point of view of 'Peace Now', since these issues also lie at the heart of the activities of the movement.

For a long time this situation rendered 'normal' issues (such as economic matters) along the left/right dichotomy much less important. For the political right (or national right, as their political parties came to be known) the question of holding on to the Territories at all costs often came at the expense of attitudes towards both democracy and peace.[62]

Similarly, the religious dimension of the issue of the Territories in particular has made it a religious imperative to hold on to Judea and Samaria – the old heartland of the Jewish people. It is important to clarify that this notion of keeping the Territories as a religious obligation is not even held by the majority of religiously active Israeli Jews. Within the religious community there are, of course, several trends in opinions on this issue, as there are in society at large. For instance, there is a major cleavage between Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox (the latter having cut themselves off from the broader Israeli society); between religious Zionists and anti-Zionists; and between the religious supporters (for example, *Oz v 'shalom*, 'Strength and Peace') of a peace plan similar to the one advocated by 'Peace Now'; and all the categories in between. At the same time, there is no escaping the central importance of land for all religious Jews (as well as secular Israelis), and this does affect the mind-set regarding the Territories and the issue of peace. As regards Sephardim *versus* Ashkenazim, the issues of territories and peace have played their part in the tensions created by the influx of Sephardic Jews into a state created by earlier immigrants with a European background.

All these cleavages have created tensions that have shaped much of the outlook of Israeli democracy today. They have also created problems of integration. While these problems might not be unique to Israel, the severe conditions under which they have been played out makes their impact on the democratic structure interesting. If integration means an evening out of differences, Israel has been rather successful in assimilating her new immigrants. However, the divisions that exist in Israel stem, to a large extent, from the cultural backgrounds of the various immigrants, with the Ashkenazim considered the elite – both economically and politically – and the Sephardim/Orientals being less well off. Since the building block of Jewish identity in Israel is still very much the *Edah*, or country of origin, it is convenient to use the above-mentioned dichotomy based on cultural and geographical factors when looking at the problems of

integration in Israel today

The people who built a Jewish society in Palestine before independence were firmly rooted in the tradition of European democracy. This was a tradition totally lacking in many of the countries from which the Sephardic Jews came. After independence – when the trickle of Sephardic Jews turned into a flood – problems between Jews already living in Israel and the new arrivals immediately came to the fore. Ever since, the issue of how to deal with immigration has been high on the political agenda. Debates and discussions triggered by the latest waves of immigrants – from Ethiopia and the former USSR – are the most recent examples of the importance with which the issue is viewed in Israel.

Despite all the problems that still prevail, Israel today is a country whose population on the whole has accepted democracy as the only permitted tool for changing society. This also includes various forms of extra-parliamentary political activity. It should, however, also be pointed out that the democratic structure is being challenged and questioned to a greater extent than before: rulings by the Supreme Court, for example, have been frequently attacked by religious groups and parties (such as the *Shas* Party), on the grounds that the rulings challenge religious independence from the secular State. On a more long-term basis, this constitutes a threat to a democratic structure built on the rule of (secular) law.

Even so, integration has been relatively successful. There are several reasons for this. Extensive education is one, and the various integrative mechanisms at work in the Israeli society are even more important.[63]

First, perhaps, is the role of the Jewish religion and – revolving around it and perhaps more important – the traditions and customs that have evolved over the centuries.[64] For the Jewish people, the role of religion as a cohesive factor can hardly be underestimated; although this was, of course, more true in the Diaspora than in modern Israel.

Second, there is the role played by social position and mobility in Israeli society.[65] Various administrations have put forward economic plans that included steps to create a better climate in which to climb the social ladder. The realization that economic and social mobility is a prerequisite for the successful integration of immigrants, and a desire on the part of the authorities to ease this movement, is a sign that this has been at work in Israel for a long time. The extent to which this has been successful varies, of course, even though the overall picture is positive. Red tape, a centralized decision-making process and limited economic resources all put obstacles in the way.[66]

This also led to – and continues to cause – congestion in the mobility channels, causing a divergence between aspirations for social mobility and the actual opportunity to realize them. This, in turn, created political discontent, and put additional strains on the Israeli polity.

Strains on the Israeli political scene are due partly to discrepancies between the political élite and the public, and partly to differences between various ethnic and social groups in Israel such as the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim. Since Ashkenazim and Sephardim are unequally represented at the political level – with the Ashkenazim still being the political élite – the strains here are rather clear. In Israel, this tension has been somewhat mitigated by the opening up of channels of mobility, thus ‘letting the steam out’. This has counteracted, and thus mitigated, cleavages between the public and the establishment.[67]

A third factor affecting integration is national identity, which is very strong in Israel regardless

of political beliefs. A major reason for this is the protracted conflict with the Arabs; Israel does have enemies and the threat of war has been very real. The one issue on which there is no difference of opinion among the *Jewish* Israelis is the need for Israel to exist as an independent state. With national identity comes commitment to common collective values. This is a crucial feature in a country like Israel, which contains several subgroups and peoples loyal to these groups. Here, too, there is potential for social cleavages, not only between different subgroups – ethnic, social and political – but also between collective goals and available resources, because of imbalances.

The integrative mechanisms outlined above have served as mitigating factors in overcoming the strains on Israeli society in general, and on Israeli democracy in particular. This has made integration possible, but has also highlighted the pressures within society. Thus, the political scene of Israel can be seen 'as an intricate balance in which disintegrative and integrative mechanisms constantly counter each other.'[68] These mechanisms also help, to some extent at least, to shed light on how Israel could relatively successfully integrate a large number of immigrants from various backgrounds. The mechanisms do not provide a sufficient explanation of how this could be achieved with the democratic system intact. When the first large waves of poor, often destitute, immigrants arrived, the State of Israel was still an infant, had barely survived the war for independence, and was constantly under attack by *Fedayeen* (Arab guerrillas) from the surrounding countries.

If one accepts the notion that the longer democratic norms or values have to develop and 'mature' in society,[69] the more likely it is that they will influence and help to cushion the strains and pressures on domestic society, then it is natural to assume that such norms and values were already present when Israel came into being.

Norms and Values

The internal stresses and strains constantly at work in Israeli society, putting pressure on democracy, are at the same time mitigated by factors protecting the democratic structure in the country.

These factors are partly the norms and values (henceforth referred to only as 'values' for reasons of convenience) that uphold democracy in Israel.[70] Among them, and of chief interest here, are: first, the normative restraint, that dissent is not only to be tolerated but is an integral part of the democratic set-up; and, second, the notion that political conflicts within society must not be solved by violent means.[71]

This is, of course, not unique to Israel, but rather a general concept when discussing democratic structures. Notions about the importance of cultural values for peaceful conflict resolution within democracies,[72] as well as the role played by values underpinning the democratic system and its effect on citizens[73] – such as citizens' views of 'others'[74] – are factors established by previous research on the subject.

The issue of democracy as a condition for peace between democratic countries also plays a role here, since there are good arguments for this state of affairs having a 'spill-over' effect on domestic, internal policy, by shaping constraints to solve conflicts peacefully.[75]

In addition, the conditions and prerequisites for democracy to emerge and take root in society are also the subject of discussion. In one of the best reviews, which covers much of the earlier literature on the subject, Huntington lists changes that have played a significant part in what he terms 'democratization' in the late twentieth century.[76] This is followed by another list of conditions that he considers favour (and to have favoured) the consolidation of new democracies.[77] This list includes both internal and external influences on the process toward democratization.

Israel seems to have both the necessary prerequisites for a democracy to emerge – such as economic growth and raised living standards paired with enhanced education – as well as a number of the conditions necessary for democratic roots to be planted. But, as regards some of the more important conditions, Israel does not fit the description. The most striking of these are a favourable international political environment, and a peaceful transition (to democracy);[78] both of which were lacking in the Israeli case. Without taking this argument too far (since this is a list of causes and not a 'prescription' for how to achieve democracy), an argument can certainly be made that the conditions lacking in the Israeli case were compensated by other factors, since Israel did make the transition to a democratic state. These factors not only mitigated and balanced the internal and external pressures on the new democracy, but also became accepted by both the State-founding Jewish community in the *Yishuv*, and the new immigrants (coming from distinctly different political entities); who, together, managed the transition from an independence achieved during harsh and difficult conditions, to a relatively stable democratic state.

The stability of Israeli democracy is, of course, open to discussion. The current changes made to putting together party lists (using American-style primaries), as well as the experiements with the direct election of the prime minister, points to a transitory period, the final outcome of which cannot yet be seen. Furthermore, the present peace process has – ironically, indeed – raised issues of how solid the democracy really is, when decisions taken by the government are challenged by some Israelis as being null and void, since they go against perceived Jewish, nationalist goals that 'overrule' normal democratic procedures. The end result of this is also not yet known. Whether the perceived stability of Israeli democracy can weather this storm, as it has weathered earlier storms, remains to be seen.

Bearing this in mind, what makes the Israeli case interesting is that the values underpinning the factors that shape the democratic structure were, and are, at work in a situation in which there is a young democracy (compared to other Western democracies) that has been constantly involved in armed conflict. Combined with the many internal conflicts in Israel this situation (on the face of it) should not be very amenable to tolerance of dissent. Neither should it enable the emergence of a stable democracy while sustaining pressures both from internal conflicts and external threats. Yet, this is what has happened in Israel.

In conclusion – and by taking the results of Russet *et al*., Shamir and Shamir, and Kegley and Hermann a bit further[79] – these findings can be translated to conditions for a domestic climate favourable to what I would call 'democratic dissent'. Democratic dissent is understood, in this context, to stem both from *structural/institutional* factors, as well as from *normative/cultural* ones;[80] making dissent towards the policy of an elected government both viable and capable of sustaining a certain longevity, as well as to have an impact on society at large. According to

Russet *et al.*,[81] it is the normative/cultural factors that have the greater impact, and this is because they constitute the base on which the structural/institutional factors are built.

This is also something that strengthens the assumption that, in Israel, there are values at play that are rooted deeper in Jewish political culture, and Jewish philosophy, than today's democratic structure might imply. Such values not only helped pave the way for the democratic structure of Israel, but also helped to infuse that structure with tolerance towards democratic dissent, even during times of war and conflict. The transition made in Israel, from mandate to independence, also points to values that must have been present in society, and within the various and disparate Jewish communities immigrating to Israel, long before the State came into being.

Political Culture

> '… a social unit the members of which display considerable cultural accord in their basic values … yet the Cultural System itself is riven with inconsistencies.'
>
> (Margaret S. Archer, *Culture and Agency: The Place of Culture in Social Theory* (1988), p. 5)

As discussed above, the way to illustrate and explain the relation between 'Peace Now' and democracy is through Jewish political culture, using the concept of democratic dissent. Political culture is therefore the gateway to the discussion about the reconstruction of 'Peace Now'. Political culture, in its Jewish and Israeli setting, is discussed both from an historical point of view, and as regards how it affects modern Israel.

Culture, in the context in which it is used here, is also perceived to be a very differentiated concept. Culture, as defined by Archer,[82] and as it is used in this context, influences political behaviour and the way politics are conducted. Furthermore, Archer – in her argumentation for using culture when looking at, and explaining, various forms of political behaviour – emphasizes the need to look at this concept as a many-faceted one, and not as one to be too narrowly defined, or used as an overall panacea where political behaviour in general could fit in and be explained.

The importance of Archer's argument is that she defines culture in a way that can be tied in with the concept of democratic dissent, as used in this book. By emphasizing (political) culture as a useful tool, but not as an all-explanatory tool, in understanding political behaviour and the way it shapes political structures, Archer defines political culture in a way that is useful for the study of 'Peace Now' and the Jewish, Israeli setting in which it emerged and functioned. In the words of Archer, the concept of culture is:

> … extraordinary in two respects. It has displayed the weakest analytical development of any key concept … and it has played the most wildly vacillating role within sociological theory.[83]

Accordingly, culture on the descriptive level is a weak concept, despite being a core concept. This is as true in the social sciences as in the area of anthropology, where perhaps the concept

has been most developed.

This difficulty in defining culture, and the way it should be used in analyses, has led to the concept being used as an overall panacea for explaining different patterns, contradictions, conflicts and connections, when social units are analyzed. Over time, argues Archer, this has led to a situation where the critical eye of the social scientist blurs his or her vision, and 'culture' is accepted in its vaguest, yet most widely used, sense.[84] This myth of 'cultural integration', as Archer calls it, has hindered a more pointed use of the concept as an analytical tool.

In order to gain an analytical grip on cultural components, Archer develops two concepts for the end-goal '…where the theoretical unification of structural and cultural analysis might be accomplished.'[85] The first concept is *socio-cultural integration* (defined as the degree of social uniformity produced by the imposition of culture by one set of people on another). The other concept is *cultural system integration* (defined as the degree of internal compatibility between the components of culture).[86] This analytical distinction is imperative for correct analyses of stability and change on any given social unit, according to Archer.[87]

These two concepts can also be used when looking at the concept of political culture since '… the cultural system supposedly orchestrates the socio-cultural domain through the creation of a particular mentality.'[88] This mentality defines the parameters of the particular political culture being dealt with. Furthermore, a '…dominant type of culture moulds the type of mentality of human beings who are born and live with it',[89] thus determining the 'inner' parameters of the kind of political culture created by the social unit.

The socio-cultural conflicts that criss-cross the cultural system, and which any society has to deal with, also affect – and to some extent determine – the changes and mechanisms society develops to protect itself and to create new avenues to deal with these conflicts. Since culture is the product of human agency, and of the social interactions of human beings, there is a constant interplay between maintaining and modifying culture to make it viable when meeting changes and conflicts in society. The importance of this interplay is also underlined by the positive role conflict can have in moulding a viable society that can incorporate changes and challenges into its cultural system: in Archer's words: '…letting the cultural contradictions come into play.'[90]

The importance of Archer's two concepts, and the way they can be of use here, is that:

> … where and when there is a high degree of logical consistency in the cultural system, this is a necessary but insufficient condition for socio-cultural integration: Conversely, extensive contradictions in the cultural system encourage but do not determine socio-cultural conflict.[91]

This duality of culture where '… each and every actor is an active participant – never a passive recipient or an enforced receiver,'[92] fits the culture of 'Peace Now' and describes how the political culture has worked in its Israeli setting.

NOTES

1. This reform was implemented as an attempt to strengthen the role of the new Premier in

putting together a strong government. However, the reform simply shifted the bulk of political horse-trading until after the election; thus, not easing the job of putting together a government in any significant way, nor weakening the influence of the various small parties in the *Knesset*. Both stated goals when the reform was introduced.

2. Peres was elected immediately after the election when Ehud Barak resigned.
3. The *Al Aqsa Intifada* refers to the Palestinian uprising that began in September 2000.
4. Bernard Lewis, *The Fate of the Middle East: Predictions* (Phoenix Paperbacks, 1997).
5. '*Edah*' means ones country of origin. The Sephardi(m) – from the Hebrew word for Spain – are Jews descended from the population of the Iberian peninsula, thrown out (with the Moors) by the Spanish in 1492. The Ashkenazi(m) – from the Hebrew word for Germany – come from the Jewish communities of Central and Eastern Europe.
6. Ehud Sprinzak, *Brother Against Brother: Violence and Extremism in Israeli Politics from Altalena to the Rabin Assassination* (New York: The Free Press/Simon & Schuster, 1999).
7. Stéphane Courtois *et al. Le livre noir du communisme: Crimes, térreur, repression* (Paris: Éditions Robert Laffont, SA, 1997).
8. Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1995).
9. Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, *Israel's Lebanon War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984).
10. Incidentally, *Yesh Gvul* became very influential despite its small size. Many members served in high postings and sympathy towards the group extended beyond their numbers. In the end, even some government ministers relied on information from the group to circumvent the secrecy created by Sharon on war-related matters.
11. Ruth Linn, *Conscientious Objectors in Israel During the Lebanon War and the Intifada* (Haifa: School of Education/Haifa University, 1989/1995).
12. Lewis A. Coser, *Social Konflikt* (Stockholm: Aldus/Bonnier, 1971).
13. Ibid.
14. Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* (New York: The Free Press/Simon & Schuster, 1951).
15. This law was abolished in early 1993.
16. Coser, *Social Konflikt.*
17. Seymour M. Lipset, *Consensus and Conflict: Essays in Political Sociology* (New Brunswick, NJ: 1985).
18. Coser, *Social Konflikt.*
19. In Judaism, life is considered sacred, and the religious establishment in Israel has 'ruled' on various occasions that deeds and acts that save life take precedence over other 'sacred' tenets. Politically, this has meant that part of the religious community has sanctified withdrawal from occupied territory, since this would pre-empt violence between Jews and Arabs, thus saving lives. As is the case with so much else in Israel, there are of course debates on this. Other religious authorities, especially among the settler communities, have at times ruled that giving up land (on the West Bank and in Gaza) constitutes a breach against the will of God. On the other hand, the Christian idea of 'turning the other cheek' has never been considered a feasible way of conducting business with the enemy For Jews, living at the mercy of Christian rulers, that option has been seen as the luxury of the rulers over the ruled. Nevertheless, the tenet of non-violence and pacifism has played a role in the mental and ideological set-up for the European and American peace movements, developed in Christian countries. The Catholic concept of *bellum justus* appeared, after all, to be a reaction to a politically violent environment, not as a pre-set condition for 'correct' behaviour.

20. Peres and Yuchtman-Yaar, *Trends in Israeli Democracy* (IDI Studies, 1992).
21. Peace movements and related peace activism are defined as social movements. See Tamar Herman, 'From Peace Covenant till 'Peace Now': The Pragmatic Pacifism of the Israeli Peace Camp in Comparative Perspective', Abstract of Doctoral Dissertation, Tel Aviv University, 1989; also, David Horowitz and Moshe Lissak, *Trouble in Utopia: the Overburdened Polity of Israel* (New York: SUNY, 1989).
22. Nigel Young, 'Why Do Peace Movements Fail? An Historical and Sociological Overview', PRIO Working Paper, 10/83, 1983.
23. Peter Wallensteen (ed.), *Peace Research: Achievements and Challenges*, Vol. 3 (Westview Press, 1988).
24. Gadi Wolfsfeldt, *The Politics of Provocation: Participation and Protest in Israel* (New York: SUNY, 1988).
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.; also, Horowitz and Lissak, *Trouble in Utopia*.
27. Today, this notion of pioneering (*chalutziyut*) constitutes much of the ideological base for the settlers on the West Bank. An ideological base that sometimes ties in well with religious imperatives of settling the God-given land.
28. *Mamlachtiyut* can be roughly translated as 'statism'. For further discussion of this concept, see ch. 6.
29. Jeanson was a French author and intellectual who became involved in setting up meetings with representatives of the Algerian indepedence movements during the Algerian war.
30. 'The Officer's Letter' was originally written by four reserve officers, among whom was one of the very few Israelis to have been awarded Israel's highest award for valour, the *Itur ha'gvura*. For futher details, see ch. 3, n.13.
31. The connection between Labour and religious Zionism – mainly through the *Mafdal* Party – was kept intact, to their mutual benefit, until Labour was defeated by the *Likud* in 1977.
32. See Jean L. Cohen, 'Strategy or Identity: New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements', *Social Research*, 52, 4 (1985), pp. 663–716; Alberto Melucci, 'The New Social Movements: A Theoretical Approach', *Social Science Information*, 19, 2 (1980), pp. 199–226.
33. See Craig Calhoun, 'New Social Movements of the Early Nineteenth Century', *Social Science History*, 17, 3 (1993), pp. 385–427; Cohen, 'Strategy or Identity'; Melucci, 'The New Social Movements'; Claus Offe, 'New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Polities', *Social Research*, 52, 4 (1985), pp. 63–105.
34. See Kim Salomon, *Fred in vår tid* (Kristianstad: Liber/UI, 1985).
35. Ibid.
36. See Nigel Young, Why Peace Movements Fail', *Social Alternatives*, 4, 1 (1984), pp. 9–16.
37. Salomon, *Fred in vår tid*.
38. Palestinians are defined here as the Arab inhabitants of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The more general term 'Arabs' includes the inhabitants of Israel's neighbouring countries, as well as the whole Arabic group.
39. See Herman, 'From Peace Covenant till 'Peace Now'.'
40. Ibid., p. xix.
41. The one-issue approach often started off the movements, but it is important to note that the European peace movements attracted groups within the more extra-parliamentary parameter,

such as environmental and feminist groups. For a further discussion, see Salomon, *Fred in vår tid*.

42. Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, *Intifida* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989).
43. Personal communication, Professor Golan Galia, Professor at the Van Leer Institute, 1987, and at the Hebrew University in 1991.
44. Ibid.
45. Sorum, *Intellectuals and Decolonization in France* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1977).
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. See Simone de Beauvoir and Gisele Halimi, *Djamila Boupacha*, Falkebog no. 10 (Hans Reitzels Forlag A/S, 1963).
49. See Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Torture – Cancer of Democracy: France and Algeria, 1954–62* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963).
50. For a more extensive discussion of this, see de Beauvoir and Halimi, *Djamila Boupacha*; Vidal-Naquet, *Torture – Cancer of Democracy*; Tony Smith, *The French Stake in Algeria, 1945–1962* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1978); J.J. Servan-Schreiber, *Lieutenant en Algérie* (Paris: Presses Pocket, 1971).
51. 'Is There an Algerian Gestapo?'
52. *Versus* private, non-institutional and institutional politics (Offe, 'New Social Movements').
53. Coser, *Social Konflikt*.
54. In 'Strategy or Identity', Cohen identifies four factors in this self-limiting radicalism: (1) the actors do not try to impose an undifferentiated, 'free-for-all' society without a political structure; (2) the shape of the movement is non-dogmatic and the actors try to limit themselves *vis-à-vis* one another; plurality, autonomy and difference are catchwords, again without renouncing the formal principles of modern civil society or universalistic principles of a democratic state; (3) the actors are self-limiting regarding their own values; they are pragmatic enough to want to learn from experience and to relativise their own values with respect to one another; and (4) many of the contemporary activists accept the existence of the modern market economy and the democratic state; attempts at change are framed as efforts to revitalize or restructure former areas of private domains to spaces for their own political action – this leads to democratically structured, non-revolutionary movements based on plurality, which are viewed as means in themselves.
55. Cohesion here does not mean social harmony or absence of social tensions or conflicts. Cohesion in this setting can also mean a more peaceful regulation of conflicts (Coser, *Social Konflikt*).
56. See Coser, *Social Konflikt*; Alistair Horne, *A Savage War for Peace: Algeria 1954–1962* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979); Sorum, *Intellectuals and Decolonization in France*.
57. See Arian Asher, *Politics in Israel: The Second Generation* (NJ: Chatham House Publishers Inc., 1985); Horowitz and Lissak, *Trouble in Utopia*; Wolfsfeldt, *The Politics of Provocation*.
58. See Efraim Karsh and Gregory Mahler (eds), *Israel at the Crossroads*.
59. See *The Jerusalem Report*, 19 August 1995 and 17 April 1997.
60. In literature and debate these two terms – Sephardim and Oriental – are often used interchangeably, blurring the real differences. Sephardic Jews originate from the Iberian

Peninsula (see Note 5 above), while Oriental Jews come from the countries in the Near East: Yemen, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Turkey and Lebanon. The term Sephardim is used for categories for reasons of convenience.

61. See Jacob Shamir and Michal Shamir, *The Dynamics of Israeli Public Opinion on Peace and the Territories* (Tel Aviv: The Steinmatz Center for Peace Research/Tel University, 1993).
62. Ibid.
63. See Gary S. Schiff, *Traditions and Politics: The Religious Parties in Israel* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1977); David M. Zohar, *Political Parties in Israel: The Evolution of Israeli Democracy* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974).
64. See Zohar, *Policial Parties in Israel*.
65. See Etzioni-Halevy and Shapira, *Political Culture in Israel: Cleavages and Integration Among Israeli Jews* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1977).
66. See Wolfsfeldt, *The Politics of Provocation*.
67. See Etzioni-Halevy and Shapira, *Political Culture in Israel*.
68. See Bruce Russet (ed.), *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).
69. Some of these basic values have been summed up by Shamir and Shamir (*The Dynamics of Israeli Public Opinion*) to be: Israel as a Jewish state (with a Jewish majority; Israel as a democracy, striving for peace with its neighbours; and Israel as a homeland, attached to the notion of *Eretz Yisrael*.
70. See Charles W. Kegley, Jr and Margaret G. Hermann, 'The Psychology of Peace through Democratization', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 30, 1 (1995); Russet, *Grasping the Democratic Peace*.
71. See Russet, *Grasping the Democratic Peace*.
72. See Kegley and Hermann, 'Peace through Democratization'; Russet, *Grasping the Democratic Peace*.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid.
75. See Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).
76. Ibid.
77. This last point is somewhat problematic since the transition made, for the Jewish community, was not from authoritarian to democratic, but from mandate to independence, with a democratic system in place. Nevertheless, the argument can be made that the transition was anything but peaceful, and that the ensuing war put enormous pressure on the new State.
78. Kegley and Hermann, 'Peace through Democraticization'; Russet, *Grasping the Democratic Peace*; Shamir and Shamir, *The Dynamics of Israeli Public Opinion*.
79. Russet, *Grasping the Democratic Peace*.
80. Ibid.
81. Margaret S. Archer, *Culture and Agency: The Place of Culture in Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
82. Ibid., p. 1.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid., p. 103.

85. Ibid.
86. Ibid.
87. Ibid., p. 30.
88. Ibid., pp. 27–8.
89. Ibid., p. 100.
90. Ibid., p. 28.
91. Ibid., p. 73.

2

Structural and Institutional Democracy in Israel

‘And I will give to you, and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojourning, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be your God.’

(Gen. 17:8)

‘Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed.’

(Quote from the American Declaration of Independence drafted by Thomas Jefferson)

Modern Israel is a fairly new state. After some 50 years, it still has a long way to go before it can be compared with older democracies. At the same time, however, ‘Israel’ is but the latest manifestation in the history of Jewish statehood in the area. Seen in this light, the history of modern Israel is only the most recent chapter in the long history of the Jewish people in Israel.

The re-creation and development of Israel as a modern state rests upon a wealth of traditions and ideas. These traditions date from the times of the patriarchs, and the ideas were developed and sharpened during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

From this it follows that, in order to fully understand Israel today, one also has to be familiar with ancient Israel. Even if Israel, in many aspects, is as secular today as many other nations, the fact that the Israeli forefathers formed an independent state some 3,000 years ago remains a source of living identity for many Israelis – this includes the political parties and the politicians. To some extent, they relate their ideals and beliefs to these earlier epochs in Israel’s history. Thus, the parliamentary and democratic system of Israel draws from experiences much older than the State itself.

In various ways, this political system was also the inspiration for the extra-parliamentary peace movements of today Even though the system that was built up immediately after independence was aimed at discouraging political activity outside the structural political set-up (that is, the political parties), there is evidence that, because the system was built on values dating far back in Jewish history, it has been very open to change and extra-parliamentary activities. Discouraging such activities was intended to assure an orderly transfer from a pre-state situation, in which the political structures were still rather loose in shape, to a more solid structure better equipped to withstand both the external pressures from Israel’s neighbours, and internal conflicts created by the problems of building a new state with people from sometimes extremely different backgrounds, and from every imaginable social class. The structure was also meant to assure the ‘founding fathers’, and their Labour Zionist parties, that they would continue to be the major power brokers in the new state.

Since before independence, parliamentary democracy in Israel was designed to accommodate all the different political strands among the Jews in the *Yishuv*. The idea was to transfer the political structure from the pre-independence period, remodel it, and make it sustainable enough to withstand the hardships of full independence. Once this was achieved – went the reasoning within the circles of the 'founding fathers' – the need for extra-parliamentary activity would disappear.

The major flaw with this way of thinking was that it did not make allowance for the fact that the system built up during the pre-independence struggle, and transferred to an independent structure, was to a large extent modelled on a Jewish political tradition that emphasized dissent, anti-authoritarianism and non-compliance. The seed of extra-parliamentary activity of the kind favoured by the peace movement was thus built in from the beginning. The outlook of the Israeli parliamentary system, therefore, is an example of an important part of the kind of political environment in which the 'Peace Now' movement appeared.

Therefore, this chapter sketches the parliamentary system of Israel. The first part deals with the immediate pre-state era, leading up to independence. The second part outlines the political parties, the formative years, and the dominant parties and major points of tension between them. The third, and last, part describes and discusses the foci of parliamentary power in Israel, the *Knesset*, the government, and the Israeli equivalent of a constitution.

History

Re-construction of the Jewish community in Palestine – the *Yishuv* – began in earnest at the end of the nineteenth century. Together with the social and cultural environment, the political system was created as a product of political developments both in the Middle East, and in Europe.

In the second week of December 1917, when General George Allenby dismounted his horse and entered Jerusalem on foot through the Jaffa gate, 400 years of Ottoman rule over Palestine came to an end, and the British era began. Zionist, Jewish society-building began at the close of the nineteenth century, but it was with the breakdown of the Turkish Empire after the First World War that this enterprise gained momentum. This took place as a result of several waves of *aliyot*.[1]

There were five different waves of *aliyot*, each distinguished by its social character, and in the contribution it made to the slowly growing political system.

The first *aliya* took place between 1882 and 1903, when 20,000–30,000 people entered the country. They founded a number of agricultural settlements in which the land was mostly privately owned. Since many of the immigrants had only rudimentary knowledge of farming, they soon ran into difficulties; they were helped by the philanthropist Edmund de Rothschild – a rich Jewish banker in France, determined to help his brethren succeed in their Zionist endeavour – but the price for the settlers was to surrender control of how the colonies should be run. Officials sent down by Rothschild had a very different outlook from that of the idealistic settlers. In the end, a lot of hired Arab workers were called in to do the job; something that went totally against the Zionist settlers' idea of creating a self-sustaining Jewish society and not relying on anyone but themselves to do the work. Demoralization and, finally, stagnation, set in.

Between 1904 and 1915, the second *aliya*, numbering 35,000–40,000 people, reached the country. These new immigrants consisted mainly of young intellectuals from Eastern Europe,

especially Russia and Poland, influenced by the socialist trends penetrating the Tsarist Empire. Many were on the run after the failed revolution of 1905. They were firmly opposed to the 'colonial-capitalist' leanings of the first settlers. They advocated a form of socialist-Zionism, stressing the importance of Jewish self-labour, and were prepared to sacrifice a lot for the development of the *Yishuv* in Palestine.

