
DILEMMAS OF SECURITY

**POLITICS, STRATEGY,
AND THE ISRAELI
EXPERIENCE IN
LEBANON**

AVNER YANIV



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*Politics, Strategy, and the Israeli
Experience in Lebanon*

Amir Yaron

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Politics, Strategy, and the Israeli Experience in Lebanon

Avner Yaniv

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Printed in the United States of America
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We are much beholden to Machiavelli and others,
that write what men do and not what they ought to
do.

FRANCIS BACON

An event has happened upon which it is difficult to
speak and impossible to be silent.

EDMUND BURKE

It is not possible to prove the value of every act at
the time it is done. It can happen that the price
precedes the achievement by a short or a long
period, just as the ploughing and sowing precedes
the harvest and ingathering.

DAVID BEN GURION

Preface

During the fall of 1982 I was asked by Karl Cerny, then chairman of the government department at Georgetown University, in which I was a visiting professor, to present a paper to the department's biweekly seminar. This was shortly after the Sabra and Shatilla massacres, when the future of the Israeli presence in Lebanon was still very uncertain and U.S.-Israeli relations were exceedingly strained. My instinct was that perhaps it would be appropriate for me, an Israeli political scientist specializing in national security problems, to talk about the logic of the Israeli decision to invade Lebanon. As it turned out the seminar was quite lively and the reactions of my colleagues spirited and, on the whole, encouraging.

The most perceptive response and the most demanding queries