It was the confrontation between the immigrants of the first and second *aliyot* that prompted the latter to form their own agricultural settlements – *Kibbutzim*. These were based on a socialist, collective, labour-oriented ideology. During this time, the first Jewish labour parties and trade unions were formed.[2]

The third *aliya* came between 1919 and 1923, mostly from Eastern Europe. Just like the people of the second *aliya*, these immigrants adhered to socialist, pioneering ideals. The two *aliyot* of 1905 and 1919–23 were clearly the most influential, and their ideologies and political outlook would dominate the socio-political development both of the *Yishuv* and Israel after independence.

Numbering some 385,000–400,000 people, the fourth and fifth *aliyot* came to the country in 1924–47. Again, the majority came from Eastern Europe, but a large minority consisted of people from Germany and Austria, refugees from the rising tide of Nazism with its virulent anti-Semitism. They often had middle-class backgrounds and settled in urban centres, such as Haifa and Tel Aviv (which was founded in 1919 as the first Jewish city in Palestine since the destruction of the Second Temple). They made a significant contribution to the economic development, and gave a strong impetus to private enterprises in crafts, industry and commerce. Although largest in number, the fourth and fifth *aliyot* did not have the same political impact on the *Yishuv* as the two previous ones.

The foundations of modern Jewish and Israeli politics were laid down at the first Zionist congress in Basel in 1897. This congress, and the establishment of the World Zionist Organization (WZO), turned a spiritual and cultural nation into a political one. The concept of a re-created Jewish polity was based on Eastern and Central European political thinking. Zionism came into being as the Jewish form of nationalism, together with other nationalistic movements of its time. The Jews were the last to succumb to the idea of nationalism as the way to liberate oppressed people. A truly universal nation, albeit with a particularistic glue holding them together, the Jews were among the last to give emancipation, and universal ideologies such as socialism, a working chance. If humanistic enlightenment had won, maybe Zionism would never have occurred at all.

But this was not to be. The bitter experience born of the failures of assimilation, the continuation of anti-Semitism in every political movement and ideology bursting forth among the oppressed peoples of Europe, and government-instigated horrors directed at the Jews in Eastern Europe especially, all contributed to the rise of political Zionism. A form of Jewish self-defence, Zionism wanted to let the Jews be like all the 'other peoples'. As a mixture of idealism, socialism and populism, it was imported to Israel by the early pioneers.[3] As a political idea, Zionism was perhaps more European than Jewish, originating as it did in a late nineteenth-century Eastern Europe filled with longings and dreams of national freedom. Struggles for national independence by the Irish, the Italians and the Greeks played a role in helping Jews from across Europe to reach the conclusion that only an independent national existence could save the Jews as a people.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, decades before the first Zionist congress in Basel, there had been several attempts to formulate what would become the basic ideas of political Zionism.[4] Interestingly, the same conclusion as to the solution of the 'Jewish Question' was reached independently by several persons of different ideological leanings. They had different ideas as to how this national re-awakening should take place, but they all agreed with Mazzini that without a country of your own:

> You have neither name, voice, nor rights, nor admission as brothers into the fellowship of peoples. You are the bastards of humanity.[5]

When Herzl wrote *The Jewish State* in 1896,[6] the ground had been laid already. But Herzl gave the fledgling movement an organizational base, a strong, even charismatic, leadership and, most important, he put Zionism on the map of international politics.

Tied in with these European traits were a series of attachments and attitudes derived from the long history of Jewish life in the Diaspora; a kind of *ur*-Zionism that bound the Jewish people together with the land, *Eretz Yisrael*, from a religious standpoint, promising the return and the coming of the Messiah. Together, these would create a viable national movement that was to achieve its most important goal in only 50 years.

In 1908, the Palestine office of the WZO was opened. For the first ten years the WZO, together with the Jewish Agency, functioned as a kind of legislative body of the State-in-the-making. It was also to play an important role in the foundation of the future government in Israel.

The period of 1918–48 was called *Ha medinah she baderech*, meaning literally: 'the state-on-the-way' In 1920, the first elections took place in order to elect a body to represent Jewish interests before the British authorities. After the conquest of Palestine, the British encouraged both Arabs and Jews to organize themselves politically to ease co-operation between the ruler and the ruled. This was made possible through a system inherited from the Ottoman Turks, called *millet*. Under this system, each religiously defined community was allowed a degree of autonomy. The principle of 'divide and rule' satisfied the British as it had satisfied the Turkish sultans.

Accordingly, the British allowed the Jewish community in Palestine to run its own administration and, at the same time, encouraged the Arab Palestinians to develop a parallel administration. Together with locally elected committees in towns and settlements, this was the first 'government' the Jewish community in Palestine had had in a very long time. It also laid the foundation for the modern parliamentary system in Israel.

Three bodies were elected: the 'Elected Assembly', working as a parliament; the 'General Council', working as a government; and 'committees and local communities'. The Elected Assembly originally comprised 71 persons, equivalent to the number of the *Sanhedrin*, the supreme court at the time of the Second Temple. This assembly in turn elected a small executive, *Va'ad Leumi* (the People's Council).

Almost from the beginning, the *Yishuv* was differentiated along two cleavages: left/right and religious observant/non-observant. Accordingly, three political sectors developed: the left-of-centre labour; the centre-right nationalists; and the religious groups. All these groups were subdivided into more or less moderate and extremist sectors.

Of the parties that submitted lists to the assemblies, the first in size and importance were the

Zionist parties: labour; nationalist; and religious. Divisions within these groups produced a succession of splits, mergers and changes that have continued to this day. Nevertheless, the mainstream parties have largely preserved their identities, and have continued to dominate the political landscape of Israel.

The different political parties were formed in the last three decades before independence. They grew out of interaction within four overlapping spheres of political action: the WZO; the Jewish Agency; local town and village councils; and the *Histadrut* (the Jewish General Labour Federation). The importance of these bodies lies in the fact that they are older than the State that they worked to establish. Today, the WZO and the Jewish Agency are the main communication channels between Israel and the Diaspora Jews.

The first assembly was elected in October 1920. In the period leading up to independence, a total of four assemblies were elected by the community, the number of seats varying from one election to the next.[7]

As the end of the British Mandate drew near, interim arrangements were established to ease the transition of power from the Elected Assembly to the first elected *Knesset*, or parliament. Two bodies were set up: *Moetset Ha'am* – People's Council (consisting of 37 members); and the smaller *Minhelet Ha'am* – People's Administration (consisting of 13 members). The *Minhelet Ha'am* became the provisional government of Israel, while the *Moetset Ha'am* was later to evolve into the *Knesset*.

Political Parties

In November 1995, about two months after the signing of 'Oslo II', which made the peace process take another leap forward, a new party saw the light of day in Israel. Called 'The Third Way', the party was founded by Labourites disgruntled with the way the Rabin government was leading Israel in the negotiations with the Palestinians on extended self-rule. There was also a fear that Rabin would hand back the Golan Heights, or most of it, to Syria as part of a comprehensive peace deal with Assad. The new party promised to work towards a continued Israeli rule over the strategic heights.

In March 1996, former 'Prisoner of Zion', Nathan Sharansky, finally decided to form a new party, *Israel B'aliya*. The top priority for the new party is to better the situation for the many new immigrants that have come to Israel since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Aiming specifically to take votes from the many Soviet immigrants in Israel, the party went on, together with The Third Way, to win enough votes in the elections in May 1996 to join the new government.

These two parties participated again in the latest Israeli elections, in February 2001, and went on to become partners in the new coalition government under Premier Ariel 'Arik' Sharon – the largest government coalition ever in Israel.

Stalking the middle ground of the political field, the Third Way and *Israel B'aliya* are but the latest in a long row of political parties founded after independence. The political system in Israel makes it relatively easy to choose the option of forming a new party as an alternative, in order to gain a foothold in the political arena. Furthermore, and unlike that of other new nations, the political system of Israel was not created entirely *de novo* on the day of independence. It is, to a large extent, the product of developments from the pre-independence period. All the parties taking part in the first *Knesset* election – and many of those existing today – were established

before 1948. The great incubators for the political parties were the Zionist organizations.

Labour

From its very inception, Jewish nationalism (as it developed through Zionism) became wedded to socialism. Various revolutionary movements in Eastern Europe – Russia and Poland in particular – came to be major inspirations for the idealistic and determined young people who got practical Zionism off the ground. These people often started out in the existing political organizations of that day, not only socialist (even though they were dominant), but also social-democratic and liberal. Jews played an important role in building up the forces that would eventually crush Tsarist Russia and change Europe politically. For example, the Jewish socialist Yiddish-speaking *Bund* movement, affiliated with Lenin's Revolutionary Social Democratic Party, caused more social unrest than non-Jewish trade unions.[8]

Jewish connections with socialism can, of course, be traced to the early days of that particular ideology Many persons, mainly of German-Jewish origin – such as Marx and Hess – provided the ideological leadership. This socialism was later transplanted into a Jewish framework, through the writings of the Jewish Marxist Borochov, for example. Jews were often at the bottom of the social and economic ladder, had nothing to lose, and rebelled against what they saw as a stifling and rigid religion keeping their fellow Jews in backwardness and poverty. Socialism, and to a lesser extent liberalism, tied in well with the universalist outlook of these young Jews who desired to create a better world without serfs and racist oppression, and to build a new society with free men on the ruins of the old autocratic regimes.

However, this was not to be. Suspicion against the Jews also existed within the socialist movements; seen as a people apart, they generated hostility and resentment. The universalist approach turned out to be confined within national borders. This put extra pressure on the Jews, since they stubbornly defended their right to remain Jews. Furthermore, for many Jews, the option of assimilation was purely academic; they were often not allowed to assimilate into the larger nations where they lived, even if they wanted to.

For many leaders of the revolutionary movements, the idea of the Jews maintaining their 'Jewishness' after the revolution was totally alien. Some were fiercely anti-Semitic, like Lassalle and Fourier; while some, like Trotsky, merely deplored what was seen as the continued stubbornness of the Jews. The assimilationism advocated by people like Trotsky, however, became less and less tenable. The dual pressure of continued oppression by the authorities in Russia – which reached new and terrible heights with Tsar Alexander III and his chief adviser Pobedonostsev, Procurator of the Holy Synod[9] – and continued resistance from the revolutionary groups, made the idea that the misery of the Jews could be solved in Europe through political change seem more and more inconceivable. More and more Jewish nationalists, not only the socialists, reached the conclusion that the Jews, like all other peoples, must live in a territory of their own.[10]

As a result, hundreds of small groups of dedicated young Jewish revolutionaries, embittered by their exclusion from universities and high schools by the government and by the continued resistance of the 'forces of change', started their own study circles and clandestine Zionist clubs – a form of Jewish populism coloured by socialism. The Zionist World Congress, which began to

convene regularly after 1897, gave these disparate groups the first chance to meet and discuss. Often hopelessly splintered along personal and ideological lines, and covering every political trend from Marx, through Kropotkin, to Tolstoy, by the first decade of the twentieth century a majority of these groups had moved somewhere left of centre to advocate a nation-building enterprise along socialist lines. Whatever the differences between these groups, however, they all shared the notion that the Jewish worker was persecuted by two evils: the 'exploiting capital', and the exclusive nationalism of the majority. It therefore became natural to view Zionism as the liberator both of the Jewish worker in particular, and the Jewish people in general. The earlier elements of what had been a necessary choice now complemented each other.[11] Thus, the almost Gordian knot tying Zionism to socialism was carried with settlers of the second and third *aliyot* to Palestine, influencing future Jewish and Israeli politics unto this day. For these people, the overriding issue for Zionism was *integration* – integration of the Jews into the world by creating 'a nation like any other'; thus solving the plight of the Jewish people.

In June 1992, when the Labour Party (*Avoda*) won the elections, and regained power for the first time since 1977, comments were often heard in Israel that things were 'back to normal'. The intermittent 15 years had been just a short deviation, and now the 'founding party of Israel' would set things straight again; the fact that the new Premier, Yitschak Rabin, had been active in Israeli politics since before independence added to the sense of continuity.

Almost from the time they set foot on the soil of the land of their dreams, the new immigrants began to form branches of their East European-based parties. Two main groups soon emerged: *Poale Zion*, which was Marxist; and *Ha'poel Ha'tzair*, which was socialist but non-Marxist. Of these two groups, which opposed each other with religious ferocity, *Poale Zion* became the most influential. It was the party of David Ben-Gurion, who had arrived with the second *aliya* in 1906. It was also the party furthest to the left, but that was mostly a matter of degree; all groups or parties, whether Marxist or not, adhered to the notion of social revolution. They came from the pogroms and the failed revolution in 1905, hoping to succeed in this remote corner of the Ottoman Empire. These young radicals created quite a stir in the feudal Turkish province to which they came. Socialism and revolution were not what the Turkish officials had had in mind when they allowed the first Jewish immigrants to buy land and settle in various parts of the country.

These ideas also clashed with the traditional, pious way in which the old Jewish community in Palestine lived. For them, it was sacrilege to hasten the Jewish return to Israel by political means. This would happen when the 'Messiah' came, and not before. Nevertheless, the fact that the final goal was the same – the Jewish return to 'Zion' – paved the way for the religious Zionism that would also play a decisive role in Jewish politics. In turn, this would, to some extent, bridge the differences between religion and secularism, making both forces available for the common goal.

When the resentment of the authorities and the Arabs – who also had their share of the new ideas – turned to outright hostility, the Jews were compelled to form their own self-defence organization – *Hashomer* (Watchmen) – in 1909. The revolutionary ideas brought in from Eastern Europe would later influence the Arabs, as well as the Jews, to oppose the Ottoman Empire.

The immigrants carried with them a determination and zeal that would make their form of Zionism the dominant political force, first in the *Yishuv*, and later in Israel after independence through the Labour Party. Their emphasis on political action would also play a role as a natural

model for latter-day political activists – outside the parliament – as they hooked up with what they saw as the 'right' form of traditional Zionism.

The new arrivals of the second, and later the third, *aliyot* also breathed new life into the existing Jewish settlements. The early immigrants – helped by, and rather dependent on, de Rothschild – had become 'ordinary' colonists using Arabs to work the land. To a large extent, this had happened out of necessity: Arab farmers knew the land and were much more experienced in agriculture than the newcomers. When Baron de Rothschild stepped in to save the whole enterprise, he also demanded that the settlements be run on purely economic grounds. Capitalism came in when the ideals went out of the window.

This state of affairs could not be tolerated by the firebrand socialists arriving after 1905. They started their own collective settlements – *Kibbutzim* and *Moshavim* – where they could reform themselves and the land along socialist lines. They saw Zionism as basically a revolutionary movement that could succeed as a political movement, but would also have to be a movement of social revolution, aimed at reshaping the composition of the Jewish people.

The Labour groups were well organized, and one reason for their success and influence was their ability to absorb new immigrants. They took care of the vocational and ideological training of the would-be immigrants while they were still abroad, and continued to do so once they were in the country. Consequently, their ideology (collectivist/socialist Zionism) became the dominant ideology of the *Yishuv*. Furthermore, according to this ideology, the collective was to play a major role in organizing and supervising all sides of social and economic life. Thus, since Labour was dominant, it could concentrate great economic power in the hands of the Labour movement, and help to establish it as the major political force in the country. This would come to have a lasting effect, and is an important explanation of why Labour could stay in power for so long, despite other changes taking place in society.

In 1920, in an effort to unite the various rival socialist Zionist movements, the *Histadrut* (Israel's General Labour Federation) was formed. Together with the growing emphasis in favour of national pioneering and colonizing, this created the conditions necessary for the predominance of the Labour movement. Most of the economic and labour activities in the *Histadrut* were shaped by political considerations, seen in a national perspective. In the political arena, membership in the Labour movement came to be a prerequisite for accession to élite positions and for political status.[12]

The strength of socialism in modern-day Israel stems, to a large extent, from the high degree of control of basic power positions in the economy, and in the network of vital services which regulate the modern state, that were built up by the socialists during the decades preceding independence. This was the result of the determined political thinking that can be seen in the way S. Derehk of the WZO noted:

> '… only the combination of all aspects of power including, of course, the purely political one, can safeguard the political and social hegemony of the working class and its leadership in the State. Only when political power rests on many non-political positions of strength, is it guarded against the danger of becoming an object which passes from hand to hand with the change in the parliamentary majority, as has happened elsewhere.'[13]

Today, the Israeli Labour movement is fused into the 'One Israel' party. This party was

created by former Premier Ehud Barak for the elections in 1999, and was an attempt to build a force that would be strong enough to wrest power away from incumbent Premier Netanyahu; which it did.

In 1965 the first large coalition of Labour groups was formed with *Mapai* as its main component. Called *Ma'arach* (Alignment) it expanded again in 1968 when the Israeli Labour Party (*Avoda*) was formed. Until 1984, *Mapai* and *Mapam* formed the main groups. That year, *Mapam* left the coalition in protest over the new National Unity Government, formed together with *Likud*. At the elections in June 1992, the two parties joined in a government again; this time with *Avoda* at the helm of the new administration, and *Mapam* as part of a new coalition, *Meretz*.[14]

The Labour movement was by far the most important and influential of the political groupings that built a Jewish existence in Israel. Between 1948, when the first elections were held in the new independent Israel, and 1977, Labour won every election and dominated every government. Today, the Labour Party is the key group for an understanding of the political system; not necessarily because of its parliamentary strength – since 1999, the party has shrunk considerably and lost a lot of ground to its ideological opponents, both on the right and on the left – but more because its influence has penetrated into almost every segment of the Israeli polity. Because of this, the Labour legacy was also felt in the extra-parliamentary peace movements that appeared in the late 1970s.

Other political groups have also played a role in Jewish politics, from the first Zionist congress until today At first, non-socialist groups dominated the WZO and it was not until 1935, when David Ben-Gurion became head of the Jewish Agency, that the pendulum finally swung, giving Labour dominance.

Nationalist Parties

Two events in 1965 changed the status of the opposition and ushered in a new political pattern: the forming of *Ma'avach* on the one hand, and the founding of *Gahal*, on the other. *Gahal* was a block consisting of *Herut* (Freedom) and the Liberal Party. In 1973, the Free Centre and *La'am*[15] joined *Gahal* and their name was changed to *Likud* (Unity). Some observers saw in these two events the beginning of a two-party system in Israel, with two major blocks in the *Knesset* leaving the rest to either support or oppose them; a goal that David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first Premier, strove towards.

Mapai is the most important group within the Labour movement, and *Herut* plays the same role in the *Likud* bloc. The right-wing *Herut* is descended from a movement founded by Vladimir Jabotinsky in Paris in 1925, called the 'International Union of Revisionist Zionists'. Jabotinsky demanded the immediate establishment of a Jewish state covering the whole of Palestine, thus implementing the Balfour Declaration of 1917.[16] In this he clashed not only with the British – who at that time tried to distance themself from the promise made in the Balfour Declaration – and the Arabs, but also with the majority of the Zionist movement. Declaring the incompatibility of Zionism and socialism, Jabotinsky left the WZO in 1934.

During the Second World War, the youth movement of the Revisionist movement, *Betar*, was reorganized into *Irgun Tzvai Leumi*, which conducted guerrilla warfare against the British and

the Arabs (who were already organized militarily under the Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin-al-Husseini). During this time, Menachem Begin succeeded Jabotinsky as leader of the movement. After the war, the *Irgun* – as well as all other para-military groups – were disbanded. Their members joined the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) or returned to civilian life.

It was ex-members of the *Irgun* who formed the *Herut* party after the War. Except for 1967–70, when it joined the first National Unity Government, the *Herut* remained in opposition until 1977. It still professes a strong nationalist line, arguing for continued Israeli hegemony over much, if not the whole, Land of Israel (*Eretz Yisrael*).

The Liberal Party was founded in 1931, and has its antecedents in the 'General Zionist Movement'. Together with the Independent Liberal Party – which broke away in 1965, and called itself the Progressive Party until it joined the *Ma'arach* in 1983 – it is the classic middle-of-the-road party. During the 1930s, it was quite influential within the WZO, but, lacking the organizational base of Labour – most notably in Palestine itself – was never able to match up to the socialist parties.

A present-day follower of the liberals is the *Shinui* (Change) Party. Its leader, Amnon Rubinstein, is one of the most respected and successful MKs (Member of the *Knesset*) in Israel. Today it is part of the *Meretz* coalition. Because of the Israeli reality as regards coalition governments – there has never been a majority government in Israel – *Shinui* has been able to play a role as a member of a ruling coalition.

Religious Parties

If an example was ever needed of a political group whose power is greater than its actual strength, any of the religious parties could provide it. Until the election in 1996, the religious parties were consistently the third largest group in the *Knesset*, and thus could provide the leading party with a necessary coalition partner to form a government. From the first elections until 1977, this meant Labour plus various religious parties. The price extracted was control over religious affairs, the exclusiveness of Orthodoxy,[17] and promises not to change the *status quo* between religious and secular Zionism. (The latter refers to agreements reached between Ben-Gurion and the leaders of the Zionist Orthodox parties shortly after independence.) In short, the religious parties would retain control of matters important to them, such as civil law and religious education, and in return, support Labour in foreign policy and immigration. For the socialist establishment around Ben-Gurion and the dominant Labour Party, this was proof of the pragmatism used in setting priorities and keeping Israel 'on the right track.'

One of the central issues in Israeli political life is the role of past tradition, a tradition centred very much on the Jewish religion. Alone among the people in Europe seeking freedom and an end to persecution, the Jews had their own particular religion. Since the Jewish religion – and this belief is commonly held by Israeli historical tradition – kept the Jewish people together during the Diaspora, its place in the national fabric of modern Israel is imperative. Religion and tradition, wedded to European concepts of self-determination and national sovereignty, helped produce Zionism.

The ideological foundation for religious Zionism was laid down mainly in Eastern Europe. It was a different kind of Zionism than the one conceptualized in Western Europe. The Eastern – mainly Russian – form of Zionism, whether religious or not, was close to, and based on, the

ethics of classical Jewish religious nationalism.

In Western Europe, the Zionists tended to see Zionism (rather exclusively) as a solution to anti-Semitism. Accordingly, the advocates of this outlook, the so-called 'territorialists', did not see the ancient homeland in Palestine as the only place to which to turn.

In 1903, the two viewpoints collided, when the WZO was offered an area in East Africa by the British Government. In rejecting the offer in 1905 – by a large majority – the WZO affirmed the link between modern political Jewish nationalism and the chain of Jewish tradition.

The key issue for the religious parties has been how to accommodate themselves to modernity, and how to view Jewish political nationalism and Zionism. These questions were especially important during their formative years in Europe. The response to this has divided the religious parties into two groups: parties of participation and parties of separation.[18]

Parties of Participation

The largest and most influential religious party has traditionally been the National Religious Party, or the NRP (*Mafdal*). This was formed in 1956 between *Mizrachi*, founded in 1902, and its Labour offshoot *Ha-poel Ha'Mizrachi*, which was founded in 1922 (partly in response to the challenge from secular Zionism). Its purpose was to influence the Zionist movement to adopt, or at least not exclude, a positive view of Jewish tradition and religion, culture and education. It attempted to show that religion had a place in the rebuilding of a Jewish nation. Since many of the secular Zionists regarded religion as the bondage that had kept the Jews a downtrodden minority in most countries where they had settled, it was no easy task.

The *Ha'poel* ideology was socialist, stressing the need to develop the land through agricultural and industrial labour. This socialism, however, was in the end subject to prior religious and nationalistic considerations, and was of a very non-dogmatic kind. Much of the influence on civil matters that *Mizrachi* has had in modern times stems from the *Yishuv* era in Palestine. Under the *millet*-system, the *Mizrachi* movement could play an important role in the Jewish community. After independence, *Mizrachi* was well suited to continue coalition life; its followers were heirs to the tradition of participation, bargaining and compromise.[19]

The decline of *Mizrachi*, and the growing strength of *Ha'poel* (due to their grassroots work and their control over the absorption of new immigrants), made the *Mizrachi* leadership argue for a merger between the two. For *Ha'poel*, the merger looked more and more interesting as the party was riven by fractional strife. In 1956 the two merged, creating *Mafdal*.

In 1977, with Labour losing the election for the first time, the NRP switched allegiance from Labour to *Likud*. Since then, the NRP has declined and lost its influence to other religious parties, most conspicuously to the Sephardic religious party *Shas*.[20] This mirrors a change within the religious community in Israel, where a larger proportion of the religiously active population are of Sephardic or Eastern origin. *Shas*, furthermore, has gone from strength to strength; it has won seats in the last election, and has been part of every major government coalition in Israel since its inception. In the process, *Shas* has managed to take a larger 'piece of the political pie', to the detriment of other religious parties and, of course, to their ideological opponents in the secular parties.

The NRP, with its roots in the European Ashkenazic community, has not been able to counter

this effectively. Furthermore, by joining hands with *Likud*, the NRP has swung more to the political right, thus alienating many traditional supporters who voted NRP both because of its religious stands, and because it supported a moderate foreign policy outlook. This development would also come to play a role in the emergence of the religious peace movement in the 1970s.

Parties of Separation

Like the *Mizrachi* movement, the *Agudah Yisrael* and the affiliated *Po'alei Agudah Yisrael* arose in response to the challenges faced by Orthodox Jews in Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Although the responses of the two movements looked different, some similarities have emerged because of their common Orthodox background. First, it is significant that both movements established themselves relatively late in Palestine. They formed political parties there only after the First World War. The major reason for this was their emphasis on Judaism in Europe and, later, in the USA. For *Agudah*, the establishment of Israel as a state not solely based on the Torah (the Jewish law) only served to underline this.

Second, they sought support from the 'old' *Yishuv*. Of course, Jews have always lived in Israel. At the time of the start of the Zionist enterprise, they consisted of a rather small Orthodox community that did not take kindly to the secular, socialist radicalism of the Zionist movement. It was through this group that the *Mizrachi* and *Agudat* movements tried to gain a foothold within the country.

The third similarity is the shared vision of a Jewish state based on the Torah; although they differed sharply on how to realize this goal. In 1901, when the WZO undertook 'cultural' tasks and made the issue of religion something to be decided entirely by the individual, some Orthodox delegates withdrew from the WZO. Those who remained formed the *Mizrachi*. Those who left would later form the *Agudah*.

Agudah Yisrael was founded in 1911. The fundamental thing that distinguished this group from the WZO and the *Mizrachi* alike was the tenet that clerical authority would be paramount. This would later be the basis for their opposition to the quasi-government of the *Yishuv* and, later, to the State of Israel. The pattern of *Agudat* policy towards separatism, and its non-cooperation with anything not strictly Orthodox, has continued to this day.

Po'alei Agudah Yisrael (*PAY*), the youth and Labour movement of *Agudah*, formed its own party in 1925. When the political reality forced *Agudah* and *Po'alei* to co-operate more closely with the *Yishuv*, some people from the 'old' *Yishuv* broke away to form the totally rejectionist *Neturai Qarta*, which still does not recognize the legitimacy of Israel.[21] According to the world view of *Neturai*, it is better for Jews to live under foreign rule than in an independent country not based solely on the Torah.

As has been the case with other parties in Israel, *Agudah* has gone through several splits and mergers over the years. In the 1992 election, *Agudat* formed a coalition with two other religious parties (*Degel Ha'torah* and *Moriah*), which took the name 'The United Torah Party'. The purpose was to pool the votes of the religious community to gain a good bargaining position after the election. However, their efforts failed, and the combined parties lost three of the seven votes they gained in the 1988 election. In 1996, however, the combined votes of the religious bloc made it the third largest bloc in the *Knesset* after Labour and *Likud*. At present, the religious bloc

is larger than *Likud*, with *Shas* being the biggest religious party in the *Knesset*.

The influence of the *Agudah* has been negligible compared to the role played by *Mizrachi*, and later *Mafdal*. After 1948, realizing they had the most to gain if they joined in competition with other parties, the *Mizrachi* movement set out to nationalize religion. This was achieved by their serving as the pivotal coalition partner of the dominant *Mapai* Party. The task was further eased by the fact that *Mizrachi/Mafdal* already dominated the institutions handling religious matters, such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs – a key tool in carrying out the nationalization – and, to a lesser extent, but today equally important, the Ministry of the Interior.[22]

Much of the groundwork was carried out during the *Yishuv*-era after 1917. Under the *millet* system, the *Mizrachi* were able to influence the different political bodies set up by the *Yishuv*, most notably the Chief Rabbinate and the Rabbinical Court system, which were necessary to preserve the *millet* character of the otherwise not so religious bodies. Thus, they achieved an institutional basis for their domination of the religious establishment. First, they controlled those administrative and supervisory tasks that, in general, promoted religious life. Second, on the political level, the Ministry of Religious Affairs was, and is, the chief source and implementor of legislation on religious matters. Third, control of the ministry meant the ability to select personnel for virtually all the other religious institutions in the State, Jewish as well as non-Jewish.

Examples of bodies in which *Mafdal* had a dominant role are the Chief Rabbinate and the Rabbinical Courts.[23] These bodies handle day-to-day affairs and therefore determine much of the life of the Israelis. The major controversy here has been religious control of laws concerning civil statutes, such as marriage and divorce laws. The Rabbinical Courts operate parallel with the civil courts, and they have exclusive jurisdiction over all Jewish citizens.

Since these bodies were functioning and institutionalized in 1948, *Mafdal* had been able to establish a firm grip on them at the time of independence. This, together with the role played by *Mafdal* in coalition with *Mapai* and, later, *Ma'arach*, explains why the religious camp in general – and *Mafdal* in particular – could have had this influence for so long, even though they only made up 15–20 per cent of the population.

In the June 1992 election, the religious Ashkenazic parties lost ground. This was partly because the Sephardic party, *Shas*, gained votes as a result of changing demographics, and a determined power challenge launched against the 'established' Ashkenazim. This mirrored *Shas's* ability to appeal to Sephardic voters in general, and not only the religious ones. This pattern repeated itself in the latest election, when *Shas* again became the largest religious party.

The shrinking part of the vote going to the religious parties in elections during the 1990s also points to another factor that has been simmering in Israeli politics for a long time: the religious observant/non-observant cleavage. The essential dilemma arises from one fundamental issue: how far should religion penetrate society and the polity? Which law is supreme? That drafted by lawyers and politicians in a modern democratic context, or the one nurtured by generations of Jews, and which has in turn sustained them throughout centuries of Diaspora and persecution?

Rising resentment toward what was seen as religious coercion against the secular majority helped turn votes away from established religious parties. A case in point is the immigrants from the former USSR, who account for about 12 per cent of the vote. Whatever their ideological leanings, a majority were firmly non-religious (most voted Labour in 1992).

For the religious parties, the key issue has always been how to relate ancient values and

traditions to modernity. Virtually all the characteristics of organizational and political behaviour emanated from each party's ideological accommodation to, or rejection of, modernity. While the *Mizrachi* accepted Israel as a modern 'fact', the participation of *Agudah* in the political system is incomplete and conditional at best. Once *Mizrachi*, later *Mafdal*, accepted the idea of modernization, they felt that the best way of protecting tradition and religion was to do it from within the system. Consequently, *Mizrachi/Mafdal* organized itself in the proto-parliament of the WZO, and later in the *Knesset Yisrael*, in order to protect and promote the particular blend of modernity and tradition that was to be its trademark for so long. The adaptive abilities of *Mafdal*, used to protect and enhance the issues dear to their hearts, also showed themselves in 1977, when the party switched from supporting Labour to helping *Likud* form a new government.[24]

This move also contained the seeds of decline in the movement.[25] *Likud*, being more ideologically committed than Labour at that time and less willing to compromise, demanded a higher price for including *Mafdal*.[26] Furthermore, the other religious parties in the government, being ultra-orthodox and more separatist, forced *Mafdal* to accentuate its religious stance even more in order not to lose support. This showed itself most evidently in the question of the occupied territories, and in religious legislation aimed at enhancing the Ultra-Orthodox position. In order to defend its position as the most important religious party, which the government could not do without, *Mafdal* radicalized and moved towards the political right. This new role of having to defend their religious posture against more radical religious parties changed the outlook of *Mafdal*. As a result, the traditional *Mafdal* voters, the so-called 'modern Orthodox', were alienated by the new radicalism and the more 'ideological' posture;[27] these were the people who would later boost the fledgling religious peace movements of *Oz v'Shalom* and *Netivot Shalom*.[28]

Together with a higher and more radical profile on the part of the religious parties – not only *Mafdal* – and the tensions that this created, there was another parallel development affecting the religious milieu in Israel.

There is a saying in Israel that every Israeli has at least two synagogues: one to belong to and one to oppose – but both are Orthodox! This means that whatever the religious and political leanings of the individual, Orthodoxy is dominant throughout. The other two variations, Reformed and Conservative, do not have official status in Israel. That, however, was – and is – not the case elsewhere. In the United States for instance, with its large Jewish community, a growing number belong to either Reformed or Conservative congregations. Through immigration, these movements have become more vocal in Israel and have started to challenge the Orthodox monopoly.[29] This trend, which started in earnest during the 1980s, put added pressure on the established Orthodox parties just as they had to face competition from the Ultra-Orthodox, and new tensions with the secular majority. These new groups of Anglo-Saxon immigrants, with their religious roots in the liberal American and West European settings, also constituted an important pool of supporters for the religious peace movements.

Interestingly enough, however, this influx of Anglo-Saxon immigrants has also provided Israel's embattled Orthodoxy with new recruits, recruits that are often said to be 'holier than the Pope'. The radicalization of Orthodoxy in Israel, seen and felt most keenly in some of the villages and smaller cities on the West Bank, has to a large degree been dependent on, and drawn its manpower from, this group of immigrants, who often constitute the hard core of the

religiously motivated settlers on the West Bank. Ideologically, they are the polar opposite of the people supporting the religious peace movements, adhering to the notion of *Eretz Yisrael* as including the whole West Bank at the minimum. However, the religious tradition from which they take their strength and activism has, in many cases, the same pre-independence roots as that of the religious peace movements. Both have taken the early religious Zionists as their role model and both groups have stressed their extra-parliamentary activism as being an integral part of their political life, often using historical parallels as examples to follow. Frequently used as examples are the religious settlers from the decades preceding statehood. The religious settlers do not see their status as a minority as a liability. On the contrary, it is viewed as yet another proof of the devious path down which a secular government can go, and resisting that path is seen as imperative for the soul of the country, even if it means going against the law.

Both these trends within the religious community are examples of how political activism is based on values that are sometimes placed above the civil law of the country or, as is the case here, take precedence over decisions taken by the elected parliament. The reason is that these civil laws and decisions were not (in this case) based on the Torah, and thus are deemed to lack the necessary moral stature to be valid on a general level.

Today, these religious opponents of the peace process (or rather of the perceived results of that peace process) are dissenters from the majority view that still – despite the recent *Intifada* – believes that a solution based on peace is the only viable one in the long-term. Some of the arguments both sides use could be heard from the activists of the peace movement in the 1970s and 1980s, as well as from the early immigrants in the first *aliyot* who fought for a Jewish state, using every means (including illegal ones) to further their goals. The connecting factor is an ideological base built on values dating back to a time when the Jews had to rely, sometimes solely, on these types of activity for sheer survival.

The Knesset

Knesset means ‘assembly’ or ‘congregation’ in Hebrew. It has 120 members, just like the *Knesset Gedola* – the great assembly – that was the supreme legislative authority during the times of Ezra and Nehemia. As is the case with so many other features of modern Israel, the *Knesset* is a descendent of bodies that existed before independence.

Several traditions helped shape the outlook of the *Knesset*. The Zionist congress – convened annually or bi-annually – was a body that came to have great influence on the *Knesset*, both as a training ground for future members and as a model, because it functioned as a parliament. Furthermore, the parties taking part in the elections to the various congresses would later reappear in the *Knesset*.

Another important source of influence came from the British. There are similarities in the role of the speaker and in the various stages a bill has to go through. The democratic heritage in Israel stems from the West European tradition, in which the British system was long considered to be ‘the mother of parliaments’. For people like Ben-Gurion, it was spelled out from the start that Israel ought to have a political system entirely based on the two-party system in Britain.

A third source of influence on the present shape of the *Knesset* came from the models of the elected assemblies of the pre-state Jewish community in Palestine. Unicamerality and election by pure proportional representation resulting in coalition governments comes from this, formative,

period.

Between 1920 and 1948, when much of the groundwork of modern Israeli democracy was laid down, the Jews of Palestine had the 'benefit' of three different governments: two of their own – the Zionist organization and the National Council, with their respective executives – and the British, working through the Colonial Office. All of them influenced the *Knesset* in various ways.

Its immediate predecessor was the *Moetset Ha'am*, which served as an interim legislative body from May 1948 to February 1949; that is, between independence and the first elected *Knesset*.[30] This body – though only functioning for nine months – together with the provisional government (*Minhelet Ha'am*) provided for an orderly transfer of power to its successor during a time of severe and extreme pressure on the new State.

A Constitution

Although there were early indications, and attempts to do so both before and after statehood, Israel has never adopted a complete written constitution. Instead there are the 'Basic Laws', acting as a foundation on which the legislative body rests.[31]

Arguments in favour of adopting a constitution stressed the need to protect civil and individual rights, and to set limits on the powers of simple majority and of the government. In the first years of independence, the educational and cohesive force a constitution could provide for a country of immigrants with no firmly established democratic traditions was also emphasized.[32]

Arguments against a constitution ran mostly along the lines of the dangers of its misuse. One example stated was that of the United States in the 1920s and 1930s, when a reactionary High Court barred some legislation. Israel should not put herself in a similar position, in which a minority could bar essential legislation. Furthermore, it was argued that the dynamism of the country would be jeopardized by too rigid a frame-work. Special legislation was more urgent when thousands of people were waiting in transit camps.

Another problem for a constitution – it was argued – consisted of the fact that Israel drew on so many different traditions in comprising her legal system: Ottoman; Mandatary; British Common Law; the personal laws of the various religious communities; and original Israeli laws.

The most impassioned argument against adopting a written constitution came from the religious camp. They argued that Israel already had a constitution in the Torah and the Mosaic Law, and that this could not be replaced by a secular law. This argument carried considerable weight, since the religious parties were in the government coalition with the socialists. The ruling *Mapai*, which led the government, was very aware of this and did not want to push so sensitive an issue. The solution was to 'freeze' the *status quo* and postpone the question.

This issue has continued to haunt various governments ever since. Locally, municipalities have changed, or tried to change, the unwritten agreements, often accompanied by tough political battles. It is not only issues such as closing roads on the Sabbath, operating non-kosher restaurants and allowing cinemas to be open on Friday nights that are at stake but, more fundamentally, to what extent tolerance and sensitivity towards one group hinders the democratic freedoms of others. Dan Meridor, a former justice minister, initiated new legislation on a written constitution, where civil and individual rights should be spelled out. In this he had support from

the opposition, who vowed to continue to press ahead with the necessary reforms. Also included were direct elections of the Prime Minister, electoral reform, and more clearly stated roles both for the legislative and judicial arms of society. The religious parties in the *Knesset* were up in arms, and very nearly brought the government down before the elections in June 1992. The legal and parliamentary battles are by no means over yet, even though the elections in 1996, for the first time, involved direct election of the Prime Minister.

Elections

The electoral system has been criticized on two main grounds from the beginning of independence and the first elections:[33] that in encouraging the multi-party system and coalition rule, it impedes truly responsible government, and that it facilitates undemocratic choices of candidates which further separates electors and representatives. The last point arose from the way a *Knesset* list was put together by the party central committee; but has since been rectified by both Labour and *Likud*. Labour had their first American-style primaries in the spring of 1992 and *Likud*, pushed ahead because of the election loss, had their primaries later the same year.

At the heart of the debate concerning the multi-party system and coalition rule is the proportional system, with a 1.5 per cent threshold for acceptance in the *Knesset*, and with the whole country as one constituency. Criticism of this low threshold was highlighted with the election to the *Knesset* in 1984 of Meir Kahane, leader of the anti-Arab racist *Kach* Party. The threshold then was only one per cent. This gave promoters of electoral reform new ammunition, and also gave rise to debate on how the nation could protect itself from extreme and dangerous racism while, at the same time, keeping the democratic nature of the State intact.[34] This also brought to the forefront, once again, the question of a two-party system. Ben-Gurion's old dream of a British system is not entirely dead.

The most powerful argument against raising the threshold is that it would all but eliminate any chance for electing an individual with an independent mind. Most members of the *Knesset* are also aware of the picture of themselves as being 'appointed from above' (even though the new system with primaries might mitigate that picture somewhat). In 1991, the threshold was raised to 1.5 per cent, and with new electoral reforms being considered it could very well be raised even further. Underlying legislation for electoral reform is the fact '… that the surgeon is also the patient.'[35]

Nevertheless, the surgeon initiated an operation to be carried out for the election in May 1996. For the first time, the Israelis voted for two lists: one parliamentary list, and one for the direct election of the Prime Minister. This was, in effect, a deviation from the pure parliamentary system that has operated so far, and the idea was to promote more stable Cabinets. One possible consequence, and something the critics pointed out early on, was that the elected Prime Minister might find himself or herself in a position with only minority support in the *Knesset*.

The critics proved to be correct, and the election in February 2001 was the last time the 'two-ballot' system was used. The reform did not help the emergence of more 'stable' governments; instead, the new system made Cabinet-building even more problematic. In the next election the old system will be used anew.

Every Israeli national of either sex, over 21 years of age, is eligible for election to the *Knesset*.

This applies unless a court has deprived him/her of that right, or unless he/she has previously been sentenced to five years or more in prison for an offence against national security, and five years have not yet elapsed since their completion.

The President of the State, the State Comptroller, judges, ministers of religion, state employees above a certain grade and army officers are barred, by law, from candidacy. If an army officer or a senior civil servant wants to stand, he/she must resign at least 100 days prior to the election.

Elections take place every four years and are fixed for the third Tuesday in the Hebrew month of *Heshvan*, which comes in the autumn; a term can be shortened only by the *Knesset* under a 'dissolution' law that also sets a date for the new election. Two regular sessions, which together last at least eight months, are held each year. The longer winter session runs from mid-autumn to the week before Passover. The shorter summer session runs from May to the middle of summer.

The most important task of the *Knesset* is to exercise control of, and surveillance over, the government. The chief instruments for this are the State Budget and the State Comptroller. The committee that has the major role when debating the budget is the Finance Committee.

The State Comptroller Law was one of the first enactments of the *Knesset*, and since 1949, it has been replaced and further amended a number of times. The Comptroller is the tool the *Knesset*, and the public, relies on when trying to reach effectively into the offices of government. The Comptroller, who is appointed by the President on the recommendation of the House Committee, is responsible only to the *Knesset*. In order to be as independent as possible from the government, the budget of the Comptroller is exempt from prior review by the Treasury and goes directly to the Finance Committee. Appointed for a five-year term, which is renewable, the Comptroller is invested with broad powers and can be removed only by the *Knesset*.[36] Their findings are submitted to the State Control Committee set up especially for this purpose. The committee then has three and a half months to go through it and present it to the House for approval. It is noteworthy that the chairman of the committee always comes from the opposition. Since 1971, the Comptroller has also functioned as a commissioner for complaints from the public. Nearly half of these complaints have been regarded as totally, or partially, justified.

Government

In 1984 the elections ended in a stalemate; neither *Likud* nor *Ma'arach* were strong enough to form a government. The process of building a new administration was long and arduous. In the end, the result was the National Unity Government, consisting not only of *Likud* and *Ma'arach*, but also of a majority of the smaller parties that had made it to the *Knesset*. This was the one outcome very few people had predicted and it came as a surprise both in Israel, and abroad.[37]

This pragmatic solution, however, was very much in line with a feature in Israeli politics that has been a rule since independence: coalition government. Israel has always been governed by coalitions; continuing a tradition begun with the first WZO congresses, which rests on ancient Jewish tradition and history. This legacy can hardly be overestimated. It has been seen as both desirable and necessary, and as giving greater legitimacy to the various bodies representing the Jewish people.

Since the law requires the government to have a majority of seats in the *Knesset* to support it,

and since the government is invested the power of office by a vote of confidence, the *Knesset* can bring the government down by a vote of no confidence at any time. Any changes in the look of the government must also have the approval of the *Knesset*.[38] One result of this state of affairs is the significant potential for factional influence on government policy – which is at its greatest before elections, and during the negotiations to form a government. The structural cause of this factionalism stems from the fact that the present parties are the result of several mergers of their predecessors. The political cause of factionalism lies in the system of representation.[39] The 'weapon' of factionalism can lend considerable influence to the party that uses it skilfully.

The tilt of power has been in favour of the legislative arm, as opposed to the government, which is further weakened by the circumstances of coalition government. Against the weakness of coalition government – and the ensuing critique of weak executives – it is claimed that this situation provides a built-in system of checks and balances against too much arbitrary action on the part of the government.

The system of coalition governments worked well enough when the same parties kept governing. With new political realities during the 1980s, however, the flaws and drawbacks of the situation became more vivid. Added to this was a new awareness among the public of the 'horsetrading' that took place when a new administration was being formed. The sense of disgust and alienation this aroused among the electorate was one reason for the growth in extra-parliamentary politics that occurred during this time.

This also ties in well with the other main characteristic of Israeli political style: the ambivalent, paradoxical approach to power and the ruling government.

On one hand, complaints are often heard in Israel that the main problem in the country is the absence of a strong, able and efficient government. Calls for a 'strong' leader are frequently heard, and this is seen as a panacea for what is wrong in Israel.[40] On the other hand, the Israelis are extremely suspicious of authority, averse to power and very adept in the ancient art of circumventing it. Even though independence gave rise to high expectations of what to expect of sovereignty and the government, these expectations, and a certain willingness to grant decisive powers to the government, have constantly been checked by distrust and suspicion towards that same government.

Summary

In establishing a democratic political pattern, Israel drew experience from many sources, taking the principle of debate and the concept of intellectual pluralism from ancient tradition. If agreement could not be reached, a consensus was often found to postpone the issue indefinitely and to enable co-existence. Thus, dissent was institutionalized without threatening the entire framework. This pragmatic approach to problem solving is also evident today – both on the national, and the local, level.

Many centuries of this type of, partly religious, education prepared the Jews – wherever they came from to settle in Israel – to accept the principles of democracy But what, in pre-state times, were pragmatic and rational solutions to day-to-day problems were less easily integrated into a modern parliamentary system that had to deal with other, and infinitely more complex, issues.

The inherent, and built-in, contradictions in today's parliamentary and democratic framework

in Israel show both the difficulty of transferring a political culture based on activism and opposition into a more structured parliamentary edifice, and the problems of rewarding that same activism (even if it is illegal) while making political decisions, and conducting politics that often go against the same code of behaviour that underlies that activism. This dilemma, as shown above, is amply illustrated in the Israeli parliamentary system of today.

NOTES

1. Hebrew for 'going up.' Immigration to Israel has always been considered as a conscious act to be closer to God by living, and dying, in the spiritual and ancestral Jewish homeland.
2. See Etzioni-Halevy and Shapira, *Political Culture in Israel*.
3. See Amos Elon, *The Israelis: Founders and Sons* (Pelican Books, 1983).
4. The most famous was Theodor Herzl's *The Jewish State*, published in 1896, and considered to be one of the most important works. It was published as a reponse to the anti-Semitism generated by the Dreyfuss trial. Previous to *The Jewish State*, the four main tracts of Jewish nationalism were: Yehuda Alkalai's *The Third Redemption* (1843); Moses Hess's *Rome and Jerusalem* (1862); Zvi Hirsch Kalischer's *Seeking Zion* (1862); and Leo Pinsker's *Auto-Emancipation* (1882).
5. Elon, *The Israelis*, p. 64.
6. See Note 4.
7. Zohar, *Political Parties in Israel*.
8. Elon, *The Israelis*.
9. His formula to solve the 'Jewish Question' was as simple as it was horrible: one-third emigration; one-third conversion; and one-third death.
10. Even Trotsky, under the twin evils of Nazism and Stalinism, told an interviewer in 1937 that assimilation did not work, and that even under socialism it might be necessary for Jews to live in their own territory
11. Ber Borochov was most influential in fusing Marxism, Zionism, nationalism and social revolution into a comprehensive theory He was a Jewish intellectual expelled from the Russian Social-Democratic Party for 'Zionist deviation.' His ideas appealed to many young Jews, equally committed to socialism and Zionism, because they reconciled the two.
12. See S. Eisenstadt, *Israeli Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1967).
13. Zohar, *Political Parties in Israel*, p. 42.
14. *Meretz* consisted of *Mapam, Ratz* – Citizens Rights Movment (CRM) – and *Shinui*, a centrist party. *Meretz* was formed as a 'peace list', to advocate new initiatives in the stalemated peace negotiations with the Palestinians.
15. *La'am* was a remnant of the *Rafi* Party; created by Ben-Gurion in oppostion to the direction the Labour Party was taking. In 1968, when a united Labour Party was formed, *Rafi* joined but *La'am* refused to do so. After Ben-Gurion's death, *La'am* joined *Likud*.
16. Named after Lord Balfour, British Foreign Office Secretary during the First World War. In this declaration, the British Government promised the Jews a national home in Palestine and expressed their declared intent to work towards that goal. The declaration was later included in the peace agreements after the War, when the old Turkish Empire was divided. For the British connection to Palestine, see Barbara Tuchman, *The Bible and the Sword* (London: Papermac/Macmillan, 1982).

17. In addition to Orthodox Judaism, there are also Reformed and Conservative groups. These movements are rather strong outside Israel, for example in the USA, but in Israel the Orthodox establishment has so far prevented these movements being considered on an equal level. On several occasions, this state of affairs has created embarrassing conflicts between the Israeli administrations and Jewish groups overseas, where the majority of Jews are either Conservative or Reform.
18. See Schiff, *Traditions and Politics*.
19. Ibid.
20. In Israel, the division of the religious community into two major parts is very important. The Ashkenazic and Sephardic religious communities have their own chief rabbis and religious courts, their own independent school systems (one reason why the Minstry of Education has always been a sought-after post by the religious parties in the government), and their own religious councils guiding and deciding the stands of their parties. A relatively new party, founded in 1983, *Shas* has managed to make political inroads into the Orthodox community, helped by the support of many non-Orthodox Israelis of Sephardic origin.
21. The vehement refusal of the *Neturai* to have anything to do with Israel as a state has led them to choose some strange bedfellows. One of the leaders of the sect, Moshe Hirsch, accompanied the Palestinian delegation to Madrid at the start of the peace conference, as 'adviser' on Jewish affairs. In an interview, he said that the goals of the Palestinians and *Neturai* were the same: to end the existence of Israel as an independent state.
22. See Schiff, *Traditions and Politics*.
23. They still have much influence within these bodies as a result of many years of dominance – today, however, that influence is being challenged by other Ashkenazic religious parties; no longer can *Mafdal* automatically control who is going to be chief rabbi (who is usually Ashkenazic). Also, for the first time, the frontrunners for the position are closer to the Ultra-Orthodox than to religious Zionist circles. This has meant even less credibility with the greater Israeli public, most notably with the modern Orthodox population.
24. For *Mafda's* political adversaries this was, of course, horsetrading, and a rather spineless desertion. The fact is that *Mafdal* never made any secret of the fact that their support for Labour was conditional, and for a 'higher' good. The rationale, of course, that more influence was to be had inside the government than in opposition.
25. Even though *Mafdal* made something of a comeback in the latest elections, the overall trend still holds. The progress on the part of *Mafdal* had more to do with events connected to the peace process than with any 'religious revivalism' *per se*.
26. Later on, when coalition politics exacted a higher price from *Likud*, this stance mellowed. But the change at the beginning of the *Likud* era pointed towards a new direction that has stuck.
27. Throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, a shift in the social and demographic background of the supporters of *Mafdal* became evident. Instead of the modern Orthodox and the 'old' Labour-orientated religious establishment, more and more of *Mafdal* supporters came from the settlements on the West Bank and Gaza, and from the new, ideologically committed, religious students in Yeshivot who were connected with *Gush Emunim* and related groups. Today *Mafdal* has lost much of its historical attachment with Labourite Zionism. In the process, the party has transformed itself, and the modern Orthodox groups that support a Labour–religious coalition have gone elsewhere.

28. For the elections of 1988, this group was big enough to try to launch a party of their own: *Meimad*. They failed to achieve the *Knesset* threshold, however; but for this group of urban, modern Orthodox Zionists there is no clear political alternative today. *Meimad*, however, managed to survive and its leader, Mikael Melchior, became a junior minister in Prime Minister Sharon's Cabinet.
29. The most important inroads made so far are the right to equal, or almost equal, footing with the Orthodox when it comes to funding for religious learning and teaching institutions. This has long been an exclusive domain for the Orthodox, much due to the fact that the NRP and, more recently, *Shas*, demanded, and usually got, the Ministry of Religious Affairs as the price for supporting the government. As stated above, however, at least some of the progress made so far is in danger of being rolled back through the effort of the religious parties in the present administration.
30. See Samuel Sager, *The Parliamentary System of Israel* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1985).
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. *Kach* was later prohibited from running the new elections because it advocated racism and incitement towards other people.
35. Sager, *The Parliamentary System of Israel*.
36. The weapons of the Comptroller are fines and legal action against offenders. Another useful tool in forcing compliance with the findings are the considerable media coverage of the yearly report. A public 'hanging' is not considered advantageous for a career, politically or otherwise.
37. The National Unity Government survived long enough to tackle the main difficulties plaguing Israeli politics at that time: the war in Lebanon and the economy. Halfway through the mandate period, the rotation of Premier took place as planned, much to everyone's surprise. In 1988, however, the National Unity Government fell apart and *Likud* formed a new government together with some small rightwing and religious parties. The main critique of the National Unity Government was that the *Knesset* had become little more than a formal talking place, since the government had such a solid majority as to make opposition virtually useless. As an 'emergency' cure it did prove to be efficient; however, the troops in Lebanon were pulled back in the main, and security for the northern border was handed over to the South Lebanese Army (SLA) in the security zone, except for small contingents of 'advisers', and patrols sent in when needed. As for the economy, inflation was cut from three-digit figures to a more normal level of 10–11 per cent.
38. As a result of this, there has been a proliferation of no-confidence votes against the government, used by the opposition as a way to constantly harass and pressurize the government. This has further weakened the government, and is constantly used as an argument in discussions of electoral reform.
39. See Gershon R. Kieval, *Party Politics in Israel and in the Occupied Territories* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983).
40. Even the scion of strong and charismatic leaders in Israel, Ben-Gurion, never received a majority of votes when he led *Mapai*. After splitting with the party and forming his own list, he only received 7.9 per cent of the vote. Another case in point is the pre-election merger in

1969 of four Labour parties, which achieved a majority on their own in the *Knesset* for the first time ever (63 out of 120). The electorate's reaction was the direct opposite of what the party leaders had hoped for, and the party was reduced to minority status again with only 56 seats.

3

Israeli Peace Movements

'… and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.'

(Zechariah 6:13)

The Israeli peace movement, from its early period to 'Peace Now', incorporates many variations, traditions, ideological frameworks and modes of operation from a history that pre-dates the movement itself. Unconsciously, and sometimes consciously, this political luggage is used in a political culture that made it possible for an extra-parliamentary peace movement like 'Peace Now' to appear, grow and make an impact.

There has been a peace movement in Israel since the birth of the State in 1948. The early period – before 1977 – can be divided into two phases: before and after 1967.

The Early Period

Early peace activism in Israel can trace its roots to the decades before independence. In the middle of the 1920s, the 'Peace Covenant' (*Brit Shalom*) was founded in Jerusalem. The leading personalities were lecturers and teachers at the newly established (in 1925) Hebrew University, such as Judah Magnes, Martin Buber, Gershom Scholem and Hans Kohn. They all belonged to the congregation of Jewish intellectuals that matured and worked in *Mitteleuropa* during the first decades of this century and, in Palestine, they were a breed apart, although at the same time very much involved in the Jewish enterprise. Their anarchistic, radical and Messianic philosophy did not go well with the pragmatic, down-to-earth socialism of the dominant, East European-born ideology that led Jewish politics at the time. Their criticism of the State, as such, went in the opposite direction from the stated goal of the Zionist movement, in which an independent Jewish state was the final goal. The Covenant's critique of the State, and indirectly of parts of the Zionist enterprise, also led to a rift between them and the larger public.

Directing itself mainly toward the leadership, as well as toward the British authorities, the Covenant was primarily involved in trying to persuade the Jews of Palestine to adopt the model of a bi-national state in solving the political conflict between Jews and Arabs. This was seen as the only viable non-violent solution to the conflict.

It was never a large group, and the fact that the leaders included some of the foremost Jewish intellectuals in contemporary Palestine did not necessarily throw a positive light on peace activism. For the general public – dominated by a socialist, pragmatic activism – peace activism

became associated with academic pursuit far removed from the political struggles of 'real life'. The group's exclusiveness and clearly pacifist outlook alienated it from the larger public, thus hindering real influence. Nevertheless, the emphasis on Judaism (based on universal Jewish values such as humanism and tolerance), would later play a role for the ideological base of more modern peace movements.

The dominant trend within the Zionist movements was to focus on partition as the best solution. It was feared that a bi-nationalist state would preserve Arab dominance, and thus never allow the Jews political sovereignty. The battle cry of early Zionism – 'a land without people for a people without land' – had, however, already been killed by the harsh realities of Palestine. During the decades immediately preceding independence, efforts were made toward reconciliation with the Arabs;[1] but the efforts were carried out *vis-à-vis* those Arabs who were ready to accept the Zionist enterprise in Palestine. These Arabs were never a large group anyway, and at the beginning of the 1930s, the battle lines were clearly visible. The *Yishuv* leadership, as well as the rank and file members, made consistent efforts to leave the doors to dialogue open;[2] however, the few Arabs still willing to compromise were silenced by the more hostile majority.

The influence of the Covenant never really reached outside academic circles – it disintegrated by itself, but with some of the leading members continuing to take part in other frameworks[3] – however, the ideological leanings of the Zionists made attempts at reconciliation with the Arabs an important priority. The main concern was with Israel as a just society with a moral duty to treat the Arabs in an exemplary way. Peace with the Arabs, it was felt, must come through the example set by the Jews themselves. This moral argument was to be picked up and used by later peace movements/activists as an important ideological base.

The failure of the Covenant put its imprint on several of the new groups formed during the next years. Groups such as 'Towards the East' (*Kadima ha Mizracha*) and the 'League for Jewish-Arab Rapprochement and Co-operation' (*Ha-liga le-hitkarvut ve-leshitufyehudi-aravi*) tried hard to distance themselves from their predecessor, but their ideology was essentially the same. They were active during the second half of the 1930s and the early 1940s when the conflict between Jews and Arabs had already erupted. This made their ideas of a joint administration and general co-operation either seem defeatist and anti-Zionist (a severe charge at the time) or, to the more tolerant critics, hopelessly naive, even when the hard facts proved them wrong. A more severe charge, where both critics met, was the accusation that the peace groups challenged the consensus of the Jewish population in a time of dire straits. This argument against peace groups would also be repeated during the 1970s and 1980s. It was formulated by the elected Zionist leadership dominated by Labour, who themselves came under fire from the peace groups for relying too much on armed self-defence. At that time, the rule of Labour was virtually unchallenged, and this was enough to deprive the peace groups of anything more than mere existence on the margins of the political system. Labour called the shots, and was to continue to do so for the next 35 years.

At the beginning of the 1940s, the feeling among the Jewish population in Palestine was that the situation had reached a decisive stage. It followed that the policy to be agreed upon was more important than ever. As a result, the ideological clashes within the *Yishuv* intensified. This was also shown by the establishment of the 'Union' (*Ihud*), founded in 1942 by peace activists[4] who felt that the time of caution was gone, and who believed that a uni-national state surrounded by

hostile Arabs would spell the end of the Jewish enterprise in Palestine. They feared that whatever moral advantage the Jews had would be lost through the 'rule of the sword'.

The more aggressive argumentation of the 'Union' did not help their cause, however. The public rejected the bi-national concept and the partition plan was accepted. With the outbreak of the Israeli War of Independence, any chance of a solution along the lines suggested by *Ihud* (the 'Union') was doomed. During the first part of the 1950s, the 'Union' tried to influence the higher echelons of the polity. The failure to do this eventually led to the demise of the association.

In the early 1950s, the first peace organization that was not rooted in any pre-independence framework came into being: 'The Israeli Peace Committee'. This was the first attempt to establish the Israeli chapter of an international peace group, the 'World Peace Council', best known for the 'Stockholm Petition'.

The Committee also managed to establish two other 'firsts' on the Israeli political scene that would prove major reasons for its very limited influence and short tenure. For a start, it tried to organize extensive extra-parliamentary political activity as a way of influencing the public. This was not an accepted norm in Israel at that time. Moreover, it was even seen as harmful to the orderly way in which Israel was supposed to function. The influence of *mamlachtiut*, as envisioned by Ben-Gurion and the dominant Labour Party, ruled the day.

It is important to note the change from pre-independence to post-independence political behaviour. Political activity, as organized by the *Yishuv* before 1948, put an emphasis on civil disobedience, taking the 'cat-and-mouse'-style politics played with the British and the Arabs as its model. As soon as independence was achieved, however, the emphasis turned to an orderly, parliamentary rule-of-law approach. A key point in understanding this is the dominance of Labour. The change in political outlook was a conscious decision on the part of Ben-Gurion and Labour to mould Israel as they saw fit, to turn the country into a stable, democratic state and to keep Labour at the helm.

The second taboo broken by the Committee was its open allegiance to a non-Jewish and non-Zionist organization; an organization that had close connections with the Soviet Union, and whose international members often showed hostility towards Israel at various congresses and conferences. This hostility came mainly from delegates from Arab and Third World countries, but also from representatives of the Soviet Union and the European parties who ran the Council. Membership of such an organization added to the suspicion with which the public viewed the Committee.

Another reason for the hostility which met the Committee from the ruling Labour Party was that its only possible competitor, *Mapam*, supported the Committee, and thus constituted a threat to Labour's dominance.

In the end, the Committee had to withdraw to the very margins of the political field. Its failure to be anything more than marginally influential was a tribute to the power of Labour, and the Committee represented the last attempt, before 1967, to present pacifistic ideas outside of the parliamentary fold. Its legacy would not be entirely negative, however. Its extra-parliamentary activity would surface later on in the new peace movements developing in the aftermath of the Six-Day War.

Political activity outside the parliamentary fold, emphasis on 'direct action', and inherent suspicion of authority, would prove to be stronger than one dominant ideology – as interpreted by *Mapai* – and would gain a new lease of life later on.

After 1967: Status Quo and Protest

The situation changed drastically with the Six-Day War in early June, 1967. Politically and militarily, the maps of Israel and the surrounding Arab states were transformed. Once again, the conflict between Israel and the neighbouring Arab states became the focal point for political debate in Israel. It was only overshadowed by the attention given to the plight of the Palestinians living in the refugee camps on the West Bank and in Gaza.

As a result of the war, which gave Israel control of the ancient Jewish homeland (Judea and Samaria), two ideological currents came to dominate the debate on how to proceed after military victory.

Those who saw in the result of the war a chance to fulfil their ideas of the Zionist dream, by incorporating the new territories, coalesced around the 'Land for Israel' movement' (*Tenuah Lemaan Eretz Yisrael Hashlema*). This movement was established to put pressure on the government to turn military advantage into a political *fait accompli*. Annexation, or at least a permanent bond between pre-1967 Israel and the West Bank and Gaza, would make it impossible for Israel to leave the Territories. This movement was the first, more successful, attempt to influence the policy-making process in the government from the outside, that is, through means other than the established political channels.

For the peace movement, on the other hand, the result of the war meant that a possibility for real peace with the Arabs opened up. This could be achieved by trading land for peace, a move that would also show that Israel was not expansionist (a major Arab charge since independence). It was hoped that in the longer run, leaving the occupied territories could also lead to Palestinian independence, thus creating peace between Israelis and Palestinians. In order to be better equipped to meet the challenge from the advocates of 'Greater Israel', the peace movement became more organized. This was also a necessary step when trying to put the message of peace across to a wider audience.

Generally extra-parliamentary activity became more tolerated after the Six-Day War. This helped the peace movement to gain a better position on the political field.

The first successful attempt at more organized peace activity was the 'Movement for Peace and Security' (*Ha-tenua le-shalom ve-bitachon*), formed by academicians at the Hebrew University In a conscious attempt to woo the broader public and to distance itself from the failures of its predecessors, the movement was careful to stress its allegiance to the Zionist consensus, to underline its *ad-hoc* basis, and to emphasize that 'Peace and Security' had no intention of becoming a party, or even an established movement.

Instead, the movement stressed that a position supporting a strong, democratic Israel was not only compatible with compromises with the Arabs, but a prerequisite for peaceful coexistence; this line of argumentation brought 'Peace and Security' face to face with the NUG. This led to heavier criticism from the government, which argued – rather successfully – that 'Peace and Security' was nothing more than a marginal and radical movement that was trying to undermine the political consensus on 'Peace and Security', so important for the well-being of Israel.

The movement was rather short-lived: it functioned as a movement between 1967–73; and its influence did not manage to penetrate the political midfield to the extent it aimed for. One reason was that the movement never really managed to spread outside the universities; its members did not stage demonstrations or try to mobilise larger crowds, but tried to reach out via the media and

through lectures. Furthermore, no organizational structure was devised. However, it did lay the foundations for future peace activity by forcing the issues of war and peace (and their costs) to the forefront of the political agenda. It also showed that peace activism outside established channels could play a role. The *ad-hoc* nature of the movement also helped mitigate the narrow influence and the short duration of the movement.

Apart from 'Peace and Security", the peace movement consisted mostly of smaller groups, individuals and *debatteurs* in the media and at the universities. Their rallying point was protest against the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and the fact that Israel, through this occupation, suppressed another people. As soon as the fighting stopped, voices began to warn against holding on to the Territories.[5] In general, the peace movement also worked to influence the policy-making bodies from the outside, just as the 'Land for Israel' movement did. But they were not able to achieve the same organizational strength as their ideological counterpart. There were several reasons for this.

First, the organizational build-up was a problem. Generally, the peace movement consisted of two parts. The first part acted as the ideological head of the movement. This part of the peace movement often had good relations with people in the government and with left-wing parties in the *Knesset*, especially *Mapam*. It was the most influential section of the peace movement – a rather small, loosely knit, intellectual group based at the universities: mainly the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

However, the contacts with *Mapam*, which provided funds and logistics, proved to have a lasting influence on the peace movement. It had four viable results: (1) the centre of activity moved from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv (the population centre of Israel); (2) it made members from other left-wing parties join; (3) as a result of these two factors, more public meetings were held, thus more people were reached; and (4) some activists put together a 'Peace List' for the seventh *Knesset* election. The list failed, but their influence, through *Mapam*, remained and influenced future peace campaigns.

The other part of the peace movement consisted of the 'grassroots', the many activists, mentioned above, who had been working for a better coexistence between Jews and Arabs inside Israel. After the war, many young people joined. They had fresh memories of the fighting and a determination that it must not happen again.

The problem for the peace movement was that the intellectuals and the grassroot activists never worked as a single common force. The intellectuals did not formulate their ideas as concrete, political alternatives that the grassroots could build upon and help put on the political agenda. The peace movement was never the single, coherent force that the 'Land for Israel' movement became.

At the time, political action in Israel was still dominated by the political parties. In the short term, the way to reach and influence the policy-makers was either via the political parties or directly through Cabinet ministers. This was precisely what the advocates of annexation did: they worked to convince people already in the government, as well as politicians in the *Knesset*. The results were stronger ties between the Territories and Israel proper, achieved by settlements and stronger military control of the area.

Another important factor behind the influence of the 'Land for Israel' movement was the fact that it had been founded by people in the Labour Party – dominant since before independence – thus the movement could have access to the Cabinet via the party. In this way, much of the

influence of the peace movement could be neutralized.

The shape of Israel's government at the time also made life difficult for the peace movement. From 1967 to 1970, Israel had a National Unity Government, which included *Herut*, whose leader (Begin) was a staunch supporter of keeping the Territories under Israeli control. This issue transcended ideological and party boundaries. Israel was back in its spiritual homeland with a unified Jerusalem as the capital. This was no small matter. Even though official government policy was based on the 'land for peace' formula, it was made null and void through the pressure of Begin and his allies. This created a stalemate inside the government.

This stalemate was exacerbated by continued intransigence on the part of the Arabs. Arab refusal even to recognise Israel played straight into the hands of the 'Greater Israel' advocates. On top of the religious/historical argument for keeping the Territories, they could now also use the security argument, saying that for Israel to be flexible and ready to compromise under such circumstances was tantamount to national suicide. To add salt to the wound, the cutting edge of the 'Land for Israel' movement, *Gush Emunim* ('Block of the Faithful'), continued to set up wildcat settlements in the Territories; some settlements were dismantled by the army, but – due to fear of what it might do to the national mood if the army was used against Israeli civilians – many settlements were later recognized and permitted.

At the same time, the peace movements became increasingly frustrated at the government's inability to move in any direction while young men continued to die along the Suez Canal in the so-called 'war of attrition'. Furthermore, the fact that Israel had become an occupying power over a hostile population was a sign that something had gone awfully wrong in Israeli society, no matter how much 'right' Israel had to the land. This was the prevalent feeling in large segments of the public, not only in the peace movement. Some opinion polls taken shortly after the war showed a large majority in favour of returning the Territories in exchange for real peace.[6]

Frustration and anger were expressed in many ways. As a sign of what was to come, 54 high school students in Jerusalem wrote an open letter to Prime Minister Meir, expressing doubts about their ability to serve in the army. The fear was that Israel would fall prey to its own victory: Jews, who for so long had been the victims of oppression and violence, should not put others in that situation. Ceding territory for peace was one alternative for those who did not want to pay the price of being an occupying power. Time and time again, warnings were issued that the occupation was undermining the moral basis on which Israel was built.

The peace camps' opposition to the government oscillated around three major points: (1) opposition to settlements, as these were perceived as obstacles to a future agreement; (2) the right of the Palestinians to exist as a nation was paramount to the peace movement; and (3) the peace movement wanted the peace process to be gradual, with various stages leading up to a permanent peace. It is noteworthy that these principles would be used later on, not only by other peace movements, but also by different Israeli administrations in their dealings with the Arabs.

The peace camps wanted Israel to take the initiative. But how this should be done, and what concrete steps should be taken, was not so clear-cut. Because of this, the proponents of the peace option had some difficulties in reaching out to the broader public. Apart from the lack of clear alternatives that could be translated into concrete political steps, the mood of the public was also a problem for the peace movement. There was clear sympathy with the trading land for peace formula, which was also the official line of the government, but there was also a feeling of euphoria after the swift and total victory against heavy odds.

The ambivalence arising from, on one hand, the fear of corrupting the moral fabric of society through the occupation and, on the other hand, the relief at having crushed a dangerous threat to the national existence, demanded clear political alternatives as the way out of the dilemma. This was something that the peace camp was perceived as unable to provide.

Another problem was the issue of who to trade with among the Arabs. There were several self-proclaimed protagonists who laid claim to the role of 'sole legitimate representative' of the Palestinians. However, the Arab summit meeting in Khartoum in 1969 in particular (when the Arabs vowed not to negotiate, recognise or make peace with Israel) created a blockage to new initiatives.

The stalemate on the Arab side was also the result of the defeat itself. It was humiliating in its totality, especially considering the goals set up by the various Arab governments before the war – which were the 'liberation' of Palestine and the destruction of Israel. The gulf between these goals and the outcome was too great to overcome; it was felt that a peace would be imposed and, consequently, could not be tolerated. For the Palestinians, on whose behalf the war was supposedly fought in the first place, the outcome of the war was a re-orientation away from dependence on other Arabs, and a move towards a more self-reliant policy.

Coming under fire both from within and without, and facing rising criticism from abroad, the government took the only remaining option: to sit tight and weather it out. In this, the government was helped by the feeling that the victory, unexpected and unplanned, put Israel in a position in which it could afford to wait for the Arabs to take the initiative. In the light of continued Arab intransigence and the ambivalence of many Israelis, the administration stayed put. As Moshe Dayan, Defence Minister at the time, put it: 'I am waiting for a telephone call from Hussein.'(Hussein being King Hussein of Jordan.)

No new efforts were launched to try to break the impasse. The tactic was to keep all options open in anticipation of more favourable times. This tactic, however, left the field open for the activists in *Gush Emunim*, who continued to create facts – in the form of settlements – on the ground on the West Bank, knowing full well that they were breaking the law. The fact that they could do this with impunity, or near impunity, taught them and the peace movement an important lesson: that action and extra-parliamentary methods could pay off in certain circumstances, even if it was illegal.

This situation also led to another step that would eventually pave the way for extra-parliamentary movements in Israel: the breakdown of old, traditional channels for funnelling new ideas about peace and security; ideas which were gaining new momentum after the war in 1967. These traditional channels were mainly socialist parties, like *Mapai*, that had formed the backbone of all Israeli administrations since independence. When such parties became ineffective as political channels because of the new situation created by the war, the public had to find new avenues for their protest. For some of the Labour-Zionists, frustrated with 'their' government, and trying to meet the challenge from the more hawkish forces, the peace movement seemed to be the only viable alternative.

Between 1967 and 1973, the peace movement was rather weak, both in terms of organization and penetration. It did not institutionalize, and its proliferation pre-empted cohesion. Its access to decision-makers was considerably less than that of the pro-territory activists. The peace input did not mature into peace impact.

It did, however, lay the foundations for future peace activism, with 'Peace and Security' as the chief promoter. Furthermore, the limited impact it had was planted in soil fertile enough to let it

hibernate until the time was ripe.

1973–77: The Tom Kippur War – A Watershed

In 1973, the Yom Kippur War brought new changes. It was an important turning point with regard to the peace process, shocking many Israelis into realising that it was not enough to win a solid military victory in order to achieve real peace.

For the Arabs, the war meant that they could regain some of their lost pride at the same time as the military option reached a political impasse. For Egypt in particular, with Nasser's successor Sadat at the helm, the war provided leverage for creating new motivation to bargain for peace.

The step-by-step approach, engineered by Henry Kissinger, to reach the cease-fire agreements after the war made it possible to talk about a peace process for the first time.

For the peace movement, the war proved that the government was incapable of dealing with the peace issue, and that hanging on to the *status quo* had not prevented another war. Dissatisfaction and frustration with the government grew into a protest movement, including not only the peace movement, but also new groups seeking ways to vent their desire for change. With clear demands for change, this new mass movement turned into a channel of political influence that the earlier peace movement had never had. It was to become a new factor in Israeli politics, not only protesting against the perceived government inertia regarding peace initiatives, but also demanding a change of political leadership. This call for internal changes meant that peace policies also became intra-party business, coming to the fore particularly after the Israeli election in December 1973.

These new sentiments in Israeli society – aggravated by the economic hardships caused by the war – gave the peace movement a boost. From 1973 to 1977, parties hatched from the peace movement had a limited, but very strong, impact on political life. In the December 1973 election, a new party – the 'Citizens' Rights Movement' (CRM) – made it into the *Knesset*. Considering Israel's tradition of party politics and regulated political life, this was a definite achievement.

The Labour-dominated government managed to stay in power, however, even though significant gains were made not only by the protest movement, but also by a bloc consisting of conservatives and liberals (*Likud*), led by Begin. Had the election been further postponed – it should have been held in November but the war intervened – the Labour-led government might have fallen. Now it could stay in power, but the writing on the wall was becoming plain.

For the peace movement, the period between 1973 and 1977 was a time of laying the groundwork for the future. This involved not only being more visible to a larger public but also, and probably more importantly, making their ideas (peace with the Arabs and a two-state solution) part and parcel of the internal Israeli political debate. Even if there were differences of opinion on details and how to proceed within the peace movement, the issues were firmly planted in the political soil.

Reactions and protests in the aftermath of the war hit the political establishment with full force in the 1977 election. Once more a new party – the 'Democratic Movement for Change' (DMC) – emerged directly from the peace and protest movement and managed to get into the *Knesset*. DMC not only repeated CRM's achievement, but also became the third largest party in the *Knesset*, with 12 per cent of the votes. This position gave DMC a key role as power broker in ensuing negotiations on the composition of the new government. *Likud*, the other winner in the

election, was finally able to form a new government. For the first time since independence a government not dominated by Labour was formed.

The achievements of the peace movement were manifested through the DMC; and the potential influence of its ideas was shown when the right trends were present in society. In the end, however, DMC never gained the influence it had hoped for. A loose coalition from the start, the party soon dissolved into different factions, unable to handle the hardships of the coalition government. Also, with Begin as Premier, who favoured a tough stand on the territorial issue, the peace forces within the *Knesset* faced an uphill struggle.

Instead, the peace movement was reactivated outside the Knesset. One of the first groups to appear as a result of the Begin victory was the 'Movement for a "Different Zionism"'. Consisting mainly of alignment supporters, it challenged the Begin administration to stop its pro-settlement policy, adopting the slogan: 'No settlements in the Territories!' The idea was to influence and catalyze other people and organizations to work against Israeli retention of the Territories. Thus, the sentiments and ideas that swept the DMC into parliament were retained in society at large.

This was underlined by the public response to an event that would transform the political map of the Middle East. The same year that saw the birth of the DMC, the fall of Labour, and Begin's rise to power, also witnessed the start of the peace process between Israel and Egypt. In November, Egyptian President Sadat flew to Israel at the invitation of Begin. This trip became the trigger for extra-parliamentary peace politics in Israel on a scale never seen before. With Sadat's trip, the urge for peace saw a revival among the Israelis. The climate was conducive to a strong peace lobby. Attempts to translate peace politics into political action in the *Knesset* had failed, or at least not lived up to expectations, but mechanisms triggered off in Israel after Sadat's visit showed that there were other possibilities to influence the political system.

1977–82: The Peace Process Starts

The peace process initiated in 1977 first resulted in the Camp David Agreement in September 1978, and finally in a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt in March 1979. The period from November 1977 to the murder of Sadat in October 1981 became the high-water mark of extra-parliamentary peace activity in Israel.

The Sadat visit silenced 'Different Zionism', but only temporarily The negotiations that started after the first meetings (held alternately in Israel and in Egypt) soon ran into trouble. The ensuing stalemate in the peace process (due to high expectations and an underestimation of the realities) got the peace movement going again; once again, the process was initiated by students at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem: it began with an open letter to Begin, asking him not to do anything that could jeopardise the peace process with Egypt. This letter was signed by 348 students at the Hebrew University, but this time their initiative came with a difference: the signatories added their military ranks to their names so as not to be branded 'leftists' or 'deserters' – the customary response to other peace promoters.[7] There were several reasons for the letter: frustration with the stalemate in the peace process; a reaction to groups like *Gush Emunim* which were seen as destroying future neighbourly relations with the Arabs through their settlement activity; and a feeling that something must be done to 'fight the despairing mood in the country'[8]

The letter was also a novelty: it was written by reservists, all of whom had seen combat duty; some were highly decorated, and none were in the regular army (which is a very small group in Israel anyway).[9] Furthermore, the letter itself gives some interesting indications of the role of the army in Israeli politics.

Israel has a citizen's army; the draft is compulsory and universal.[10] The result is that people in Israel are both civilian and military and – even though the borders are strict between the two spheres – they are expected to behave 'politically'. From this it follows that soldiers, both officers and privates, are not only supposed, but also encouraged, to voice dissent and to take initiatives of their own.

The letter – by emphasizing its army connection – also pointed to a hitherto neglected fact: that a 'dovelike' outlook can go hand in hand with army duty. The emphasis on a citizens' army, the encouragement to 'think' civilian even in the army, and the fact that very few people stay in the army (most embark on a civilian career after their service), are among the reasons suggested for this.[11] Another probable reason for the involvement of soldiers in the peace movement is the fact that they were intimately involved in the matter through related issues, such as security and Israel's defence. They could see the problems, but also the remedies.[12] Again, the combination of 'an army of civilians' with the close connection between the issues of security and peace made for an initiative that broke new ground.

Response to the letter went far beyond anything the signatories had expected: several thousand private messages were sent to them in support of its content;[13] within two weeks, 200,000 Israelis had signed a petition in support; and another 100,000 attended a peace rally organized on the eve of the Camp David meetings.[14] The purpose of the rally was to urge Begin to compromise on the issue of territories (that is, Sinai) in order to obtain a peace treaty. During the six-month period between the publication of the letter and the rally in Tel Aviv, the 'Peace Now' (*Shalom Achsav*) movement was born.

In a relatively short time, 'Peace Now' became the largest peace movement ever to appear in Israel. Moreover, it also turned into the biggest extra-parliamentary movement in Israel. The response among the public and in the media showed that the letter had struck a deep chord within the hearts and minds of many Israelis. The feelings of hope for peace after so many years of wars – triggered by Sadat's visit – coupled with the despairing feeling that the peace process seemed to get bogged down in the usual pattern of charges and countercharges, combined to create favourable conditions for a peace initiative. This was all the more surprising as there was never any intention to create a movement or organization. It was more an attempt to vent some anger over the slow pace of the peace process with Egypt, and the feeling that something ought to be done; and it represented a sense of despair at seeing the process proceed arbitrarily rather than there being a clear-cut, rationally devised target.

The *ad-hoc* formation of the movement – with the initiators of the letter responding to the various messages of support and requests to join that poured in – proved to be as successful as it was unexpected. Nothing was planned, 'it just happened', in a surprisingly spontaneous manner worthy of a Salvador Dali.

The letter, which was eventually signed by some 250,000 Israelis, was the uniting force behind the movement. The demonstrations and other activities that followed had to be 'in keeping with the spirit of the letter', and had to be sanctioned by the newly formed leadership.

This led to a high degree of flexibility and considerable ideological variation. The letter became a common denominator for a large number of people who opposed *Likud*'s policies, both towards the peace process and generally.

Local branches sprung up around the country with a great deal of manoeuvrability for making decisions on their own. This came to be a lasting tenet of the movement. Eventually, the group coalesced around three main 'forums': Tel Aviv, Haifa and Jerusalem. These various forums could meet when the need arose and decisions had to be taken by consensus. Early on it was also decided that 'Peace Now' should not form a party, or align themselves to a particular party.[15] Instead, it was felt that the movement should work to influence the parties by lobbying from the outside. At the time, a major political rift in Israel ran along the issue of the future of the Territories, as it does today, which meant that 'Peace Now' was placed left-of-centre on the political scale. Support therefore came mainly from Labourites who were disgruntled with their party, and from other left-of-centre Israelis. The aim of the letter, however (and, later, of the movement when it came into being) was to reach the political mainstream.

The movement was seen more as a mood than a movement;[16] a channel for funnelling feelings about peace that were present in society. This was correctly seen to be both a weakness and a strength: it was seen as a weakness because it made for a vague, rather diffuse, picture of how peace should be achieved, with no clear answers or spelled-out alternatives to government policy – an emphasis on what should not be done instead of the other way around.

On the other hand, this was its strength, as it made it easier for more people with various ideological leanings to join in. Its less than specific, 'bottom line' approach meant that the movement could attract many people who might be scared off by a too ideological and determined a stand. One activist described 'Peace Now' as a slow-moving train that allowed people to get off at various ideological stops.[17] It was also felt that the issue itself crossed political boundaries, and that opting to establish a party (or at least to align the movement with a party) would be detrimental to the goal. The wide support enjoyed by the movement in its initial stages seemed to bear this out.

There were also other reasons for the success of 'Peace Now'. The timing proved to be right, even though this was unintentional. More clearly than ever before, there was an overriding statement around which to rally.

The peace process had several components, of course. Peace with Egypt was the most pressing and imminent issue, but there also seemed to be a real chance for peace with the Palestinians. That conflict was seen by many peace activists to be the core problem in the struggle with the Arabs, and it was hoped that the Palestinians would 'realize' this too and join in the process. The idea of the Camp David Agreement was that more actors should be included, most importantly the Palestinians and the Jordanians. The continued reluctance of the Palestinians to join would create difficulties and tensions within the peace movement later on.

Instead of the extended peace process spelled out in the Camp David Agreement, Israel and Egypt reached a separate peace accord. This was still seen as a step forward by the peace movement. Egypt was considered to be the most influential and important of the Arab countries, and it was felt that Egypt would eventually manage to involve more Arab participants in the process.[18] Sadat's role as peacemaker can hardly be overestimated. He had the vision to break the psychological taboo inherent in recognising Israel as a full partner. Without him, it is

doubtful that the Israeli peace movement would have gained the widespread support it did so quickly[19]

Another important reason for the success of the peace movement during these years was the weak parliamentary position of the government. Begin's first administration (1977–81) went through several changes; his party (*Likud*) did not have a majority on its own and was dependent on different coalition partners. These smaller parties gained an influence way beyond their actual size since, without them, there could be no Begin government at all. Begin was able to use a show of sensitivity to extra-parliamentary opinion to offset some of the pressure from within the government and in the *Knesset*.

The many crises and desertions experienced by the government eventually led to an early election in 1981. To the surprise of many, Begin managed to patch together a new administration, but with the same weaknesses as the old one. This was seen as a failure for the peace movement – a Labour victory would have meant an easier ride for its ideas (the land-for-peace formula and an end to new settlements in the Territories).

During the four years of the first Begin administration, the peace movement placed itself squarely within the political arena. What had begun as a loose conglomeration of various groups grew, after the Six-Day War, to a many-faceted and articulated set of opinions; and, led by 'Peace Now', established its own role and place on the Israeli political scene.

The conflict with the Palestinians was still considered to be the main point of contention. Self-rule and autonomy, spelled out in the Camp David Agreement, was considered a good starting point for further negotiations; but the Camp David Agreement – as well as the peace-accord between Israel and Egypt – was supposed to involve other parties, if it were to work as intended. When this involvement did not materialise, the issue of whom to negotiate with among the Palestinians loomed as a larger problem. Despite this, the peace movement pressed for an Israeli initiative, but the ball was not entirely in the Israeli court; something that the Israeli public discovered ahead of the peace movement. This created an impression of a peace movement that was not really in tune with public opinion. Egypt's inability to get more Arab partners onto the bandwagon, and the continued Palestinian refusal to join the process, showed that the impasse was not caused by Israel alone.

This issue created a division not only between the peace movement and the broader public, but also within the peace movement itself. On the one hand, the groups centred on 'Peace Now' argued that the peace movement had to be at the political centre of Israel, and that it had to work as a channel for currents within the general population.

On the other hand, more radical movements began to appear that argued that the peace between Israel and Egypt had not changed anything fundamentally. The core issue – the conflict with the Palestinians – was still unresolved. The cure was for Israel to push for peaceful compromises as a clear alternative to the perceived footdragging by the government. It was also pointed out that people on the Palestinian side, such as Issam Sartawi, had begun to talk about a peaceful solution, and that a compromise solution was perhaps the chance for Palestinians to gain something from the peace process.

1982–84: War and Peace

The debate continued, and the tensions within the peace movement came to the fore when the

war in Lebanon started in June 1982.

The war between Israel and the PLO in Lebanon had been an ongoing affair for a long time, with the PLO and other organizations using south Lebanon as a staging post for attacks against Israel, which were followed by Israeli retaliations. In 1978, this had led to a limited Israeli intrusion that silenced Palestinian attacks for a while, but since the beginning of the 1980s the border had been quiet for over a year, due to a *modus vivendi* of a sort developing between Israel and the PLO.

The immediate factor triggering the war was the attempted murder of Israel's ambassador to the UK, Shlomo Argov. This gave Begin the excuse he needed to finish the Palestinian 'state-within-the-state' in southern Lebanon once and for all.[20] The war did not become the short, limited, affair that Begin had had in mind, however; instead, the Begin administration fell, and the architect of the war (Minister of Defence Ariel Sharon) had to resign.

For Israel in general, and for the peace movement in particular, the war became a watershed. For the first time, the IDF was used as a political tool in a war that had not been forced upon the country. The protests were swift in coming, and in several cases soldiers on leave refused to return to the front. This was previously virtually unheard of. Demonstrations were organized and several new peace and protest groups were formed – partly as a result of the initial hesitation of 'Peace Now' to come out clearly against the war. This hesitation stemmed from the fact that several of its members were fighting and risking their lives; and it was felt that criticism of the war would hit people who were only doing their duty, albeit reluctantly. This was only temporary, however, and within a short time 'Peace Now' joined in the chorus demanding an end to the war.

The protest against the war – not only by people who defined themselves as being part of the peace movement – also represented the first large-scale Israeli protest during a time of severe stress against the conduct of the army, and against government policy. This was an important deviation from earlier times of crisis, and it was another example of how consensus – that is, solidarity with the country's policy during war – had been weakened. The peace movement, with 'Peace Now' as the dominant force,[21] took the lead in this development.

The army itself played a role in this. Soldiers on leave spoke about a war that was having a considerable effect on the civil population. The number of soldiers who refused to go back grew. The fact that many of the mid-level officers supported 'Peace Now' also probably affected the conduct of the war.[22] In the course of the summer, as the war dragged on without a clear end in sight, an organization was formed by army personnel to support soldiers who refused to fight in Lebanon. The group called itself 'There is a Limit' (*Yesh Gvul*). The name had a dual meaning, alluding to the border that ought not to be crossed; not only the international border, but also the internal border that every human being sets for him/herself to mark where loyalty to one's conscience comes above loyalty to the State. Due to its small size and its high-ranking members, the group were able to get information about the war out to the broader public, and also to members in the Cabinet who were being kept in the dark by the Minister of Defence and the CIC.[23]

Yesh Gvul's emphasis on placing the individual conscience above loyalty to the State, even in times of crisis, was based on their commitment to universal Jewish values as opposed to more particularistic, national values. In this, they hooked up with a much older Jewish tradition of

defying authorities when personal conscience clashed with a 'higher' loyalty towards, in this case, the State. The supporters of *Yesh Gvul* could also point to the permanent 'order of the day', issued in 1956,[24] that clearly spelt out that every person was responsible for his/her own actions, even during war.

Another example of the dilemmas posed by the war (and how to handle them) was the return of, or refusal to receive, the 'Peace for Galilee Campaign Ribbon', issued by the IDF to everyone who took part in the war. In the end, thousands of reservists signed petitions stating their unwillingness to receive the ribbon. The supporters of *Yesh Gvul*, and like-minded individuals, walked a tightrope, trying to balance conflicting and clashing loyalties and values.

Other *ad-hoc* groups appeared, such as 'Mothers Against the War'; this group was formed by the mother of one of the most important figures in 'Peace Now' – a soldier killed during the battle for Beaufort Castle, a PLO stronghold in southern Lebanon. Several other Israelis were also killed during the battle. The first news of the fight relayed through the high command, when the castle was reported in Israeli hands, had talked of a victory without casualties; however, the army high command had to backtrack when the truth was revealed: by other soldiers who were outraged by the attempted cover-up. The women behind 'Mothers Against the War' were equally determined that nothing like this would happen again. This was the beginning of a network that worked to ensure that information about the war reached the public and parliament alike.

The significant support gained by the peace movement, and by 'Peace Now' in particular, could be explained to a large extent by the high level of political involvement of the Israeli public. This involvement proved to be stronger than the long-honoured tenets of solidarity and consensus in times of crisis. One of the long-term effects of 'Peace Now' has been that the movement helped the push for a different view of what the national consensus ought to be. It was no accident that the movement partly grew out of 'Different Zionism'. The activities of the peace movement during the war also meant that the country experienced a time of severe division. Pressure against the government continued to mount, and it reached a peak with the massacres in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatilla in Beirut.[25] In the political mêlée that followed, Begin resigned and withdrew entirely from public life, and Sharon was forced to resign from his post as Minister of Defence.

New elections were held in July 1984 and, after long and hard negotiations, a 'National Unity Government' was formed, including both Labour and *Likud*. The new government was led by Labour leader Peres; with new *Likud* leader Shamir as Foreign Minister. The new administration had three main goals:

- To end the war and bring the troops home.
- To shore up the economy, which was in a bad state, with high unemployment and with inflation running wild.
- To restart the peace process.

During the war, the peace movement had proved that it was a force with which to be reckoned; and extra-parliamentary activity had become an option in the political field that it had not been before. The large demonstrations organized against the war showed that there was room for movements such as 'Peace Now', working outside the parliament but inside the political

mainstream. The outlook of the new government, however, meant that the influence and activity of the peace movement declined somewhat: the first priorities of the peace movement (an end to the war and a continued peace process) were among the issues that the new administration took upon itself to solve.

Another reason for the relative decline of the peace movement was that the channels into the political system were more or less blocked by the wall-to-wall majority in the *Knesset*. The solid majority made it difficult for the opposition to have any influence whatsoever, either inside or outside parliament. The peace movement's relationship to the new government was also complicated by the fact that there were several ties between them and Labour. Criticism of the government became more difficult than it had been with Begin as Premier, when the border between government and opposition was much clearer.

However, a lot of the peace movement's potential influence came from its ability to channel currents present among the broader public; currents that became visible when there was an issue to rally around. This had been amply shown during the Lebanese War, and in the ensuing political debate.

1984–87: Internal Problems and Uprising

During the years following the Lebanese War, the peace movement continued to work, but on a different level and partly with different issues. The war had highlighted the rifts within Israeli society more clearly – not only between Jews and Arabs, but also between groups inside the two ethnic communities. The political struggles during and after the war, which were often quite violent, led to the peace movement becoming another factor in a more polarized society.[26] To a great extent, opinions about the war and its conduct had cut across ethnic lines.

The peace movement shifted focus somewhat and became engaged in campaigns to spread what were seen as traditional Jewish values, such as respect and tolerance for dissenters and the meaning of democracy. The immediate cause for these campaigns – which targeted the government through the Ministry of Education, and several private and public scientific and educational institutions (such as the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem and the New Israel Foundation) – was the 1984 election, in which the outspokenly racist party *Kach* managed to get into the *Knesset*. The fact that, proportionally, many younger people supported *Kach* and its leader, Meir Kahane, led to the anti-racist project being started. This, in turn, eventually led to an anti-racist law being passed, and *Kach* was refused permission to participate in the next election on the grounds that it advocated racism and forceful expulsion of Arabs.

These new campaigns, and the work with 'internal' issues, did not mean that the questions about relations with the Palestinians and the fate of the Territories had disappeared. The internal problems, and a perceived continuing difficulty in finding a clear alternative to the PLO (which still did not support a compromise solution) only pushed these questions into the background.

The war, and the expulsion of the PLO from Lebanon, also made further contacts between the parties more difficult. The trends on the Palestinian side – which would eventually lead to new political thinking and a rift between the PLO leadership in Tunis (to where the PLO had moved its headquarter after being expelled from Lebanon) and the Palestinians on the West Bank and in Gaza – had not yet materialized, or made a mark on relations with Israel.

For the peace movement and for Israel as a whole, the Lebanese War meant that renewed

discussions and debates about where the country was heading, and how, were placed on the political agenda. The peace movement showed that it had a place in those discussions, and in the debate about the war, its consequences, and what future road Israel had to take.

In December 1987 the Palestinian uprising (*Intifada*) broke out. It started in Gaza and soon spread to the West Bank and Jerusalem. Within a year, the uprising would lead to important changes in the Palestinian community.[27] For Israel, the uprising meant that the difficulties with the occupation were highlighted once again, and it became the peace movement's main point of criticism against continued occupation. The *Intifada* gave the peace movement new ammunition in its argumentation that a *status quo* situation would be too costly for Israel, both morally, and in terms of sound economics.

The argument that Israel ought to take the initiative and talk to the PLO gained new momentum. At least, went the argument, the PLO should be given the chance to prove that they meant business with their new signals about peace and compromises, heard after the Palestine National Congress (PNC) meeting in Tunis a year after the beginning of the uprising. Furthermore, it was argued, the PLO was much better than the radical Islamists in *Hamas* and other groups, who began to gain more and more influence over the Palestinian population.

Ten years after the beginning of the peace process with Egypt, a new cause underlining the urgency for peace appeared; this time there was a natural point of contact for people who wanted to engage themselves in various peace efforts. The peace movement, with 'Peace Now' as a dynamo, had come of age.[28] It had placed itself on the political map of Israel and become part of the political debate about fundamental issues, such as war and peace, and the future of the Territories. Several taboos had been breached since 'The Officers' Letter'. At the same time, as shown above, the peace movement also helped to polarize Israeli society and to shatter the consensus and cohesion surrounding issues that were fundamental in Israel.

NOTES

1. Most famous were perhaps Chaim Weizmann's (later to become Israel's first Premier) meetings with King Abdullah of Transjordan, where a *modus vivendi* was reached. The deal reached was to have been a partition, but not the one envisaged by the UN. The ensuing hostilities, pressures from other Arab governments and, finally, the murder of the king in 1951, shattered the deal once and for all.
2. See Mordechai Bar-On, 'Peace Politics from Sadat to Hussein', ICPME Discussion Paper, 10 May 1986, Tel Aviv.
3. An example of how some of the ideas born during this time continued to live on is the Martin Buber Institute for Adult Education at the Hebrew University. A former president of the university, Kamal Yaron, has organized an institute that continues to use Buber's ideas of dialogue in practice, both at the university and outside.
4. Most of them, like Martin Buber, had been active for a number of years already, and saw the establishment of the 'Union' as a way to take a more active part in the political debate.
5. One author summed it up as follows: 'There is another reason why I don't want to hold on to these territories. *I don't want to be a colonialist*…if we hold on to the Territories, we shall enslave the people living there, since practically all the inhabitants do not want to live in the State of Israel or in a protectorate, and they say this even today, while still under the shock.'

(Amnon Kapeliouk, 'Peace By Stages', *New Outlook*, 3 (1968), p. 38). See also *Fighters' Talk (Siach Lochamim*), published shortly after the war. The book consists of interviews and dialogues with young soldiers, recorded by a group of *kibbutzniks* headed by a former pupil of Martin Buber. Many of the values expressed in the book were common to leading pro-peace people. It was a 'deglorification' of the war.

6. See *New Outlook*, July 1967, and *The Jerusalem Post* (international edition), September 1967.
7. Personal communication with Motti Peri, founding member of *Shalom Achsav*, Jerusalem, 8 January 1987; also withNaftali Raz, founding member of *Shalom Achsav*, Ma'oz Zion, 19 January 1987.
8. Peri, personal communication, 1987.
9. See ch. 1, the following pages, and n.13 below.
10. Israel's Arab citizens are excluded. They can volunteer but, apart from the Bedouins, this is an option that very few Arabs choose.
11. For a more extensive picture of the role of the army in Israel, see Yoram Peri, *Between Battles and Ballots: Israeli Military in Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
12. One participant at the time (the head of Israeli military intelligence) was quoted as saying: 'To conquer fear one has to have a political solution.'
13. The letter stated:

    We write to you with a profound anxiety. A government that prefers the establishment of the State of Israel in the borders of a Greater Israel (that is, including the West Bank and the Gaza Strip) above the establishment of peace through good neighbourly relations instils in us many questions (doubts) [*sic*]. A government that prefers the establishement of settlements beyond the green line [the pre-1967 borders] to the elimination of the historical quarrel and the establishment of normal relations in our region will awaken in us questions about the justice of our cause. A government policy that will encourage the continuation of control of approximately one million Arabs may damage the democratic, Jewish character of the State and make it difficult for us to identify with the State of Israel.]

    (David Hall-Cathala, *The Peace Movement in Israel, 1967–87* (Oxford: St Antony's/Macmillan, 1990).
14. The initiative to move the negotiations between Israel and Egypt to the USA came from President Carter, as a possible way to break the deadlock.
15. Raz, personal communication, 1987; Peri, personal communication, 1987.
16. Raz, personal communication, 1987.
17. Hall-Cathala, *Peace Movement in Israel*.
18. Egypt did manage to ride out the storm created by the peace with Israel. The isolation was broken and the Arab League moved its headquarters back to Cairo, but the price was high. Sadat was murdered in October 1981 by fundamentalist opponents to the peace process; ironically, during a victory parade celebrating the eighth anniversary of the October War.
19. Janet Aviad, Director of the Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem, personal communication, 27 November 1986 and 21 November 1991; Gary Brenner, Kibbutz Hazor, personal communication, 25 May 1981; Professor Golan Galia, personal communication 8 January 1987 (Van Leer Institute) and 10 December 1991 (Hebrew University); and Itamar

Rabinovitch, Professor, Stockholm, personal communication, 14 April 1985.

20. Schiff and Ya'ari, *Intifada*.
21. The initial hesitation soon gave way to a clear stand against government policy The first advertisements in the press appeared on 16 June, and the first large demonstrations were held in Tel Aviv on 1 and 2 July.
22. Galia, personal communication, 1987 and 1991; Peri, personal communication, 1987; Raz, personal communication, 1987; and Dr Michael Soltman, Haifa University, Haifa, personal communication, 17 November 1986.
23. Galia, personal communication, 1991; Peri, personal communication, 1987; and Raz, personal communication, 1987.
24. There are numerous examples of this in Israel today. One of the best is, perhaps, the permanent military 'order of the day' issued by High Court Judge Binyamin Halevi in 1956. This arose from an event that took place in an Arab village in Israel shortly before the Sinai campaign in October that year. An order of curfew was not relayed to the men of the village working in the fields, and when they returned at dusk, several soldiers panicked and many villagers were killed. In the subsequent trials, the soldiers responsible defended themselves by stating that they were only following orders. This was not accepted, on the grounds that responsibility rests with the individual. Henceforth it became illegal to obey orders that would constitute danger to innocent people, whether civilians or military personnel; this case is often evoked by the peace movement when the conduct of the military (especially in the occupied territories) is scrutinised. For further discussion, see ch. 6.
25. Schiff and Ya'air, *Intifada*.
26. Aviad, personal communication, 1991; Galia, personal communication, 1987. See also Horowitz and Lissak, *Trouble in Utopia*; and Schiff and Ya'ari, *Intifada*.
27. Schiff and Ya'ari, *Intifada*.
28. The *Intifada* led to the appearance of several new peace groups. See Magnus Norell, *Guide till fredsrörelser i Israel* [*Guide to Peace Movements in Israel*] (Stockholm: Fredshögskolan, 1990).

4

‘Peace Now’: Anatomy of a Movement

When the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt was signed in March 1979, the immediate goal of ‘Peace Now’ was realized. Peace with the most important Arab country was seen as a key to extending the peace process to other Arab states and, even more important, to the Palestinians. The basic goal of ‘Peace Now’ (the peace-for-territories formula) was not novel, but the emphasis given to it by the movement put it at the forefront as the tool for a peaceful solution to the conflict.

It could have stopped there, with ‘Peace Now’ like a mayfly born out of the peace process with Egypt, vanishing in the wake of the peace treaty. The fact that ‘Peace Now’ survived its initial goal, peace with Egypt, was due to a shift in its focus from the land, to the people living there. The basic goal was not abandoned, but the new emphasis led to a shift in the argument toward more moral considerations, rather than a pure political argument. This shift, however tactically correct, also led to some controversy within the movement. It was feared that to emphasize the ethical and moral issues of the occupation too much would be to repeat the mistakes of earlier peace movements, and to invite accusations of not being ‘loyal’ to Israel in the face of ‘the enemy’. As it was, those arguments came up anyway, but they failed to crush the movement. The initial signatories, with their impeccable army connections and assurance that this was being done out of concern for Israel, carried the day. Again, the timing for such an initiative proved to be right. The flexibility of the movement in reacting and responding to changing political circumstances is an important explanation for its tenacity and continued existence, even during times of declining membership.

As the group matured, new strategies were also called for. There were two main roads that could be taken to influence government decision-makers. The first was to link up with a political party, preferably one within the government. The changes in the political culture, heralded by *Likud*’s rise to power and a growing extra-parliamentary activity, still had to make serious inroads in the established position of the party as the dominant power in the political field. There were voices for linking up with a party since the DMC, born through the same protest movement as ‘Peace Now’, was now represented in the administration.

This option, however, was ruled out early by the fledgling ‘Peace Now’ leadership:[1] as the movement grew, a clearer view of what the movement wanted was called for. In this context, it became clear that ‘Peace Now’ was a ‘mood more than a movement’, and that it needed to respond to that public mood and be a channel for public sentiments. Determined to be mainstream, it was paramount for ‘Peace Now’ to include as many people as it could. In a sense, it was a case of the least common denominator: ‘Peace and Security’; it was therefore felt that to align the movement to a party would be contrary to its stipulated goals.[2] The decision to work

through consensus should also be seen in this light. The tenet of never overruling a minority opinion has been with the movement ever since.

At the heart of the convictions of the early activists were also frustration and contempt for the existing political order, not least the political parties. This also called for the distancing of the movement from the parties and the lure of influence through the prolific election system in Israel. With a one per cent threshold for *Knesset* membership at that time, the possibility was certainly there.

The other road to take to influence the government and the establishment was to adopt a radical strategy with a high 'nuisance-value',[3] such as demonstrations and sit-ins. To be, as Gilles Kepel put it:

> … i politiken utan att vara en del av politiken. [… in politics without being part of politics.][4]

In other words, not to be bound by all the rules of the political game, but to take part in that game nevertheless. This approach was not new. To the extent that extra-parliamentary activity had been used before, the 'nuisance' factor had been one way of getting the message across. It often worked.[5] This, however, posed new problems for the movement; in the early stages of the build-up of 'Peace Now', there was a conscious decision to stay within the parameters of the law. The emphasis on being the mainstream, and the effort to be a movement for a large part of the public, a part that normally did not take to the streets, put certain obstacles in the way of using these tactics too much. In the beginning, the movement was careful not to overstep the line of illegality. Police permission was duly sought for every demonstration, and a permit to carry it out was a prerequisite.

The challenge was therefore to put a mark on the political scene, and to take advantage of the currents present in society, without having to resort to tactics that would alienate a large proportion of the potential supporters.

The discussion of tactics, goals and strategy continued unabated within the movement as it continued to grow. As time went by and new issues came to the fore, such as the war in Lebanon (with the Sabra and Shatilla massacres being particularly burning events), and more settlements in the Territories, more radical tactics were sometimes called for. Slipping into the West Bank to protest against new settlements became a feature of 'Peace Now' activity The perceived lack of forceful and radical responses to the often illegal activity of *Gush Emunim* and allied groups led to the establishment of other, more radical, peace groups, such as *Yesh Gvul* and *Kav Adom*.[6] These and other groups and movements criticized 'Peace Now' for being too cautious, especially since their ideological 'enemies' broke the law with some regularity in establishing illegal settlements.

The overall strategy of 'Peace Now' remained one of trying to play by the rules, as long as possible, and to continue to aim at the political centre. Prominent features were demonstrations and mass rallies, and the number of participants was a good measure of the appeal of the movement. Despite the internal debates and controversy over ends and means, a discernible strategy developed. Considerable imagination and innovative tactics were used, but they were nevertheless always within the limits of conventional political participation. This extra-parliamentary activity was, however, on a scale never before seen in Israel.

The success of ‘Peace Now’, at least in the short run, in gaining a position on the political field, was largely the result of its ability to adapt and change tactics in pace with the changes in the political arena. ‘Peace Now’ did not choose one of the above-mentioned ways over another, but used a combination of tactics.

Impediments

After the peace treaty with Egypt, the arena of the struggle was transferred to the West Bank and Gaza in order to combat *Gush Emunim* and the heightened settlement activity in the Territories. With the conclusion of the peace treaty with Egypt, dooming the settlements clustered around the town of Yamit in northern Sinai, *Gush Emunim* and the government rightly perceived the new front as running along the ‘old’ border, or the green line. The option of peace for the Territories ran contrary to the government’s goal of never letting the West Bank and Gaza go the way of Yamit.

This was a clear-cut issue for ‘Peace Now’ to hook on to, but the peace treaty with Egypt, the most important Arab country, nevertheless led to a slackening of activity on the part of ‘Peace Now’. The organization had lost steam[7] and it became more difficult for ‘Peace Now’ to attract people to take part in demonstrations, especially outside the main population centres. There were two main reasons for this, both of which could be found in the resources and objectives of the movement.

The resources available to ‘Peace Now’ did not permit continuation of the earlier strategy, mainly because of lack of manpower. The reduced ability of ‘Peace Now’ to marshal support for its policy also led to heightened difficulties in carrying out visible protests, both against government policy and against the activities of the settlement organizations, led by *Gush Emunim*. There was a built-in weakness in the emphasis on the ‘mainstream’ to uphold ‘Peace Now’ policy. The movement became hostage to a population that could not always be counted upon to react to moves by *Gush Emunim* or the government, moves that ‘Peace Now’ saw as a danger to the continuation of the peace process. The leadership, as well as the rank and file of the movement, were well aware of this dilemma;[8] nevertheless, it was decided to pursue the road taken, that is, to be a channel for sentiments from the public at large. It was felt that the disadvantages this brought with it were outweighed by the danger of being perceived as too élitist and secluded, which would certainly alienate the public far more. The lessons of earlier peace movements and their failure to reach a larger public were well learnt.

As a contrast, one can look at the activity of *Gush Emunim*, which was perceived more and more as the main ideological opponent of ‘Peace Now’- even more so than the Begin administration – since it actively pursued a policy that made the peace process more difficult, and the Palestinians even more reluctant to join the process.

Gush Emunim aimed at a far more restricted section of the public (while they also tried to brand themselves as bearers of the same ‘true Zionist spirit’ as the peace movement, for *Gush Emunim*, that spirit was to be lived out in settling the land of Israel). They had a much more clear-cut goal (settle the land, thus making its hypothetical future return impossible) and an easy remedy to what was euphemistically called the ‘troubles’. *Gush Emunim* did not try to be a channel for ideas originating elsewhere, but aimed instead to initiate ideas, acting instead of

reacting to developments. Thus, they could always muster activists to carry out actions in the Territories as well as in Israel proper.

The second reason for the decline in the ability of 'Peace Now' to encourage the public to play an active role was grounded in the objectives of the movement. In the aftermath of the peace treaty with Egypt, 'Peace Now' shifted its focus to the West Bank and Gaza. Instead of trying to accelerate a process already in motion – that is, the peace process with a clear goal of peace with an enemy – 'Peace Now' changed strategy and focused another area (the Territories and the settlements), where their aim was to try to alter a process. This was a far more complicated issue. It not only contained the issue of settlements in the Territories, but also the question of how to achieve peace with the Palestinians. Because of these complicating factors, no clear-cut strategy of how these goals ought to be achieved was ever formulated.

The issue of the settlements involved not only the question of being for or against, but also the larger issues of whom and what belonged to the land, heightened tensions with the Palestinian population in the Territories, and the moral and ethical dilemmas faced by Israel as an occupying power. For the settlement movements, led by *Gush Emunim* and their political allies and sympathisers, the issue was simply presented as being whether or not Israel should incorporate what was rightfully hers. The choice was presented as a simple one – between right or wrong – and in a clear and authoritative way.

The peace movement, with 'Peace Now' leading the way, tried to counter this by bringing together all the related issues; something that complicated their task considerably In order to present a clear alternative that could be followed up by new strategies, however, new tactics were called for. No such tactics emerged, however, and 'Peace Now' only insisted on change, without spelling out how that change should be carried out.

A related issue was the fact that the attempts to establish communication with the Palestinians came to nought. The Palestinians wanted not so much the dialogue, as the result of that dialogue. Obviously 'Peace Now', or any other peace movement for that matter, could not deliver any political results. When this became clear to the Palestinians involved, the dialogues more or less petered out. 'Peace Now' was not about to question the authority of the law, and it was also bound by the rules of the game of an extra-parliamentary organization. To some extent, the Palestinians confused the opinions of 'Peace Now' with the opinions of the Israeli public at large. When it became clear that 'Peace Now' was only one of several actors in this particular political arena, Palestinian reactions changed.

In summary, it can be said that the main weaknesses of 'Peace Now' were: difficulties with ideology (trying to cover a wide spectrum of the political landscape); difficulties with the leadership (no coherent leadership apart from a spokesperson); difficulties with strategy (not adapting to new goals and points of attention quickly enough); and, finally, difficulties with the lack of a stable organization (*ad hoc* and 'loose' from its inception, 'Peace Now' never became a more solid, formal organization).

It should, however, be pointed out that some of the weaknesses outlined above were clearly visible to 'Peace Now'; but a conscious decision was made to keep a loose leadership structure, stressing local initiatives instead. The same was true of the organizational set-up. It was felt that an emphasis on local branches, and decisions taken by consensus, was preferable to a more centralized structure of decision-making, even though that might have been a better move tactically. It was a question of weighing several options against each other, but not always choosing what appeared – from a conventional standpoint – to be the best move. Democratic and

moral factors weighed heavier than purely tactical considerations.

Penetration

When the wide support, arising relatively quickly, that ‘Peace Now’ enjoyed in its first years began to wane, another impediment to the impact of the movement could be detected: its limited scope for penetration. ‘Peace Now’ had no representatives in decision-making bodies, such as the Cabinet. In the *Knesset* at large, there were about 20–30 MKs that publicly supported the movement; however, the MKs represented problems of another kind.

First, there were the MKs of the leftist parties, *Sheli* and *Chadash*. For ‘Peace Now’, these were more of a liability than an asset, since association with them could give credit to the charge that Peace Now’ was too far to the left and working as a front for these radical, fringe movements. As shown in earlier examples, this would almost certainly make people of the political centre, and within the Israeli/Zionist consensus, shy away. Since it was those parts of the public at which ‘Peace Now’ was aiming, the ‘guilty by association’ charge remained troublesome for the movement.

Further towards the centre were the *Ratz* and *Shinui* parties. Co-operation with these was better, but ‘Peace Now’ simply refused to forge strong ties with either of them. The decision not to connect themselves to any political party remained a cornerstone of ‘Peace Now’ policy

The weakest ties of ‘Peace Now’ were with *Likud*: it enjoyed some support from the party’s liberal wing, but generally *Likud* represented government policy regarding retaining the Territories. The same was true of the other parties in the governing coalition (before the National Unity Government) such as *Tehiya*, linked with the settlement movement and the Ultra-Orthodox parties.

The party closest to ‘Peace Now’ was *Mapam*, which to some extent had the same recruiting base, most notably the *Kibbutz Artzi* federation. Especially for the younger members of *Mapam*, ‘Peace Now’ had the lure of a new force, with innovative and fresh tactics to combat government policy. The leaders of ‘Peace Now’, however, aware of the importance of being independent, preferred to have no formal links with *Mapam*.

Finally, there was the Labour Party, with which ‘Peace Now’ links were also rather strong, both emotionally and intellectually. But, again, there were of course no formal links; on the contrary, ‘Peace Now’ saw themselves as, in a way, having picked up the fallen mantel of the hitherto ruling (and now declining) Labour Party. The defeat of the Labour Party, after 30 years in government, left the party licking its wounds and groping for a new direction; any close affiliation with the party could have tarnished the image of ‘Peace Now’.

In the 1981 elections, the major goal of ‘Peace Now’ was to influence the various political parties to adopt the ideas the movement was advocating. This was done in order to make an impact on the political system itself, and their lobbying was most successful *vis-à-vis* party committees working on the party platforms. Clearly, the force behind ‘Peace Now’ was felt throughout the political establishment.

However, although ‘Peace Now’ kept its non-partisan character, its meetings with Labour were the most crucial, for three main reasons. First, there was the possibility that Labour might return to power. Since this could mean more influence for ‘Peace Now’ if Labour adopted some of the movement’s ideas, wooing Labour made a lot of political sense. The interest was mutual.

Labour realized that ‘Peace Now’, since it was not competing for votes as a party, might help draw votes to Labour instead. The second reason that association with Labour paid off was that Labour deliberately had a very ambiguous platform. This was partly out of necessity, and reflected the opinions of the several factions within Labour, and was partly intended to appeal to as wide a range of the electorate as possible. This vague and ambiguous platform made it easier, or so the reasoning went, to influence people. Finally, there was a similarity in basic outlook between ‘Peace Now’ and the Labour Party Most crucial here was the tenet of trading territory for peace, a central idea both for the party and the movement.

However tempting it was for ‘Peace Now’ to woo different parties and work more closely with the Labour Party or more left-wing parties, the movement never wavered from its non-partisan line. There were several reasons for this. First, its members and supporters had only one real goal in common: to promote the idea of peace. It was a case of the least common denominator holding the movement together, and how this basic goal should be achieved was always a point of contention within the movement. It was not enough on which to build a party platform. Another important reason why the idea of a party never caught on was the fact that the members and supporters already belonged to, or were affiliated with, existing parties (see above). It was felt that forming a new party would not only create unnecessary competition, but also put supporters in an awkward position by forcing them to choose one over the other. Furthermore, ‘Peace Now’ could achieve much more influence through the many individuals who were working to change their own parties’ stance on adopting a more pro-peace policy, than it would if it had to compete with those parties in an election. Third, ‘Peace Now’ was created as a movement, and that was how people saw it; and it was believed that transformation into a party would mean that many supporters would choose to stay with their ‘old’ party. Finally, being extra-parliamentary was perceived to be an asset not to be forfeited easily. ‘Peace Now’, being anti-establishment in outlook, could draw a lot of support from the prevalent feelings of frustration and disappointment with established politics. Forming a party would be tantamount to squandering what was seen as ‘Peace Now’s’ greatest asset.

As for the second criterion of penetration (access to political decision-making) ‘Peace Now’ was not as successful as its counterpart *Gush Emunim*. As shown above, the more clear-cut, activist *Gush Emunim* had a much more ‘across-the-board’ access to the decision-makers.

Expansion

‘Peace Now’s’ shift in focus at the beginning of the 1980s, decided by the new developments created by the peace treaty with Egypt and the Lebanese War, had two main objectives. One revolved around the rights and needs of the Palestinians, both as individuals and as a people with collective and national rights. The other focused on the national imperatives of Israel.

The bottom line of the ‘Palestinian track’ was that Israel, as the superior force, must and could work towards a fulfilment of the national rights of the Palestinians. This was seen as the key to a peaceful solution to the conflict; not only between Israelis and Palestinians, but also as a first step in solving the conflicts between Israel and her other Arab neighbours.

Of course, this process was supposed to be reciprocal. The demand from ‘Peace Now’ was that the Palestinians, through and with the PLO, must renounce the use of violence and terror and recognise Israel. To foster a process that could bring about these results, contacts were taken

with various Palestinians, although not the PLO since a prerequisite was mutual recognition. This was something the PLO steadfastly refused. These efforts did not achieve any monumental changes in the overall picture, even if the participants themselves often experienced new and positive changes of attitude.

The major difficulty, however, was that 'Peace Now' had no counterpart on the other side. The political field on the Palestinian side looked quite different, both because of the different political culture and because of the occupation. As stated above, the Palestinians were more interested in the results of the dialogue – that is, an end to occupation – than in the dialogue itself. Since 'Peace Now' could do nothing more than enhance the dialogue and try to pressure the Israeli political decision-makers, not much happened. When the Palestinians realized that 'Peace Now' 'could not deliver', they pulled out.

The mutual misunderstanding of the respective aims of each side added to the problems. This discrepancy between what 'Peace Now' and the peace movement as a whole wanted, and the response they got from the Arab side, was keenly observed by the Israeli public. There was a growing concern over the ability of 'Peace Now' to provide a viable policy alternative, since they kept insisting on dialogue, changes and Israeli initiatives, and were still unable to show a serious partner for all their troubles. This dilemma was to remain with the movement until the end of the 1980s, when the PLO finally came around towards recognition of Israel at the PNC meeting in Tunis.

The other thrust of 'Peace Now's deliberations proved more fruitful in terms of making an impact on the internal political scene. 'Peace Now' was always at pains to stress the fact that it was an Israeli movement. The underlying *raison d'être* for the movement was the well-being of the country and an interest in which way it was heading. The perils posed to Israel as an occupying power were on top of the agenda. It was felt that basic democratic features – such as respect for the law and tolerance of minority views – were being endangered. 'Peace Now' also argued that Israel must not keep the Territories or prolong the occupation indefinitely; not only because of the moral and ethical danger it posed to Israel, but also from a pragmatic, security-conscious standpoint. The argument was that Israel was exhausting its resources and power in defending itself instead of heeding its own internal needs, and all this in the face of continued hostility from its neighbours, and the objection of the world community to the continuation of the occupation.

This argument became more prevalent in the aftermath of the Lebanese War, when internal strife polarized the country as never before. The culmination of tensions was reached at a demonstration in Jerusalem in April 1983 led by 'Peace Now', when a hand grenade was thrown at demonstrators, killing peace activist Emil Grünzweig.

Furthermore, 'Peace Now' regarded peace as essential to Israel's continued survival, and as a precondition for attaining what they saw as the fulfilment of true Zionism. It was an interpretation of Zionism that tied modern Israel to earlier peace efforts, and to an emphasis on what was perceived as moral behaviour, because it was an appropriate means by which to achieve the desired goals. Not only was the goal of peace perceived as desirable, but also as attainable, provided that the right kind of policy was pursued. In this, 'Peace Now' clashed with its ideological opponents, most notably the settler activists in *Gush Emunim*, who also perceived themselves as pursuing the true historical Zionist heritage. As a result, a deep rift developed in Israeli society.

Thus, the activities of 'Peace Now' and its ideological enemies alike were based on

fundamental ideological issues at the heart of Israeli politics, making the political rift into a chasm very hard to bridge. Added to the changes in the political milieu was a hitherto unseen extra-parliamentary activity triggered by 'Peace Now', making the political battles look different and taxing the actors to adapt to the new political environment.

'Peace Now' adopted a pragmatic attitude in order to attract wider support, pointing out the dangers of occupation: for example, it isolated Israel internationally; drained its financial resources; alienated the Jewish Diaspora; and split public opinion. 'Peace Now' also took pains to assure Israelis that they associated with mainstream Zionism, following the feasible rather than the desirable, as opposed to their ideological adversaries. This pragmatic approach helped 'Peace Now' to expand, not only in Israel, but also through its 'association of friends' in Europe and in the USA. This was important because it showed the movement's connection with world Jewry, something that was essential in proving its Zionist credentials.

As the movement grew, it not only secured new logistical and financial support, but also – and this was perhaps even more important – gained a legitimacy that made it impossible to disregard. This legitimacy also extended to the religious community, and was achieved through the religious peace movement *Oz v'shalom*. Perhaps the most important aspect of this relationship was that it partly eroded the ideological barrier between the pro-peace camp and the religious community. Even if the impact was scant, that breakthrough proved fruitful in presenting the religious camp[9] with an alternative to the more fervent Messianic groups, most notably within the settlement movement. Whereas groups such as *Gush Emunim* worked from within a religious context, trying to monopolise the interpretation of a religious view of Zionism, co-operation between 'Peace Now' and *Oz v'shalom* did a lot to legitimise the 'peace option' within parts of the religious community.

There were, however, also impediments to the expansion of 'Peace Now'. The obstacles emanated from two major sources: the movement's own characteristics and the external environment.

The first obstacle to expansion was the internal split on the issues of Palestinians and the Territories. A least common denominator was not enough to bridge those differences – the basic goal was peace. That this meant territorial concessions was clear, but how much, to whom and under what conditions? The movement's answer to this – that the details had to be worked out through the elected political bodies, and that 'Peace Now' could only work within the parameters set up – did not sound too persuasive. 'Peace Now's difficulties in adopting a more clear-cut posture were to remain a major obstacle to expansion, and thus to influencing the public. Added to this were the divergences among other peace movements and the negative nature of the demands: no more settlements, no more occupation – and an absence of a clear positive alternative.

The other obstacle to expansion was the lack of appeal of 'Peace Now' to those other than the better-off Ashkenazi Jews. Aware of this Achilles' heel, 'Peace Now' made several attempts to forge an alliance between the peace-promoters and the advocates of social/economic improvement. One of their main arguments was to point out that settlement activity on the West Bank and Gaza drained the country of resources that could be used to improve the situation of poor, often Sephardic, Jews in Israel proper (that is, within the 1967 borders). 'Peace Now' tried to break out of its social parameters through co-operation with movements such as *Ha'Mizrahi l'shalom*, but its narrow social base (which its critics and adversaries were apt to highlight in

order to discredit the movement) remained a problem that never really went away.[10]

During the first years after the Gulf War (1990–91), when the peace process took off in leaps and bounds with the initiation of the Oslo peace process, 'Peace Now' saw many of its ideas not only condoned, but also implemented, by successive administrations.

The two-state solution, so contentious and fiercely fought-over in the 1970s and 1980s, became a starting point for negotiations across the political spectrum. Economic 'peace dividends', coming as a result of the peace process, showed the benefits of a truly peaceful co-existence with the Arab world as a whole.

When a Palestinian administration was established, and the first tentative steps were taken on the road to an independent Palestinian state, it seemed for a while as if a lasting conclusion to the long and bitter conflict between Israelis and Palestinians was finally within reach. For 'Peace Now', this was a time when the movement's ideas were put to the test and found strong enough. Then in July 2000, the Camp David negotiations between Premier Barak and Chairman Arafat broke down. Arafat's 'no' to the hitherto most detailed proposal for a permanent resolution to the conflict was followed by the outbreak of what was swiftly labelled the '*Al Aqsa Intifada*', this came after several failed attempts to stitch together a new proposal. In February 2001, Barak was soundly defeated by opposition leader Ariel Sharon, and a new coalition came into being. Even though Labour (who traditionally had endorsed several of the ideas of 'Peace Now') was included in the government,[11] the election of Sharon became the logical result of a process started with Arafat's 'no' at Camp David the year before.

These months between Camp David and the election of 2001 saw a lot of the progress, made during the heyday of the peace process, being rolled back and the influence of the peace movement as a whole severely curtailed. Disappointment and anger with Arafat for his inability to help bring the conflict to an end, when the chance opened up, coupled with disillusion concerning their own government's handling of the new *Intifada*, dealt a severe blow to the peace movement's ability to influence the political agenda. Not only was there a feeling of having lost their partner in peace (Arafat), there was also a feeling that the changes brought about in Israel concerning peaceful co-existence with the Arabs in general, and the Palestinians in particular, had been quickly forgotten, and there was a general return to a language of confrontation and uncompromising stands.

In sum, when peace finally seemed within reach (at Camp David) and the ideas of 'Peace Now' were about to be implemented on a long-term basis, the speed with which several years of progress were rolled back shocked the movement, and triggered an internal debate within it – still raging at the time of writing (September 2001) – on how best to achieve peace and long-term stability.

However, hidden among the pandemonium and violence of the latest *Intifada* is the fact that, for all intents and purposes, there is no turning back on some of the more fundamental notions that 'Peace Now' argued; the basic idea of the peace movement – a two-state solution – is still there; as is the idea that long-term stability can only be achieved by a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Even at present, with confrontation running high, the main actors are still paying heed to political compromise and the notion of peaceful solutions, even though their deeds tell another tale.

All in all, it is fair to argue that some of the more fundamental concepts of 'Peace Now', and the peace movement as a whole, are still around, albeit severely roughed up.

Summary

Peace efforts after 1967 occurred in three stages.

First, in the wake of the Six-Day War, a spontaneous peace movement sprang up, the 'Movement for Peace and Security'. It had no real organizational base. Its main role was to put forward an additional alternative to policy-makers.

The second stage occurred between the Yom Kippur War and 1977. This stage was also rather passive and the peace input only showed itself in the new DMC party – even though that was an important achievement in itself. With Sadat's initiative, the peace forces in Israel proved their capacity to take part in the political process, and to influence both policy-makers and the public at large. A new feature at this stage was the increase in extra-parliamentary activities.

Peace groups in the third stage were very different from earlier movements. Their organizational resources were more solid and their expansion penetrated more deeply. 'Peace Now' took a leading position in this development. Although penetration remained a problem because of an ambivalent connection with the political parties – most notably Labour, whose decline as a leading actor was one of the reasons for the expansion of 'Peace Now' – the peace movement managed to place itself squarely in the political arena, with 'Peace Now' in the forefront.

Seen from an ideological perspective, 'Peace Now' deviated from its predecessors not only in stressing the moral arguments, but also in putting forth more pragmatic considerations. This added to its ability to provide an alternative for a larger public. Despite initial success, however, the obstacles were large. Limited resources; vague and diffuse goals (except to achieve peace); the weaknesses of a pressure group; and the absence of a clear-cut positive alternative; all hindered expansion and opened the movement up to criticism. Furthermore, the inability of 'Peace Now' to reach out to the Sephardic part of the Israeli population, with some notable exceptions, proved an obstacle for further penetration and expansion. The movement did make its mark on the political landscape, however, making extra-parliamentary peace activism a viable, legitimate alternative to more established politics. Furthermore, during the 1990s, the movement also saw many of its ideas and concepts of a peaceful existence with the Palestinians implemented during the years of the Oslo peace process.

NOTES

1. Galia, personal communication, 1987; Peri, personal communication, 1987; and Raz, personal communication, 1987.
2. Ibid.
3. Professor Yael Yishai, Haifa University, personal communication, 20 November 1986.
4. Gilles Kepel, *Gud tar hämnd* (Stockholm: Ordfront, 1993), p. 89.
5. See Wolfsfeldt, *Politics of Provocation*.
6. See Norell, *Guide till fredsrörelser i Israel*.
7. Aviad, personal commuication, 1986 and 1991; and Soltman, personal communication, 1987.
8. Yishai, personal communication, 1986; Golan, personal communication, 1987; Peri, personal communication, 1987; Raz, personal communication, 1987; Reschef, personal

communication, 1987; and Aviad, personal communication, 1991.

9. The ‘religious camp’ refers here to the non-Chassidic, ‘modern’, part of the religious community.
10. See YossiYonah, *Tikkun Magazine*, 5, 3 (1990).
11. Barak resigned after the election and Shimon Peres became the new, interim, leader of the party, joining the coalition as foreign minister.

5

The Ethnic Dimension

‘So oft in…wars, the disputants, I ween, rail on in utter ignorance of what each other mean.’
(John Godfrey Saxe, ‘The Blind Men and the Elephant’)

The ethnic dimension is an integral part of the political environment in which ‘Peace Now’ appeared. It helps to illuminate one aspect of the setting of the political culture, which is part and parcel of the history of the Jewish political culture; a culture that is a building block of the extra-parliamentary peace movement. The background and politicization of ethnicity in Israel goes a long way in explaining the outlook and importance of culture as a decisive factor in the appearance of ‘Peace Now’.

Ethnicity, frequently intertwined with the regional dimension, has often been a factor in various conflicts in the Middle East. There are, of course, several variations on the theme of the role of ethnicity in a conflict.[1] The Israeli case differs from many other conflicts in that it deals with a conflict between different ethnic groups within the same national group, instead of a conflict between different national groups. This means that the focus here is on a domestic, inter-ethnic conflict inside one country: Israel. The territorial base, so important throughout the area, is not a factor here, but the definitions used in connection with conflicts based on ethno-geography are still valid.

Conflict is defined as the incompatible position(s) of two or more parties on an issue.[2] Furthermore, a definition used for an ethno-regional conflict also fits the Israeli case as:

> … a conflict concerning the right of an ethnic group to influence or control developments within a certain territory or within the State as a whole.’[3]

However, it is important to point out that the Israeli case does not concern territorial control or secession. The definition is valid, nevertheless, in the sense that the conflict is over influence and control of developments that change and alter the position of the ethnic groups in question.

Emphasis is put on the role of confrontation and external pressure as factors influencing a more conscious ethnic identity. Important questions are how, when and why ethnic-national conflicts arise. The key question, however, is to what extent the ethnic conflict has influenced social cohesion in Israel.

The general conclusions can be summed up under four headings:

1. Conditions for developments of ethnic identity:

- Interaction with other actors (government, other ethnic groups, etc.).
- Outside influence (external pressure).
- Integration within the group.

2. Politicization of ethnic identity:
   - A perceived threat from the centre (government) or other groups.
   - Structural changes (war, *coup d'état*, centre <–> periphery conflict).
   - Discrimination (difficulties in obtaining a high position or education due to ethnicity, various discriminatory laws, etc.).

3. The conflict process:
   - Defined conflict object.
   - Composition of conflict parties.
   - Mobilization (methods as a matter of tactics depending on external conditions).
   - Actions and demands.

4. Ethnic and other societal conflicts:
   - Ethnic conflicts can coincide with other conflicts. When this is the case, ethnicity can be a factor influencing cohesion in society.

Background

In Israeli society the ethnic cleavage is in many ways unique. This is because it is rooted in unusual cultural and social developments within the Jewish Diaspora. First, this division, even if it is usually defined as being ethnic, lacks many of the elements of national particularism that normally mark ethnicity. Second, the boundaries between the ethnic groups are not clearly defined. This is because there are at least two ways of describing this cleavage in dichotomous terms.

First, there is a distinction between Ashkenazim and Sephardim (ignoring geographical factors), basing the distinction on prayer and ritual.[4] The second distinction is between Jews of European-American origin *versus* Jews of Asian-African origin, basing the distinction on geographical and cultural factors.[5] These two dichotomies overlap, however, and are used to cover the same ethnic groups. In addition, there are both three- and four-way classifications for ethnic groups in Israel, placing Jews from the Balkans, Yemen and Georgia in their own respective categories. Since the distinction used here covers both the geographical/cultural dimension and the religious one, I use the most common dichotomy, that is, Ashkenazim and Sephardim.

The differences between Ashkenazim and Sephardim are multifaceted and exist on several levels in society. For the purpose of this book, three categories suffice to outline the differences:

1. Geography: it is noteworthy that the country of origin of the immigrants, *Edah* in Hebrew, continued to play an important role even in Israel. This was true for both Ashkenazim and Sephardim.

2. Culture: various traditions and different political milieus shaped the outlook of the

immigrants. Of major interest here is the Western, democratic and socialist political thinking that built the base for the Ashkenazi immigrants, the 'founding fathers' of Israel, and the very different traditionalist and authoritarian political environment of the Sephardim.

3. Political behaviour: this includes voting pattern and political participation. Today, *Likud* is heavily supported by voters of Sephardic origin. This is also the case with the largest religious party, *Shas*, while *Ma'arach* (the Labour parties) is heavily supported by voters of Ashkenazic origin. This is a change from the early period of independence, when the new, Sephardic, immigrants supported the ruling 'Alignment'. As for political participation in activities outside voting, such as demonstrations, it took until the late 1970s before Sephardic participation became more vocal and numerous.

The basic conditions for the ethnic conflicts between Ashkenazim and Sephardim were laid down before Israel became an independent country. The people who built a Jewish society in Palestine before independence were strongly influenced by the tradition of European democratic and socialist thinking.[6] For the most part, this was a notion lacking in many of the States from which the Sephardic Jews came. After independence – when the trickle of Sephardic immigration became a flood – problems between the Jews already living in Israel and the newly arrived immigrants showed themselves immediately.[7]

Time is a crucial factor here. Before independence, the majority of immigrants came in four *aliyot* or waves, between 1882 and 1931. These people not only immigrated to a new country, but also built the structure for a Jewish society in Israel. This structure was created along European, Ashkenazic, lines. The resulting system proved to be efficient, in that it could handle a large influx of immigrants, but it was not prepared for the new kind of Sephardic Jew who entered the country after independence.

When Sephardic immigration to Israel gained momentum in the early 1950s, the logistical problems created by the scale of the influx nearly overwhelmed the authorities. The number one priority was to get the new arrivals through the transit camps and into society as fast as possible. Inevitably, the sensitive hand needed to ease poor, uprooted and often illiterate refugees into completely new surroundings was often lacking. This, of course, created tensions; tensions that formed the first stages of conflict formation between Ashkenazim and Sephardim. It is noteworthy that the creation of ethnic conflict, to a large extent, was the result of the actors (Ashkenazim and Sephardim) forming the process itself. The failure on the part of the Ashkenazic Israel to see the diversity and different needs of the Sephardic immigrants helped to form a Sephardic structure that was to 'hit back' on the Ashkenazim when action finally came.

It was several years before the Sephardic community made itself heard through more organized and vocal action. Several factors played a role in this. The first was the question of nationality and nationhood. No matter how big the differences were between the Ashkenazic 'founding fathers', with their European background and culture, and the poor 'fellah' from Yemen, coming from a country ruled as in medieval times, both were still Jewish and both shared the same values concerning the Jewish National Home. This was an effective bridgestone and helped integration to a large extent.

The other major factor helping integration in the first years was a more functionalist one. The immigrants came to a society already in place. The *Yishuv*[8] had built a structure along European,

often socialist, lines. It was efficient, and had proved its solidity during the war for independence. Furthermore, the structure was aimed at integrating immigrants. The *raison d'être* of Israel was to collect the Jewish people in their old homeland. The waves of immigration turned out to be a bit much in too short a time, but for the new citizens, their first impression was often of people who gave them a hearty welcome, food, shelter and often a job, and started to teach them the basics of the Hebrew language, if the need was there. Overwhelmed and dazed by the transition, it took some time before they could see the transit camps, and the inequalities between themselves and the other Israelis, as something not measuring up to their expectations.[9]

A third factor mitigating the tensions of integration was the country of origin, that is, the country from which the immigrants came. The *Edah* is one of the more important building blocks of Jewish ethnicity and this survived in Israel, too. The first ethnic identification of the immigrants, under their overall Jewish nationality, was their country of origin. This was a natural thing for a people spread out to all four corners of the earth, but for the *Yishuv*, with the goal of total integration and the creation of a new, independent and strong Israel, this was often overlooked. The result was that Jews from such disparate countries as Yemen and Morocco were heaped together in some distant development town, forced into a coexistence they probably would never have chosen voluntarily. The shared hardships thus created an affinity between peoples and made them, to some extent, adopt the formerly alien notion of 'Orientals'.

A fourth factor playing a role in integration was the external threat posed by the conflict with the Arabs. The country had just barely survived the war for independence, and the peace was very shaky, with terrorist infiltration and retaliatory raids taking place almost every week. It was possible for the newcomers, often poor and having been forced from their homes, to identify with their new homeland and its struggle for survival. This survival was the key to their future.

It is not too far-fetched to assume that the Israeli authorities in charge of immigration stressed the unifying notions of the Jewish people, even if their goal was to 'educate' the newcomers to become 'modern Israelis' as soon as possible. As for the disintegrative forces at work, they can be described as incompatibilities between the two ethnic groups. Those factors are outlined below.

The Israel that was built before independence was structured and modelled on Europe. It was a country designed to fit European notions and ideas of society and its functions. The goal was to build a new Jewish existence in the old Jewish home, but the basis for that was Western, or Ashkenazic, thinking. Out of this came the absorption policy to handle the integration of the new immigrants. With the overall goal in mind, and the external threat of war, there was little room for understanding the diversity of the new arrivals. The aim was to integrate the newcomers to be 'Israelis' as soon as possible.[10]

The result was the break-up of long, often cherished, traditions and patterns of living on the part of the Sephardim. For communities that had existed for hundreds, or even thousands, of years, often in very hostile environments, to be told that their way of living was 'wrong' and must be changed was tantamount to a very great insult. Sephardic interaction with the government saw them on the receiving end, but it also created a feeling of kinship within the Sephardic community that did not exist before. As a result, a greater integration between various Sephardic groups came about.

The fact that discontent and frustration took some time to evolve into a more vocal protest was also due to some mitigating factors created by outside influences, in this case in the form of

external pressure due to the conflict with the Arabs. Out of this came national identification, and with that followed commitments to collective values. Another important factor was the role of the Jewish religion and, revolving around that, traditions and customs evolving through the centuries, as well as an understanding of the severe difficulties that faced the new state;[11] this, however, could only postpone the conflicts that would surface later on.

The Politicization of Ethnic Identity

During the 1950s and early 1960s, the formative years of Israel, the integrative factors mentioned above worked to suppress conflicts between Ashkenazim and Sephardim. Certainly there were some protests as early as 1952–53, but those protests failed to make an impact on the basic inequalities between the two ethnic groups.

The pre-state model, with the Labour Zionists as the dominant factor, was still very much intact. The system for bringing new immigrants to Israel, built up during the 1920s and 1930s, gave each political and/or religious group within the *Yishuv* responsibility for bringing their respective followers to Israel. When the immigrants were in the country, it was still the respective organization that stood for the bulk of the practical work. The government had the overall responsibility.

Since Labour-Zionists were the dominant actors, with the largest resources, they took advantage of this fact and tied the majority of the new arrivals to various Labour organizations. This support was later translated into votes in the elections, with the predictable result of continuous majorities for various Labour parties such as *Mapam* and *Mapai*.

The other two political blocs were the so-called General Zionists and the Progressives or Liberals and the religious parties. Between them they had enough votes to deprive Labour of its own majority.

This disproportionality on the political level, with the Ashkenazim being the political élite and making Sephardic social and political mobility to some extent dependent on political loyalty, led to resentment and discontent. The fact that the system was there when the Sephardim came, and that they were divided between various Ashkenazic groups, diluted their political clout and made it difficult to blame any particular group for the high expectations, and for the benefits that did not materialise soon enough.

After the Yom Kippur War in 1973 and the economic recession that followed,[12] discontent and frustration with the Ashkenazic establishment, which more and more came to be equated with Labour, finally started to translate itself into a more vocal protest. The 1977 elections were a watershed. Liberals and conservatives under Begin benefited for the first time from the ‘ethnic vote’, and wrested the parliamentary majority away from Labour. The election results reflected an increasing congruence between ethnic background and political preference. The trend towards ethnic polarization reached its peak in the 1984 election. The increasing overlap between ethnic origin and political preference did not lead *Likud* and Labour to become homogeneous parties, but it did increase the tension between them; a tension that would put its mark on the political arena throughout the 1980s.

Begin, ethnically clearly Ashkenazic, managed to equate the ruling Labour, dominant since independence, with negligence toward the ‘other Israel’: the Israelis living in development towns

with blue-collar jobs, and who were the people hardest hit by the economic recession, and whose votes Labour had so long taken for granted.

It is difficult to assess how much influence Begin had on this development. It might be that the talk about polarization, created by Begin as an electoral weapon to attract Sephardic votes, became a self-fulfilling myth. There were, of course, inequalities, but on the whole, the integrative mechanisms worked quite well, considering Israel's position.[13]

Begin's role in this development is interesting because it points to an explanation for changed political behaviour on the part of the Sephardim, as a result of 'the personal factor'. For 30 years, Begin hammered away with the argument that *Ma'arach* could never give the new, poor Sephardic immigrants a life comparable with that of the dominant Ashkenazic establishment. The fact that Begin himself was of European (that is, Ashkenazic) origin never became an obstacle. Begin was always 'the odd man out' in the political echelons. He could easily identify with, and be identified by, the Sephardim as someone outside the political mainstream. In Israel's political climate, where the political parties are so dominant, it is unusual for a political personality to make such an impact.[14] This does not contradict what has been stated above about ethnic identification. The feeling of being second-class citizens was real enough, and shaped Sephardic assessment of the group's situation.

Thus, the ethnic identification of the disparate Sephardic community was that of second-class Israelis, who could not be trusted to take part in the ruling of the country, and whose nationalism was regarded as alien to the more sophisticated Ashkenazic community.[15] The Sephardim, consisting of many different groups, came to define themselves, to a large extent, in terms of 'us' and 'them': the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'.

As a result of Begin's rise to power, the problems of integration between Ashkenazim and Sephardim were placed at the top of the political agenda. For the losers, *Ma'arach*, ousted after more than 30 years as the dominant power in the government, the impact of the 'ethnic vote' was finally realized. The incompatibilities[16] between *Ma'arach*'s (and, in all fairness, most of Ashkenazic Israel's) goal of integration – forcing the Sephardim to rid themselves of their 'ghetto-past', and absorb the new Israeli identity – on one hand, and the Sephardic notion of their wealth of traditions as being something from which their new homeland could benefit, on the other, were seen as the main reason for the Sephardic turnabout at the polls.

This process, leading up to the change in the Sephardic voting pattern, took almost 30 years. During this period, a polarization between Ashkenazim and Sephardim took place. Conflict objects were defined and, as a result, various demands from the Sephardic community were formulated, helped to a large extent by continued wooing by *Likud*. With greater political awareness, a Sephardic mobilization occurred.

It is interesting, and somewhat ironic, that to a large extent the above-mentioned process was possible because various and simultaneous integrative mechanisms at work in Israel functioned so well. As Sephardic children were educated, as Sephardic women took part more and more in supporting their families, and as Sephardic men did military service, the feeling of being real Israelis grew. At the same time, the feeling of not being quite as Israeli as the Ashkenazim could be expressed more easily[17]

Summary

Strains on the political scene in Israel result from the real, or imagined, discrepancy that the political elites are of Ashkenazic origin and the majority of the population is Sephardic.

When the Sephardic Jews came to Israel, the political system was already in place. Modelled after a European, often socialist, concept of democracy, Israel had little in common with the countries from which the Sephardim came. Since integration and assimilation were the order of the day, and because dependence on the government, both economically and politically, was clear, most Sephardim supported the current dominant political force: *Ma'arach* or Labour. The Sephardim assumed that supporting the leading political force would ease their integration into the new country.

Because of the dependence on the government and the uprooting of old ways of living, it was some time before the Sephardim used their numbers at the voting polls. Rising discontent with the establishment, that is, *Ma'arach*, and perceived injustices and unequal possibilities in education, economics and politics, finally manifested themselves in the 1977 election. The leader of the conservative and liberal bloc *Likud*, Begin, managed to equate *Ma'arach* with the establishment, and presented himself as the champion of the underdog: the 'other Israel'.

The shift in government created more, and better, possibilities for the Sephardim in Israel, especially in the economic sphere. It also polarized the country to an extent never before felt.[18] The Sephardic vote, in 1977 and after, can also be seen as a protest against a centralized economic and political system of the kind built by the Ashkenazic establishment.

The ethnic factor in Israel has thus far only created two political parties along ethnic lines;[19] this is probably due both to the integrative factors at work in Israeli society, and the fact that the existing channels for social and economic mobility have worked.[20]

The Sephardic impact and imprint on politics in Israel brings a new, and possibly dangerous, dimension to the polarization in the society. When the polity is polarized, the chances for intolerance, lack of communication and violence, grow. There are already signs that this is happening. Thus, the involvement of the Sephardim in mainstream Israel poses new challenges for Israeli society. The chances for the continued success of a democratic regime in Israel rest, in no small part, in having the different ethnic groups overlap.

This was underlined in the late 1980s and early 1990s with the heavy influx of immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Close to 400,000 people arrived in Israel in less than three years. Between 15,000 and 20,000 Jews from Ethiopia (so-called *Falashas*) were also brought to Israel during this period – the largest wave of immigrants since the early 1950s. These influxes put additional strains on Israeli society. The integration of these people is seen by many Israelis as a test of the country's ability to live up to its ideals.

There are, of course, important differences between these two groups and the impact they have, and will have, on Israeli society. The first group, from the Soviet Union, is ethnically Ashkenazic.[21] Often well-educated and urban, they settled, in as far as they had a choice, in cities such as Haifa, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. But they were also 'the last group in', and thus had to climb from the bottom of the ladder. Although many of them managed to get jobs more or less appropriate to their education, most had to start with a more menial and less well-paid job than they were used to;[22] if they could get a job at all.

It is perhaps too early to clearly see any long-term effects, but some trends of relevance can nevertheless be seen from this development.

First, the new influx of immigrants led to a declining role for Palestinians, mainly from the West Bank and Gaza, on the job market in Israel. Given the choice, many contractors and employers preferred the new immigrants. These jobs are, for the most part, in the building and service sectors. Moreover, these menial blue-collar jobs are often the only ones available. This meant that the Palestinians were pushed not up the ladder, but down.

Second, the role of climbing the economic ladder was given to many Sephardic Jews who were suddenly able to take advantage of this new situation. For the 'traditional' Sephardic enterprises, such as small business contractors and services, the massive immigration created new demands they could fill.

For the Sephardic component of the immigrants, the *Falashas*, the situation is similar to that of the 'Soviets'. The mechanisms for handling these groups are the same. Both groups also have kinsmen in the country that can help to ease integration. Interesting, however, is the fact that in some areas, the *Falashas* seem to be handling the transition better than their European brethren. The harsh reality of immigration, that sometimes not even a PhD degree could get you a job, hit hard. Increased social problems among unemployed immigrants, such as drinking and juvenile delinquency, which earlier had been comparatively rare in Israel, show the seriousness of the problem.

For the majority of the *Falashas*, however, even a transit camp in the Negev could be superior to anything they had in Ethiopia. Other mitigating factors are the smaller numbers of Falashas, more familiarity with the climate (an important factor in a desert country like Israel), and a relatively successful group of *Falashas* already in the country This is not to say that integration has been trouble-free for the *Falashas*. A major bone of contention concerns certain of their religious practices: thus, for example, the Ethiopian version of a rabbi (*Kes*) is not recognized by the Chief Rabbinate in Israel until he has studied Talmudic law, which has been virtually unknown to Ethiopia's isolated Jews.[23]

For the ethnic picture as a whole, the new immigration will mean that the ratio between Ashkenazim and Sephardim will even out. It is too early to see what this means for the political picture in the long run, although, politically, the new immigrants have already shown that they are a force to be reckoned with. In the June 1992 election, the immigrant vote gave between 10 and 12 mandates, and a party created by Soviet immigrants took part.[24] And, of course, in the latest elections, from May 1996, *Yisrael b'Aliyah*, a party entirely based on immigrants from the former Soviet Union, gained enough seats to be part of every government since then.

This points to a faster integrative process, but impatience with a perceived slow and inefficient bureaucracy can put new pressure on the political field. Mistakes from the 1950s, with transit camps made permanent as poor development towns, and insufficient sensitivity to the new immigrants, could become a reality again.

The most intriguing thing about Sephardic political ethnic identification in Israel today is perhaps that it does not just follow strict ethnic lines. With the exceptions of the short-lived *Tami*, and *Shas*, there has not been any long-lived political party along ethnic lines. The political discontent of Sephardic Jews has shown itself in the existing system within the present parties; parties dominated by the Ashkenazim.

Politicization of the Sephardim in Israel, often regarded as the ethnic vote, has made an impact on the system through existing channels. Sephardic Jews are also under-represented in the political, extra-parliamentary organizations that developed in the late 1970s and 1980s. In this

connection, it is noteworthy that today a majority of the Israeli Jews are either of Sephardic origin or born in Israel; the so-called *Sabras*.

In this sense, it is fair to say that integration has succeeded – at least partially. Structures and institutions built up for handling large-scale immigration have proved their worth. The main problem, and a major reason for the polarization between Ashkenazim and Sephardim, seems to be difficulties in understanding each other's background and differing outlook on what Israel ought to be. On a formal and economic level integration has, especially since 1977, worked fairly well. On a psychological level, and in the attitudes between the two groups, many differences seem to remain.

Since 1977, when it made its first impact on the political scene, the Sephardic vote has been a factor that cannot be neglected. Both the major parties, *Likud* and *Ma'arach*, are well aware of the impact the Sephardic vote can have. The 'lesson of '77' has been learnt to no small extent. This can be seen in the way successful integrative mechanisms have been formulated by the political establishment: focusing on the common Jewish heritage rather than the often differing Ashkenazic and Sephardic traditions; and pointing out the advantages of a multicultural, but united, Israel over a divided country with several ethnic communities striving to be on top of each other.

It seems, however, that the role and the impact of the Sephardim in Israeli politics is very much that of a slumbering giant, rising when the need is there. In the 1977 election, when *Likud* was made a Sephardic party, at least in its electorate, a deeply felt discontent with the 'establishment' manifested itself. It made a lasting impact, and the result was clearly understood by the Sephardim. The Sephardic influence in the 1977 election also meant that 'the other Israel' placed itself on the political map of Israel. This factor should not be underestimated. The fact that the underdog could also have an impact on the look of the government was of great psychological importance for the Sephardim.[25]

Political developments in Israel during the 1980s and 1990s support this notion, at least to some extent. Sephardic presence, both within existing political parties and in extra-parliamentary public protest[26] has risen perceptibly. Together with greater possibilities for climbing the economic and social ladder, the Sephardic involvement in Israeli politics is bound to be felt even more in the future.

Finally, with the greater Sephardic involvement in political life – taking off in earnest in 1977 – being parallel to other changes in the Israeli polity, and being a factor in polarizing various ethnic groups in Israel, it is fair to say that the Sephardic impact on the social cohesion has been two-pronged.

On the one hand, its polarizing role has been a factor in lessening social cohesion. The political battles during the 1980s – both between the left and the right, and inside the various parties – has shown that the conflicts concern deeply felt issues that have not been solved. The discontent with the political milieu in general, and with the continued dominance of the Ashkenazim, coupled with increased protest against slow progress in these areas, gives the polarization a sharp edge that can be potentially dangerous. The chasm has not been bridged solidly yet, as shown above.

On the other hand, this same development has given the Sephardim a position in Israel they have not had before. The mitigating and integrative factors mentioned above have also worked to lubricate the system, easing the transition from a pioneer society to a modern state. In this

process, the Sephardim have played an important role in making Israel a society with one foot firmly in the Middle East and the other in the West, which might be a liability for some of Israel's Arab enemies, but is at the same time a necessity for the continuation of Israel as a Western democracy in the Middle East: this was understood by many Israelis early on, not least by the peace movements. Consequently, they started to woo the Sephardic community as a political factor that must be reckoned with. Seen by the Sephardim as belonging to the Ashkenazic establishment, the peace movements were often viewed with suspicion. This created tensions that often ensured that overtures from the peace movement fell on deaf ears.[27]

The arguments used by the peace movement to woo the Sephardic community are mostly economic. It is pointed out that money spent on settlements on the West Bank and Gaza ought to be used to better the lot of poor neighbourhoods and development towns in Israel proper. So far, success has been limited. There are examples of peace movements that are aimed at the Sephardic part of the population – *Ha'Mizrachi l'shalom* is probably the most well known – but they are small, with a limited sphere of influence.

So far at least, the polarizing effects of ethnicity have weighed heavier than the possible similar interests between the peace movement and the poorer parts of the Sephardic community.

NOTES

1. See S. Tägil, ed., *Regions in Upheaval. Lund Studies in International History* (Lund: Lund University Press, 1984).
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 15.
4. The terms Ashkenazim and Sephardim originated in the medieval period of the Diaspora, and were assumed by the various Jewish communities following different expulsions throughout history. The term Sephardim really encompasses two divisions: the Oriental (or Eastern) community that never left Asia and Africa, and the Sephardim, whose language and culture originated in Spain before the expulsion in 1492. Since the term Sephardim is today used to cover both groups, this practice is adopted here.
5. See Horowitz and Lissak, *Trouble in Utopia*.
6. In Western Europe, Britain was the model. Ben-Gurion, for example, wanted Israel to adopt the British constitution and two-party system.
7. See Sammy Smoocha, 'Three Approaches to the Sociology of Ethnic Relations in Israel', *Jerusalem Quarterly*, 40, 86 (1986), p. 86.
8. The Jewish community in pre-independent Israel.
9. See Etzioni-Halevy and Shapira, *Political Culture in Israel*.
10. There is also a much darker side to this process of integration that has surfaced just recently: the issue of the missing Yemenite children. Allegedly, scores of new-born children were taken from their families upon arrival to Israel, reported dead, and then adopted by Israelis already in the country. The scandal, thoroughly reported on in the Israeli media, added another chapter to the saga of immigration to Israel. When the issue was raised (after rumours surfacing from time to time), it added to the tension between Sephardim and Ashkenazim.
11. See Etzioni-Halevy and Shapira, *Political Culture in Israel*; and Schiff, *Traditions and*

Politics.

12. See Rael Jean Isaac, *Israel Divided* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University, 1976).
13. Ibid.
14. The other, or first, 'personality' who made an impact on the system was, of course, Ben-Gurion. His career was somewhat special, however, since it began before independence.
15. A reminder that these opinions still exist came in the June 1992 Israeli elections. Shortly before the election the Ashkenazi leader of the non-Chassidic *Yeshiva* world, and mentor of *Shas*, Rabbi Eliezer Schach, said that Sephardim could not yet take positions of leadership. As one result, the Sephardic/religious party *Shas* not only kept their seats in the *Knesset*, but also joined the coalition with the secular Labour Party, in defiance of what Rabbi Schach had said. This was possible because many Sephardim who were not Orthodox voted for *Shas*, outraged by the insult coming from Schach. *Shas'*s spiritual leader, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, thus went against his own mentor and broke the ranks of the Ultra-Orthodox camp. Whether this renewed bridge between the non-Orthodox and Orthodox Sephardic camp will have any long-term effects or not, remains to be seen.
16. See Wallensteen, *Peace Research, Achievements and Challenges*.
17. See Amos Oz, *In the Land of Israel* (London: Flamingo, 1983).
18. See Arian, *Politics in Israel*; and Wolfsfeldt, *Politics of Provocation*.
19. *Tami*, winning seats in the 1981 and 1984 elections, and *Shas*, set up in 1983. Both drew their support mainly from traditional and religious voters of Sephardic origin. Of the two parties, only *Shas* still exists.
20. It is important to note that the general problem of political discontent in Israel today, which is manifested in extra-parliamentary movements, is something that cuts across ethnic lines.
21. An important exception is the group from the Caucasus region. Jews, mainly from Georgia, but also from Armenia and Azerbaijan, already constitute a rather homogeneous group in Israel. Called 'Georgians', they form a group somewhere between Ashkenazim and Sephardim.
22. This is not surprising. For example, Israel already had the highest number of doctors per capita in the world before the influx of the new immigrants. Efforts have been made to use as many people as possible in areas where they would fit in best, but the majority of people work in jobs not connected to their education. Unemployment is still a major problem among the immigrants. This was also one of the main reasons why the known 'Prisoner of Zion', Nathan Sharansky, launched his immigrant party *Yisrael b'Aliyah*, which is now in the government. ['Prisoner of Zion' is a label given to Soviet, Jewish, dissenters, imprisoned for trying to emmigrate to Israel and because they actively pursue studies in 'Jewish' subjects such as the Hebrew language, faith, traditions, etc.]
23. *Da*, Russian for 'yes'. They failed to get any seats in the *Knesset*, however. A majority of the immigrants voted Labour in 1992.
24. See Arian, *Politics in Israel*.
25. See Wolfsfeldt, *Pollitics of Provocation*.
26. Galia, personal communication, 1991; Ronnie Kaufman, spokesperson for *Shalom Achsav*, Jerusalem, personal communication, 12 November 1991; David Shachan, Director of ICPME (at the time), Tel Aviv, personal communication, 3 December 1986; Willy Gafni, Director of ICPME (at the time), Jerusalem, personal communication, 9 November 1992.
27. Raz, personal communication, 1987; Galia, personal communication, 1991; Kaufman,

personal communication, 1991; Professor Moshe Lissak, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, personal communication, 18 November 1991; and Gafni, personal communication, 1992.

6

The Jewish Political Culture of Israel

Israeli voters have dispersed power to a relatively large spectrum of competitive parties, preferring not the policy of one, but rather the lowest common denominator of many;[1] this is also reflected in what Mosca called the 'ruling élite'. Israel is not governed by one, but a plurality of élites. This has been the case since independence, harking back to the early days of settlements. Even the dominant Labour movement always consisted of several groups, and later parties; never a single coherent group.[2]

Up until independence, in the pre-state period, the re-establishment of the Jews in Palestine was marked by excessive partisanship, a spontaneous distrust of power and an individualism born of a deep wish to 're-create' the Jews into better, freer human beings. Few instruments were as effective in helping achieve the Zionist goal as the autonomous social and economic institutions in which the Jews received a fair degree of home rule long before formal sovereignty was established in 1948.

The early socialist pioneers took their ideas from both Marxist and pre-Marxist sources, often from the so-called 'utopian' varieties of socialism. There they found an emphasis on anarcho-syndicalist features, like those found in the writings of Kropotkin.[3] The anarchist trend that runs through Israeli life, and not only political life, comes from more than one source. First, there is the classic suspicion of the outsider in society, a role Jews have played everywhere they went. Intertwined with this are the two ideological and intellectual trends that most influenced the pioneering Zionist movement: the anarchist style of libertarianism of nineteenth century pre-Revolutionary Russia, and the syndicalism of related French and Italian movements. From 1948, however, a new trend has been discernible, marking the transition from a pre-independent, colonist society to a post-independent, modern one.

Political independence came to the Jews only after a long and hard struggle involving great human cost. In the flush of achieving it a cult of the State was born, with Ben-Gurion as its high priest. In Hebrew, the expression is *mamlachtiyut*, best translated as 'statism' This stands for a very pragmatic, matter-of-fact attitude to public affairs. A man/woman of *mamlachtiyut* will:

> … judge issues on merit only, and will look above party politics, personal prestige, and the interests of selfish, sectarian pressure groups.[4]

Mamlachtiyut calls for the State to be the sole arbiter, and chief regulator, of power and the goods of society. To a large degree, this was achieved in Israel after independence. All the different institutions of public service, communications and defence organizations were transferred from the various semi-autonomous social and political bodies to the State. Today,

homage is paid to the idea of *mamlachtiyut*, but the implementation in practice (with the exception of the army) is often another matter.

As the Israeli political system evolved from the organizations of voluntary institutions and settlers to a more orderly 'national state' form, the early tradition of emphasis on self-reliance, taking care of oneself (*le'histader* in Hebrew), and distrust of power and the arbiters of power, remained. The system has been rather stable, but every Israeli government has had the same problems with factionalism and with shaky, easily crumbling coalitions of several confederated élites.

There is surprisingly little unanimity in Israel, even on sensitive matters like defence and security. When unity and discipline are called for, they frequently appear on an *ad-hoc* basis for clearly pragmatic reasons, but they very seldom seem to come about as the result of a general obedience.[5]

Historically, the Jewish attitude to authority – including their own – has always been highly sceptical, if not outright hostile. Nineteen centuries of Diaspora existence under foreign rulers, living at the mercy of their whims, served as a training school in the civic art of treating authority with disdain. In the Jewish tradition, power is evil. In the best of circumstances it could grant equality, or near equality, to Jewish subjects, but that could just as easily be taken away, as happened time and time again. In these circumstances, the mere striving for power becomes objectionable.[6]

This attitude, coupled with the homage to *mamlachtiyut*, points to an ambivalence that still survives in Israeli political style today. The tradition of political behaviour, so old and deeply ingrained, and tested for such a long time, can, of course, not disappear simply by the act of sovereignty. In Zionist mythology and ideology, civic indiscipline has been portrayed as a weak, 'diasporic' quality that ought to be jettisoned with the emergence of Jewish independence. Nevertheless, the deep, basic disrespect for authorities remains one of the main characteristics of Jewish political culture in Israel.

The fact that the Zionist endeavour largely succeeded by using these traditional Jewish tenets towards power and authority makes the continued influence of near-anarchic trends in Israel a certainty. Not least, the idea of self-reliance and emphasis on activism is an important factor for modern, extra-parliamentary peace movements. Their recurrent references to what they consider to be the 'old' and 'right' form of Zionism is by no means only rhetoric.

The source of ideological and practical nourishment for the Zionists came from many directions: other national movements; the growth of anti-Semitism (both officially sanctioned and the ever-present 'popular' version); religious and national bonds to Palestine/Zion (hence the name of the movement); and the powerful force of a combination between activist socialism and Jewish 'reawakening'. This last factor would not only come to influence the early Zionists, but it would also put its mark on Israeli political culture until the present day.

The ideological ammunition came, as indicated above, from a 'Jewish' relationship to power and politics, and from the ability to adapt to changes. Continuity through change can be said to be a hallmark of Jewish political history throughout.[7] Modern Israel, with its blend of anarchy or near-anarchy, and pragmatic order, has institutionalized the idea of change in its political culture: it is of a non-dogmatic, pragmatic nature, willing to compromise, but it is also individualistic and non-conformist, characterized by fierce political exchanges.

There are three main sources for the above attitudes: traditional Jewish politics, as developed

during the Diaspora; East European political ideas hatched at the turn of the century and leading to Zionism; and, finally, Central European, mostly German, Jewish philosophical, political and ideological thinking in the first half of the nineteenth century, which was most important in the years between the world wars.[8] In the decades preceding the Second World War, an unprecedented concentration of brilliant and Utopian minds was seen to be grappling with the questions of the kind of society to strive for, and the individual's place within it.

The first source is perhaps best seen in the way Jewish political theory differs from the Western/Greek theory that moulded West European political structures. It is legal rather than speculative. Abstractions and sweeping issues are more often than not boiled down to concrete issues embedded in the real world of the Jewish communities in which they evolved, with the emphasis on *how*, not *what*. Jewish political theory is built from the bottom up, portraying Man as a real human being struggling in his/her daily activities, never achieving perfection. It deals with political action in a specific setting, thus overcoming the chasm between theory and practice.[9]

In Jewish political history, the rulers were always someone outside the Jewish community, setting the rules of the political game most often without consideration for the minority. Because of this, the local community, *kehilla* in Hebrew, became the base for Jewish existence. For centuries this was the only custodian of Jewish political life, found everywhere, serving as the local body politic adapted to different local circumstances. In each country where Jews lived, *Edah* in Hebrew, there were several *kehillot*; each epoch had its *kehillot*, with or without a state. This is also why Judaism became grounded in a community rather than a church.[10] The *kehillot* represents the persistent existence of Jewish political tradition, regardless of localities in time or space.

The second source is dealt with in chapter 2 above. The third source, Jewish political and philosophical thinking in Central Europe, is intimately tied both to the Zionist enterprise and, through this, to the modern peace movements, their ideology, role and impact.

First of all, to a large degree, this tradition represents the tenets of how democracy should look in Israel. For the peace movements dealt with here, their ideological ammunition, as well as their *raison d'être*, comes from the fear of what is happening to the moral base on which Israel should stand, as a result of the conflict with the Arabs, and the military rule over the Palestinians on the West Bank and in Gaza.

Historically, the base on which the ideology (encompassing ethics and moral standards) of the peace movements stand, is seen in the constant and recurring references to these notions by representatives of, and/or spokespersons for, the movements.[11] The key elements here are the 'Jewish' relation to power, to religion and Messianism and – bridged by a notion of Zionism as a nation-builder – ideas of the responsibility of the individual to society. This responsibility meant an acceptance of the 'rules of the game' as long as the game was considered just and democratic.[12] It also meant an obligation, on the part of the citizen, to defy and protest against the results of the political game if it deviated from the high standards set up.[13]

This, of course, is also tied to the Utopian ideas of the early Zionists mentioned above. The new and important idea was the marriage of this Utopian, Messianic pre-independence Zionism with the state-building process after independence,[14] and the notion that it is indeed possible to

change the ‘diasporic’ Jews from a downtrodden, defensive lot, into full, healthy citizens eager to take responsibility not only for themselves, but also for society as a whole.

Constant references, on the one hand, to the importance of staying within certain rules set up by society and, on the other, to the necessity of breaking these rules if need be, points to a certain anarchistic trend. As mentioned above, this is, and has been, visible in Israel for a long time. During the long dominance of Labour it was kept *à la lange*, but with the changes heralded by the Yom Kippur War it was given relatively free rein.

This ideological set-up gave the peace movements a certain leeway in trying to change the political game;[15] several factors played a role in this, but the ideological motivation was already provided for. It is interesting that the duality of this Jewish philosophical and political tradition was inherited by Israel. It not only gave the new State a political and philosophical ground on which to stand, but it also constituted the base from which the extra-parliamentary peace movements took their ideological ammunition. This duality, based in the same fertile Jewish ideological soil, explains, to a large extent, why Israeli society could afford this profound change in the political set-up, while at the same time having to deal with the external conflict with the Arabs.

This also helps to explain how the peace movements could occupy a piece of the political map and – in a relatively short time – could place themselves at the political centre. This was not only the result of a conscious decision to aim for the centre – since it is the public’s response that decides the beliefs of such movements in a democracy – it was a deeper, more natural, and obvious course to take. They saw themselves as part of the same public at which they aimed, and thereby avoided falling into the trap of being relegated to the political fringe; a destiny to which their predecessors all too easily became prey. Their success was also the result of not trying to lead the public as much as trying to be a channel for sentiments already present in society at large.[16] This did not mean that initiatives could not be taken, but it meant that the movement obtained its strength and direction from the public.[17] However, there was always the problem of if, and when, the interest in peace issues would cool off. The ups and downs of the movements often reflected the relative popularity of other matters influencing the public.

Furthermore, by setting themselves squarely in the political midfield they could become integrated more naturally and thereby more easily put up a defence against their opponents, both on the left and on the right.[18] By being more *vielheit* than the *vielfalt*, the Israeli movements managed to become part of the mainstream, to get their ideas across, and to protect themselves against being perceived as too much on the fringe.

Finally, the first indicator of the weakening of cohesion in Israel, as a result of the changes beginning in the late 1970s, is also apparent here. The mere fact that there were extra-parliamentary peace movements at all is symptomatic of this weakening of cohesion, indicated by the breakdown of one dominant political factor (that is, Labour), and the ushering in of new alternative political channels.[19]

Extra-Parliamentary Protest in Israel

The hierarchical, élite-dominated party system of Israel was the result of developments that occurred before independence. As shown above, the historical role of the political party in Israel

can hardly be overestimated; the formation of political parties preceded the existence of the State itself. It was through them that much of the Jewish society in Mandatary Palestine was organized, as an important part of the *Yishuv*, hence they took over a variety of tasks not normally associated with political parties.

As stated above, the socialists were the most important of the political groupings building a Jewish society in Palestine. Their grip on resources, and the distribution of those resources, remained virtually unchallenged until the late 1970s. A key element in the build-up of a political culture dominated by one single factor (that is, Labour) was the fact that the political élite – or those who turned out to be the 'founding fathers' – arrived before the 'masses' they were to lead.[20] This fitted in well with the ideology of the highly motivated socialists in the first and second *aliyot*. They built up an organization that was prepared to handle the would-be immigrants; and when the immigrants started to pour in, there was already an organizational base for handling their integration into the *Yishuv*. This organization was built on strong party machines and a strong centralized power élite.[21]

Furthermore, in most cases, the people arriving in Israel comprised a highly educated and politically aware group, motivated to build a whole new society, often along socialist lines. According to this worldview, a strong party machine to activate and lead the public was the most natural thing.

In 1939, with the British White Paper limiting Jewish immigration at a time when the threat of Nazi Germany became very real, the position for the Zionists became more difficult.[22] The restrictions led to direct action and civil disobedience, which have been given a very special place in Israeli history. The parallel between the pioneers and modern protesters, not only in the peace movement, is often used to justify cases of popular disorder.[23] This justification for sometimes breaking the law also ties in well with the notion of individual responsibility, and the obligation to protest against perceived wrongdoing by the authorities.

On the eve of independence, the *Yishuv* had developed along three lines:

- A strong party machine as *the* integrative tool for new immigrants.
- A highly motivated, homogenous and politically mature population, intimately tied together due to both their low numbers and small area of settlement.
- A struggle against the British – becoming more and more violent as war drew nearer – that was seen as justifying direct action.

Early statehood saw changes in the political culture. First of all, the strong and dominant role of the parties diminished in favour of the State (see above on *mamlachtiyut*). The dominance of Labour, and the insistence of the first Prime Minister, Ben-Gurion, led to a weakening of the parties' powers in areas such as education and welfare. The change was gradual, but eventually the civil service became independent of the parties. However, the parties' role as channels for political ideas assured them of a continued place at the top of the political hierarchy.

Labour's continued dominance, carried over from pre-independence days, also made the Labour parties – especially Ben-Gurion's *Mapai* party – 'first among equals'. This dominance also made them the single most important factor in shaping the political agenda.[24] By calling the

shots in the political debate, and by determining issues and the action to be taken, they functioned as a cohesive factor, pushing national goals to the forefront and arguing for unity in the face of external threats.

Second, the rapid growth in population altered the social milieu radically From being a small intimate society, Israel expanded rapidly, and suddenly had to incorporate a large influx of people from far more diverse backgrounds. From 1948 to 1951 the Jewish population doubled, forcing the power brokers – parties and the government – to give up much of the intimacy and openness that had characterized the pre-state era.

When this intimacy was lost, the participants (that is, the public) became much more the 'observers'. Traditional channels for influx into the system did not clog up entirely as a result of the population increase, but the strains put on the system made it much harder to influence, especially if you did not have party loyalty as a backup.[25] The need to be politically involved grew with the population increase, creating a prerequisite for political discontent. The fact that a majority of the new immigrants were of Sephardic origin, compared to the earlier Ashkenazic inhabitants, added to the strain.

The changes in the political culture of Israel – increased political discontent leading up to a more action-oriented situation – were intimately connected to the overburdening of the Israeli polity outlined above. This also led to a drop in the level of commitment to collective societal goals. This centre-periphery tension showed itself in the way peripheral groups – including the Ultra-Orthodox, the communists and, to some extent, the Israeli Arab population – tried to obtain greater material resources from the centre (that is, the government) without any significant increase in these groups' unconditional involvement in reaching the collective goal.[26] This trend runs parallel to the demise of Labour as the dominant factor in politics, which gave greater manoeuvrability to other participants and, as a result, brought a gradual weakening in social cohesion.[27]

These changes in the political culture of Israel have been manifested in several simultaneous trends:[28]

- An increased sense of political discontent, due to a perceived governmental inability to deal with problems deemed important by the public.
- A greater psychological involvement leading to an increased need for political expression.
- A decreasing sense of institutional efficacy and, as a result, a feeling of political impotence.

The bottom line here is a sense of blocked opportunities. This 'influence gap' – between the public and the government – leads to an increase in direct action and civil disobedience.[29] When coupled with a heightened tension between the political centre and the periphery, which creates weaker adherence to collective goals or willingness to make sacrifices to reach those goals, this points to a decline in social cohesion. Since keeping abreast of politics in Israel is considered a necessity of life, the frustration caused by blocked opportunities is felt even more in the face of the difficulty of making an impact on the system.[30]

The bargaining processes of coalition government also show the greedy side of politics, which does not promote goodwill in institutional politics. This has led to an increase in extra-

parliamentary action as an alternative to more traditional paths of political influence. The peace movements have played an important role in this development by being prime movers in creating new avenues for political initiatives to be funnelled into the system. As another result of this, the role of the party has diminished even more.[31]

On the positive side of this development is the fact that these extra-parliamentary groups have created novel opportunities for political communication. That this has happened in a diverse and segmented society shows that the system has adapted to a more consociational structure, over-riding the various social cleavages running through the society.[32] It also strengthens the notion of a 'Jewish' political philosophy of change through action, as outlined above.

On the negative side is the fact that this has a social cost: an increase in illegal, and sometimes violent, protest that might lead to an increase in contempt for law and order.[33] This is what Wolfsfeldt calls the 'politics of cynicism', based on three components:

- High discontent with the present situation.
- High psychological involvement.
- Low institutional efficacy.

A comparison between Israel and several European democracies shows that Israel ranks highest in terms of psychological involvement, but only sixth when it comes to institutional efficacy.[34] The discrepancy between involvement and perceived efficacy is due to an inconsistency between certain aspects of Israel's political culture, which has encouraged political involvement and activism, along with certain structural factors of the political system that have made that activism more difficult (such as the centralizing of power in the hands of the political establishment, and the lack of extra-parliamentary political organizations – which could have served as channels for political communication between elections – until the 1970s).[35] This discrepancy both reflects and precipitates political discontent.

Another reason for the high level of political involvement in Israel is probably the small size of the country. There are few public issues that do not directly, or indirectly, affect the individual or someone he/she knows. Another explanation might lie in the fact that the political culture of Israel places a high value on political interest and participation. This is a tradition handed down from early nation building before independence.[36]

What makes the Israeli situation unique is that it includes a high level of direct/mobilized action (demonstrations are the most likely reaction to a policy initiative in Israel), and a low level of institutional participation. This shows that the Israeli public has found ways to overcome institutional obstacles to political participation: 'The party is no longer the only game in town.'[37]

The changing political culture of Israel – with a decline in the influence and position of the political parties and a growth in extra-parliamentary activities between 1977 and 1987 – has made mobilized political action a first choice. This process has occurred within Israel against the background of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. For the peace movement, which is part and parcel of these changes in the political culture, this conflict is about fundamental values – values that pose questions about where Israel is heading, and how. However, if the peace movements

developed because it was felt that fundamental issues were at stake, so did their ideological adversaries; although, on the basis of the same political events, they reached diametrically different conclusions on which political course to take.

Until 1967, there had been a kind of national consensus in Israel on issues relating to defence and security,[38] presided over by the dominant Labour Party. This changed with the Six-Day War. The controversies that arose in the aftermath of the crisis in national consensus – resulting from developments in 1967, and heightened even more in 1977 – laid bare real value dilemmas concerning the nature of Israeli society. These dilemmas became very persistent over time, polarising society, with the peace movements and their supporters constituting one pole.[39] The novelty of these changes was that the dilemmas could no longer be solved *ad hoc*, or with interim solutions, which had earlier been skilfully used by the leading Labour Party to include as large a majority as possible in the 'security and defence fold.'[40] Several such dilemmas can be recognized:[41]

1. The first pitted an ethnocentric, particularistic nationalism, enhanced by religious sentiments, against a secular, humanistic and universalist outlook.

2. The second dilemma ties in with the first, but the emphasis here is on how to define Israel: the problem being one of definition of 'ethnicity' and 'nationality' among its citizens. In other words, this dilemma pitted a 'Jewish' definition of Israel against a 'civil' one: that is, Israel as a 'Jewish state' against the 'State of the Jews'. Is Israel primarily a state belonging to the Jewish people, with non-Jews relegated to the status of second-class citizens? Or is it a civil state with a Jewish majority, which – given the democratic nature of the State – takes the lead in shaping Israel in line with its national aspirations? The distinction here is not as obvious as might be expected, because the goal of maintaining Jewish political autonomy – not dependent on anyone's goodwill – is shared by most Israelis. The adherents of a civil definition, among them the peace movements, try to overcome this dilemma by advocating partition to maintain the 'Jewish' character of Israel.

3. The third dilemma developed between the political centre and the periphery. The 'centre' posed collective goals, and sacrifices for those goals, against more group-related interests. The dilemma between collectivism and individualism is intimately connected to this. It is also related to the issue of civil rights and the rule of law, as part of a democratic way of life – democracy as the 'tyranny of the majority' – or based on bargaining and compromise.

These value dilemmas reflect the various cleavages that divide Israeli society, and which solidified after 1977. However, they do not only relate to national policy *per se*, they also relate directly to the way in which the national, governing institutions perform. Here we are mostly concerned with extra-parliamentary policy, but the relationship is nevertheless crucial for the understanding of the mechanisms at work, making direct political action through extra-parliamentary movements possible. These institutional dilemmas are furthermore related to the overburdening of the Israeli polity[42] On an operative level, the institutional dilemmas can be summed up as follows:

1. The first dilemma – which is indirectly related to the value dilemma of collectivism *versus*

individualism – means that the desire for a high level of social mobilization to meet modern needs is put before consideration of future needs. It also gives preference to individual and group interests over the interests of the collectivity.

2. The second institutional dilemma is between centralization and decentralization. A strong central government, as opposed to less governmental influence, even if that means less control.

3. The third dilemma relates to the question of distributive justice, and the degree of flexibility in the system. This dilemma involves a choice between a particularistic and universalist system. A particularistic system is more flexible, in that it can more easily improvise responses to problems; whereas a universalist system can provide greater accountability and is less vulnerable to arbitrary action. This dilemma is indirectly related to the value dilemma of Israel as a civil, as opposed to a purely 'Jewish', state.

The several contradictory trends expressed by these dilemmas stem from tensions between the administrative period of the *Yishuv*, and the requirements of statehood, further complicated by an overburdened polity.

The difference between these two types of dilemma is that, as Israel matured, the evolving organizational and political culture softened, or reduced, the acuteness of the institutional dilemmas. At the same time, the value dilemmas intensified the conflicts between those on opposite sides of the chasm. Regulative mechanisms– *ad-hoc* and *status-quo* decisions[43] – that had worked previously were no longer enough. As a result, the polarization became sharper and more radical, with fundamentalism gaining a certain ascendancy, thus undermining consensus and further eroding social cohesion. This process was exacerbated by the fact that the dilemmas confronting Israeli society translated into very real and central political issues; this often forced the positions taken to be extremist and exclusive, which made compromise more difficult.

So far, the stability of Israeli democracy has not been threatened by the conflicts over fundamental values and the accompanying strong feelings and positions taken.[44] The system has tolerated a high degree of debate and controversy concerning difficult and fundamental issues. This was underlined during the politically intensive period from 1967 onwards, culminating with the upheaval of 1977, the peace process with Egypt and the Lebanese War. It is particularly interesting that the growth of extra-parliamentary activity – due to factors in the overburdened and congested political institutions – followed by polarization, decreased consensus and a lessening of cohesion, took place during a politically tense and uncertain time.

The fact that the Israeli political system, so far at least, has been able to incorporate and use the increase in extra-parliamentary activity developed and used by the peace movement during this period, is ample evidence of the presence of a much older, Jewish, political culture, on which the peace movement based itself. In a sense this political culture, having developed over the centuries, reached political maturity during the decade 1977–87.

NOTES

1. See Elon, *The Israelis: Founders and Sons*.
2. At times, the various interest groups and ideologies have been represented by up to 25

different political parties. Post-independence Israel has seen a decline in the number of parties, but the change is mostly in degree. The most important power factions are in fact coalitions of smaller groups or former parties.

3. There were times, in the 1920s, when some of the more influential settlers hoped that the National Jewish Home would develop into a community of free villages, a network of co-operative agricultural and industrial institutions tying the whole country together with a minimum of coercion and a maximum of voluntary engagement.
4. See Elon, *The Israelis: Founders and Sons*, p. 291.
5. Ibid; also Arian, *Politics in Israel*.
6. An excellent illustration of the Jews' basic disrespect for authority can be found in traditional Jewish humour, with all its biting self-irony. It is still, particularly in its political form, a lively art in Israel and very often the butt of the joke is the 'hero ideal', so cherished by Zionist ideology. In a classic anecdote, a man rings the office of the prime minister shortly after Ben-Gurion has resigned. 'May I speak to Premier Ben-Gurion,' he asks. The operator tells him that Ben-Gurion is no longer in office. 'Oh,' says the man, 'thank you.'A few minutes later he rings again, and once more asks to speak with Premier Ben-Gurion. Again, he receives the same answer. The third time the operator begins to get annoyed. 'We've told you three times that Ben-Gurion is no longer in office. Stop calling!' 'I'm terribly sorry to bother you,' says the man, 'but I can't hear the news often enough!'
7. See Lehman-Wilzig and Susser, eds, *Public Life in Israel and the Diaspora* (Tel Aviv: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1981).
8. Central Europe is defined here as the area of Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire (that is, *Mitteleuropa*). It is an affinity based on culture, rather than economics or national states. (For an illustration of this, see Michael Löwy, *Förlosning och Utopi* (Daidalos, 1990).
9. Ibid.
10. For comparison, see the role of the Church in Christianity and the Mosque in Islam.
11. Aviad, personal communication, 1986; Yishai, personal communication, 1986; and Galia, personal communication, 1987.
12. Constant references to the importance of staying within the limits of the law and abiding by the rules mark the activities of the peace movements dealt with here. The agonizing and subsequently slower decision-making process of *Shalom Achsav* and *Oz v'shalom* has opened them up to criticism from other, more radical, peace movements. The example of the Lebanon War and the various responses of different movements is a case in point.
13. For an example of this, see ch. 3, n.24.
14. See Löwy, *Förlosning och Utopi*; also Gershon Scholem, *The Star of David: The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995).
15. Of course, this was also true for other extra-parliamentary movements. The nationalistic, settler organization *Gush Emunim* took the direct-action model provided for in early Zionism to greater lengths than did the peace movement.
16. This idea – especially significant for 'Peace Now' – of the movement as a catalyst, or channel, for the broader public, has been with the movement since its inception. (Shachan, personal communication, 1986; Raz, personal communication, 1987; and Reschef, personal communication, 1987.)
17. In the beginning, however, the movement reacted mostly to external events, such as new settlements on the West Bank, or perceived foot-dragging by the government on matters

concerning the peace process with Egypt. This was something their critics in the more radical movements were quick to pick up on.

18. A comparison with some of the European counterparts to 'Peace Now' points to another interesting difference concerning placement on the political field. For such movements as the Dutch IKV (Interkerkelijk Vredesberaad, 'Interchurch Peace Council') and anti-nuclear movements in Germany, it became their credo to be *outside* the mainstream. It could be argued that this also alienated them from some of the public they could have appealed to, had they paid more attention to the question of whose opinion they wanted to change. By placing themselves on the 'outside' they also left themselves more vulnerable to attacks from the political establishment, who could dismiss them as being too far on the fringe to warrant much attention.
19. Lissak, personal communication, 1990.
20. See Wolfsfeldt, *Politics of Provocation*.
21. See Arian, *Politics in Israel*; also Wolfsfeldt, *Politics of Provocation*.
22. The British authorities tried a two-pronged approach to dealing with the Zionists. On the one hand, they allowed – and to some extent even encouraged – political activity on the part of 'main-stream' Zionism. On the other hand, the British cracked down hard on the more extremist organizations within the Zionist movement. Groups such as *LEHI*, and the so-called Stern Gang, were outlawed.
23. See Wolfsfeldt, *Politics of Provocation*.
24. Lissak, personal communication, 1991.
25. See Wolfsfeldt, *Politics of Provocation*.
26. See Horowitz and Lissak, *Trouble in Utopia*.
27. This trend – increasing pressure on the centre for material rewards without a matching willingness to contribute to the common good – started in earnest after the Yom Kippur War in 1973. It should, however, be noted that the overall willingness to contribute to the attainment of collective goals has been, and still is, higher in Israel than in most other democratic societies. From an Israeli perspective, however, the decline has been considerable. (See Horowitz and Lissak, *Trouble in Utopia*.)
28. See Wolfsfeldt, *Politics of Provocation*.
29. Ibid.
30. See Arian, *Politics in Israel*.
31. This is shown by the fact that the extra-parliamentary peace movements regularly manage to muster more people (for example, at demonstrations) than the political parties. (Lissak, personal communication, 1991.)
32. See Kenneth McRae, ed., *Consociational Democracy: Political Accomodation in Segmented Societies* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd, 1974).
33. Even though the growth of extra-parliamentary actions has not led to an increase in their intensity, there is a danger that the contempt for the law and order inherent in the use of illegal action might suggest a potentially dangerous normative environment. (See Wolfsfeldt, *Politics of Provocation*; also Horowitz and Lissak, *Trouble in Utopia*.)
34. See Wolfsfeldt, *Politics of Provocation*.
35. See Etzioni-Halevy and Shapira, *Political Culture in Israel*.
36. Ibid.
37. See Wolfsfeldt, *Politics of Provocation*.

38. See Arian, *Politics in Israel*; Wolfsfeldt, *Politics of Provocation*; and Horowitz and Lissak, *Trouble in Utopia*.
39. This does not contradict the findings that the peace movements placed themselves on the political midfield, but two major ideological schools emerged as a result of the war and its aftermath, and the peace movements became one pole, in apposition to their opponents.
40. See Horowitz and Lissak, *Trouble in Utopia*.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. An example of how conflicts concerning fundamental values were handled in the first decades of nation-building can be found in regulations passed to accommodate the religious population. The first governments worked out a 'freeze' settlement with the religious authorities, whereby the *status quo* should prevail if a compromise could not be reached. *Shabbat* and *kashrut* legislation are prime examples. That this 'societal contract' did not survive other changes in society is shown by the many conflicts between the secular majority and the religious observant minority during the past decades: conflicts originating in what one part sees as attempts to upset the *status quo*. Examples are the disagreements over Friday night films and driving on certain roads during *Shabbat*.
44. See Horowitz and Lissak, *Trouble in Utopia*. Also Yehezekel Landau, spokesperson (at the time) for *Shalom Achsav*, personal communication, 18 November 1986; Galia, personal communication, 1991; Dr Joseph Walk, Jerusalem, personal communication, 19 November 1991.

7

Conclusions: A Dissenting Culture

> ‘He could never quite subscribe to any dogma … It was his nature … to complicate issues and to dissent.’
>
> (Parini, *Benjamin’s Crossing*, 1997, p. 66)

This book deals with the issue of dissent in a democratic country, Israel, through a case-study based on the reconstruction of an extra-parliamentary peace movement (‘Peace Now’). Particular attention has been focused on the interrelation of external, sometimes armed, conflicts with internal conflicts, as played out on the political field and concerning those same external conflicts. The central task in the book was to: *reconstruct the emergence and political impact of an Israeli peace movement* (Shalom Achsav, ‘*Peace Now*’) *in the light of the specific situation in Israel, a democracy involved in ongoing external armed conflicts*.

The hypothesis was that certain specific factors in the case of Israel led to a development that, because of the political situation in the country at the time, seemed unlikely to happen, and that those factors were to be found in the specific Jewish political culture of Israel.

The reconstruction involved tracing the foundations of ‘Peace Now’ in a historical context, discussing the present political structure of Israel, and looking at the factors influencing that structure. The role of these factors in the emergence of ‘Peace Now’ in particular, and extra-parliamentary Israeli peace movements in general, was then examined, showing the contradictory trends simultaneously played out in Israel at that time. On the one hand, this involved the ongoing external conflicts with the Palestinians and the neighbouring Arab states, where the emphasis was on issues such as unity and internal cohesion in the face of external enemies; and, on the other hand, the internal debate on the fundamental and existential issues of what kind of country Israel was to become, which addressed those fundamental issues of unity and internal cohesion.

The Israeli peace movement was then discussed, with the emphasis on a reconstruction of the emergence of ‘Peace Now’, first during the pre-state period, and then during independence. This period was divided into two parts: before and after 1967, a year marking changes in the political geography of the region and setting the scene for future conflicts between Israel and her Arab neighbours.

The reconstruction of ‘Peace Now’ was further illustrated by showing how ethnicity played a role in the emergence of the movement: this issue was expanded in a discussion of the role of extra-parliamentary protest in Israel in general. This final chapter points to the conclusions that can be drawn when all these factors are brought together to form an argument for the

determining role of Jewish political culture as a factor in the creation of democratic dissent in its Israeli setting.

The concept of 'democratic dissent' can be seen as defining the kind of activity in which 'Peace Now' was engaged. It also summarises the aspect of Jewish political culture that made a movement such as 'Peace Now' (and, of course, other similar movements in Israel) possible against the background of the parallel external and internal conflicts. Finally, the concept epitomises the historical development within Jewish communities at various places that led to the formulation of the individual's 'right' to dissent.

First, this concept was shown to have influenced the way the modern political structure of Israel was built up. As mentioned above, the re-creation of an independent Israeli nation rests upon long and various traditions to which the main political players still adhere. When the political structure was built up in the decades before independence, there were constant references to Jewish political independence in former times, both as regards how to elect members to parliament, and in the terminology of the various political bodies elected to run the country. It is argued here that these very traits in the political structure unintentionally contained the seeds of extra-parliamentary dissent. It is also argued that the structure had built-in contradictions caused by the transference of a political culture based on activism and dissent to a more systematic parliamentary system. Various Jewish communities brought with them their own interpretations of how to solve conflicts. Underlying all these differences was a body of ideas and concepts that developed over time, but were based on a similar philosophy for solving political, and other, conflicts without disrupting society. Thus, dissent became an integral part of the communal structure.

Second, it was shown that the concept of 'democratic dissent' helped the early peace movements in Israel to formulate their ideological standpoints, and to defend those standpoints on the internal political scene. These movements, laying the ideological groundwork for 'Peace Now', to a very large extent based themselves on what their activists saw as the 'correct' interpretation of Judaism and Zionism. The problems they encountered in reaching out to the broader public had more to do with their association with academia (perceived as being far removed from the pragmatic, socialist activism of the early Zionists busily creating a state from the marshes and sand-dunes of Palestine) than with their reading of Jewish culture and tradition. The emphasis on ethics, and the use of 'moral' arguments to foster their cause, had numerous references to *Halacha* and the Talmud, much to the chagrin of the established Orthodoxy. During the decades leading up to independence (and as the social conflict with the Arabs grew worse) the social pressure to unite and to support the same policy grew. This led to intensified clashes within the *Yishuv* that marginalized the peace movements; however, the concept of dissent, even in the face of strong internal opposition, never disappeared. After the Six-Day War in 1967, the 'moral' line of argument for a peaceful solution to the conflict with the Arabs grew even more intense. To rule over, and to subject another people to military submission was utterly objectionable to the peace movements. With the military victory, the debate intensified and the arguments sharpened even more after the 1973 Yom Kippur War. During these years, the essence of the debate itself centred on the question of how should a 'righteous' Israel behave. The dissenters in the peace movements went increasingly outside the parliament – that is, outside the formal political channels – to argue their case. This was in the best of prophetic tradition, even if it was perhaps unintentional.

Third – and of great interest here – the concept of 'democratic dissent' is shown to have been

at the core of the ideological discussions within ‘Peace Now’, helping the movement to create an ideological space on the political field in Israel – a space based on solid enough ground (ideologically and otherwise) to make a definitive impact in Israel.

In addition, these discussions, as well as building up the ideological defence of ‘Peace Now’, also helped to broaden the issues in question (that is, peace with the Arabs and how it should be achieved) to include the deeper and wider issues of how these aims of the movement ought to affect Israeli society in general. This broadening meant that the movement could widen its support-base, and that other movements – with related interests – could participate in the efforts of ‘Peace Now’ to change policy. These other movements included several Sephardic movements that tried to ameliorate the injustices and discrimination they saw in their treatment by the authorities. The argument that money spent on settlements on occupied land in the West Bank and in Gaza was money *not* spent to help erase poverty and discrimination in Israel proper became a rather powerful argument in debates in Israel. What the broadening of the ‘Peace Now’ agenda also did was to show, in effect, that their ideological arguments were based on ancient Jewish political culture – a culture that made room for dissent, even if it meant ‘weakening’ internal cohesion in times of conflict. ‘Peace Now’s insistence on being part of, not just a participant in, the relevant discussions; on taking part in formulating the kind of issues that ought to be brought to the table; and on deciding the arena in which they should be discussed, became a hallmark of the movement from its inception.

Fourth, and as a consequence of the above-mentioned discussion, the concept of ‘democratic dissent’ became a major factor in the bridging of the ethnic and social divide (in theory at least, if not entirely successfully in practical political life, such as in voting behaviour) for ‘Peace Now’ in Israel; thus showing that ethnicity, although a factor, did not in itself necessarily constitute an obstacle to political dissent, or to heightened political awareness and participation. As shown in chapter 5, there were many reasons for the ethnic conflicts in Israel. Inequalities and built-in discrimination became major issues over the years in Israel, even if it took some time before the full impact was felt on the political field. It was difficult for the newly arrived Sephardim to influence and use the political system to their own advantage, as it was already in place when most of them arrived in Israel. When ‘Peace Now’ emerged, the main issues on the Sephardic agenda focused on economic and social inequalities, as well as perceived discrimination towards development towns and villages where the Sephardim constituted a majority of the population. In 1977, their discontent resulted in a major shift in voting behaviour: after having supported and voted for Labour since independence, the Sephardim shifted to *Likud*, and their charismatic leader, Menachem Begin. This helped *Likud* to oust Labour from power, and brought the opposition to the fore for the first time since independence.

As mentioned above, at that time the peace movement was often perceived as yet another Ashkenazic phenomenon that would not, or could not, help remedy the discrimination and inequality in society. It is true that this picture of the peace movement in general, and ‘Peace Now’ in particular, stayed with the movement. However, the social and economic arguments mentioned above did help ‘Peace Now’ to reach new groups within Sephardic communities; this did not end with economic or social matters, but also encompassed religious and philosophical matters. One of the smaller peace movements, *Oz v’shalom* (‘Strength and Peace’), and one in which Sephardic members were prominent, based their commitment on religious and philosophical interpretations of Jewish thought, tradition and political culture, that roughly coincided with similar interpretations and discussions within ‘Peace Now’. Thus *Oz v’shalom*,

and other like-minded movements, could show their respective constituencies that it was possible to bridge the ethnic and religious abyss. These religious and ethnic peace movements never became as big as their counterpart, 'Peace Now', but they touched base with the larger Ashkenazic movements when it came to *why* and *how* they acted as they did. In this they shared a common interpretation of Jewish tradition when it came to dissent, and the moral and ethical ground on which it was based.

Last, it was shown that the concept of 'democratic dissent' is part and parcel of Jewish political culture in modern Israel. This is perhaps most clearly seen in the way extra-parliamentary dissent presents itself today. As shown earlier, there is, in Jewish political culture and history, scepticism towards authority and power as such. Nearly 20 centuries of Diaspora, under foreign rule, largely explains why this is so, but there is also an older, independent, body of Jewish thought on the issues of power, authority and dissent. Together with these older concepts, a concept of 'statism' emerged during the Zionist enterprise. This concept tried to put the emphasis on the State as the major regulator of power and the distribution of goods of society. The dilemma stemming from the contradiction inherent in the collision between these two concepts is aggravated by the fact that the ideal of self-reliance and activism was both an integral part of the Zionist endeavour, and is part of modern extra-parliamentary activism.

As outlined earlier, there were several sources for the above-mentioned ideological and practical strivings of extra-parliamentary groups and movements in Israel. Suffice it here to say that, what the activism of 'Peace Now' shows is that the contradiction between the need to 'play by the rules' [of the political game], and the need, and 'right', to break these rules if this is deemed necessary, is still an integral part of the Israeli political scene.

Dissent and Political Culture

Political culture and the related issue of ethnicity are, by all accounts, increasingly contentious issues. In various shapes and forms, political culture, as defined here, influences the way in which politics are conducted. The understanding of culture is therefore a valid element in the understanding of political behaviour.

In its Israeli setting, Jewish political culture goes hand in hand with political dissent in several ways; although this has been shown by focusing on a specific peace movement, it is clear that the roots of this political behaviour, that is, 'democratic dissent', go deeper and are also visible in other strata of Israeli political culture. Furthermore, this political behaviour, evident in political dissent, is grounded in a Jewish relationship to power, both their own (in times of Jewish independence) and that of foreign rulers. This relationship has been shaped and formed over a long time, as can be seen in the way Jewish communities have structured themselves in ancient Israel, as well as in the Diaspora.

A credo of political and social dissent was established through the legal autonomy enjoyed by Jewish communities in various parts of the world. This varied of course, in degree as well as in form, depending on the ruler and the geographic location. However, there is a similarity in how these structures were formulated, regardless of place or time. Jewish communities were structured, legally and socially, along the lines of a contract or a covenant between the ruler and the ruled, much like the social covenants formulated by Hobbes and Locke. There is, of course, a difference here with regard to whether the communities enjoyed independence under their own

ruler, or were subject to foreign rule.

During independent times, when the Jewish people had their own rulers, the contract (or covenant) was formulated along two lines: one, it was forbidden to use violence or to rise up against the ruler or king – the legal term was *mored b'malkhut* ('rebellion against the king') – since this could undermine the fabric that kept the community together. To rebel against the ruler was to question the authority of God, since God had given the Jewish people their independence in the first place. Any man who challenged God's authority in this way was considered a *rodef*, a 'pursuer'. Thus the Jews developed, through the years, this notion of a contract between the constituted authority and themselves. There were, however, obligations on both sides, and the breach of these obligations carried sanctions.

One form of resistance, even though it was not outright rebellion, was the right of individuals to challenge the mandate of a king by disobeying an order, or law, deemed wrong and in violation of the Torah. A *Sanhedrin* ('judge') would hear the case and the plaintiff would not be punished for bringing it to court.

In addition to the above-mentioned kind of resistance, there is another form of dissent to constituted authority, in Hebrew called *zaken mamreh* (literally, 'rebellious elder'). In this situation, a high court might rule that an elder or judge had erred, and return the case to him to reverse it and apply the law as it had been decided by the majority in the high court. A refusal to do this was a grave offence. However, according to the Talmud, even if the judge or elder could be called a criminal for breaking the fabric of social order, that did not preclude him from roving the country, preaching that the high court had been wrong, and thus continuing his right to dissent. There would, of course, be anarchy if lower courts did not obey higher ones, but in the talmudic system, anyone could proclaim his dissent, if not in deed, then in words.

In those times when Jews have been subjected to foreign rule – which has been the case throughout the past 19 centuries in Israel, and always the case outside Israel – they still very often had various degrees of sovereignty within their own communities. In their own communities they often enjoyed legal autonomy, and this was something they wanted and often paid for. They taxed themselves in order to have control of their own courts and, on many occasions, the king or feudal lord entered into *quid-pro-quo* agreements with a specific Jewish community to grant them legal autonomy This was the case in many Muslim countries, for example, where all religious minorities[1] enjoyed legal autonomy.

In both the above cases, however, Jews were permitted to protest in the face of persecution or wrongdoing on the part of the ruler. Moreover, they were obliged to do this in order to rectify the ways of rulers, even kings. There is a respectable body of literature sanctioning non-violent protest, as well as a great amount written on the ethics of dissent against constituted authority. This was especially the case in instances where the rulers were responsible for the welfare of Jewish communities. Making them aware of their duties, and even penitent with regard to their 'evil' ways, was in the best prophetic tradition. The prophets have been used throughout Jewish history to exemplify dissent against constituted authority[2] Even though violence was (and is) not sanctioned (except when life is at stake), an ethic of dissent developed. Emphasized in this ethic was the obligation of the individual to trust his own judgement in this regard. This was not arbitrary – there were clear rules as to when a ruler was to be reproached – but it was emphasized that the individual was trusted by God to follow his own conscience and to make a 'right' judgement.

In addition, there is a long Jewish tradition of civil obedience,[3] formed both during the times of Jewish independence in Israel, and in the Diaspora. As a result, there is a classic maxim of Jewish law that no court with legislative power can ever legislate anything that the majority of people cannot, or will not, accept. This democratic aspect of Jewish law made it paramount for leaders of the community to be in constant touch with the people they were entrusted to lead or rule over. More importantly for us, this aspect also made it a 'civil right', as well as an obligation on the part of the individual, to make decisions on their own. Since this legal autonomy was very often the only way in which Jewish communities could be independent, at least to some extent, the notion of meriting the individual with the right to ethical decisions in all matters became deeply ingrained. Thus, the right to dissent against constituted authority is deeply rooted in Jewish tradition and culture, both political and social.

Generally, the importance of dissent in Jewish law and Jewish communal life runs through the ages, as can be seen through the writings in the Talmud. In addition to the above-mentioned examples, provisions were also made for the underprivileged, that is, those who are disadvantaged by the constitutional authority. First, they could strike. This right is as ancient as the Talmud itself. More importanly for this discussion, their right was a right against the community, a legal right: the poor could sue the community for subsistence – not for compassion or empathy, but to enforce what was their legal right within the community There were built-in mechanisms to prevent exploitation of the poor by the rich.

Another important aspect of this tradition in regard to dissent is the right to privacy, dating back to the earliest days of the Jews wandering in the desert: in the Middle Ages, this right was expanded to include the right to privacy with regard to speech. Thus, a right to speak one's mind was established, in Jewish law, long before the liberal nation-states included this provision in their constitutions. In fact, the law (*Halacha*) went even further in insisting on the responsibility of the individual. *Halacha* does not only regulate relations between individuals, but also the relations between nations and, more important, it governs the conduct of nations within their own borders. This Jewish political philosophy (which over time played a primary role in developing a Jewish political culture) argued that not only were the nations responsible towards their own subjects, but they were also responsible to mankind in general, as well as to God. This created both a 'right' and an obligation to protect humanity (even by force if no viable alternative was available) and human conduct, including individual rights, everywhere.[4] This meant that the laws applied to nations were also applicable to individuals – a powerful tool to wield in order to follow one's conscience, if ever there was one.

For the people in 'Peace Now', the wealth of Jewish thoughts on authority and dissent has played an important role in how they behaved, and in their movement. This was perhaps most evident in the way in which 'Peace Now' tried to build up a dialogue with like-minded people among the religiously active part of the population. There was common ground between the secular, often urban, Ashkenazim in 'Peace Now' and the more traditional activists on the religious side of the secular-religious divide that permeates so many aspects of Israel – not least when it came to the issues of war and peace. The issue of war is dealt with elsewhere in this study, suffice it here to say that the two sides were in agreement on an absolute prohibition on war as a way to find a long-term solution to any conflict, such as that with the Palestinians. Aggressive wars are given no sanction by the universal legislation assumed by Judaism to govern the conduct of mankind, individually or collectively. It follows that the individual, again, has an

obligation to dissent when the constituted authority, in this case the government, follows an ethically ‘wrong’ path. As discussed in the Introduction, this often constitutes a dilemma for the individual; but, even though a soldier such as Guni Harnik chose to fight, he never gave up his right, or obligation, to dissent.

The long-term implications of this right to dissent might be of even greater importance, however. For the individual this right, and obligation, means that society has created protective surroundings in which he/she can dissent and protest. In modern Israel, as well as in other democratic states, this is a natural aspect of a free society. However, of interest here is the fact that these concepts were established some 2,000 years ago, at a time when the right to dissent and protest were not self-evident. It can therefore be argued that these concepts, through time, imbued Jewish polities and thus prepared the ground for dissent of the kind ‘Peace Now’ came to present, in the midst of both internal and external conflict.

NOTES

1. Even though the Jews were considered a distinct nationality, they were classified by the Muslim authorities according to their religion, since the two effectively went together. Latter-day attempts to deprive the Jews of their nationality and portray them as not being a nation, but only adherents of a religion, Judaism, should be seen as a result of the political conflict with the Arabs.
2. The prime example is probably Elijah, constantly in flight from the wrath of Queen Jezebel and King Ahab. For a wonderful illustration of this, see *God Knows*, by Joseph Heller [*Gud Vet* (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1984)].
3. A classic example can be found in the Talmud. The rabbis legislated against the use of wine made by non-Jews, and also tried to do the same for oil. Their community, however, accepted the former but rejected the latter, the result being that the rabbis had to abolish the prohibition.
4. A good example of this concept is the phrase: ‘He who saves one man, it is as if he has saved the whole world.’ Said, among other things, about Raoul Wallenberg.

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Glossary of Political Parties

POLITICAL PARTIES

Agudah Yisrael	An Orthodox religious party, founded in 1911
Agudat	Part of the United Torah Party (with *Degel Ha'Torah and Moriah*)
Avoda	A Labour party (*avoda* means 'work' in Hebrew)
Chadash	A left-of-centre party (*chadash* means 'new' in Hebrew)
Degel Ha'Torah	Part of the United Torah Party (with *Agudat* and *Moriah*)
Derech ha-shlosha	'The Third Way'
Gahal	A block, comprising *Herut* and the Liberal Party
Ha'poel Ha'Mizrachi	Religious Zionist party
Ha'poel Ha'Tzair	Non-Marxist socialist party
Herut	'Freedom'
Ihud	'Union'
Israel (Yisrael) b'Aliya	A party based entirely on immigrants from the USSR
Kach	Anti-Arab, rightwing and racist party (outlawed after the election in 1984 for advocating racism and expulsion of Arabs)
La'am	The remnant of the *Rafi* Party
Liberal Party	Later the 'Progressive Party'; this has ceased to exist. One section (the 'Progressive Party') joined *Ma'arach* in 1983; a current 'liberal' party is *Shinui*
Likud	'Unity': a combination of conservatives and liberals, *Gahal* and *La'am*; heavily Sephardic; the party of Menachem Begin
Ma'arach	'Alignment': a coalition of labour parties
Mafdal	The 'National Religious Party' (NRP); a combination of *Mizrachi* and *Ha'poel Ha'Mizrachi*, founded in 1956
Mapai	A Labour party; the party of David Ben-Gurion
Mapam	A Labour party
Meimad	Orthodox, Zionist party
Meretz	'Peace list': a coalition of *Mapam*, *Ratz* and *Shinui*
Mizrachi	Religious Zionist party
Moriah	Part of the United Torah Party (with *Agudat* and *Degel Ha'Torah*)
Neturai (Qarta)	An Orthodox, non-Zionist religious party
One Nation	
Paole Zion	Marxist party
Po'alei Agudah Yisrael	An Orthodox religious party, founded in 1925; affiliated to *Aguduh Yisrael*

Ratz	‘Citizens Rights Movement’ (CRM); a centre party
Shas	A Sephardic, partly religious party. After the elections in 2001 it became the third largest in the *Knesset*
Sheli	A left-of-centre party
Shinui	‘Change’; a centre party
Tami	A short-lived Sephardic religious party
Tehiya	An Ultra-Orthodox party with links to the settlement movement

PEACE ORGANIZATIONS

Brit Shalom	‘Peace Covenant’
Ha’Mizrachi l’shalom	A peace movement created by and aimed specifically at the Sephardic community
Ha’tenua le-shalom ve-bitachon	‘Movement for Peace and Security’
Ha-liga le-hitkarvut ve-leshituf yehudi-aravi	‘League for Jewish-Arab Rapprochement and Co-operation’
Kadima ha Mizrachi	‘Towards the East’
Kav Adom	‘A Red Line’ [alluding to the fact that there are ‘red lines’ that should not be crossed]
Netivot Shalom	‘Paths of peace’
Oz v’shalom	‘Strength and Peace’ [aimed specifically at the Sephardic community]
Shalom Achshav	‘Peace Now’
Yesh Gvul	‘There is a Limit/Border’

OTHER POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS

Gush Emunim	‘Block of the Faithful’ [part of the ‘Land for Israel’ movement]
Histadrut	General Labour Federation
Israeli Peace Committee	
Knesset	Parliament
Minhelet Ha’am	People’s Administration
Moetset Ha’am	People’s Council
Mothers Against War	
Movement for a Different Zionism	
Tenuah Lemaan Eretz	‘Land for Israel’ movement
Yisrael Hashlema	
Va’ad Leumi	The People’s Council [part of the *Knesset*]

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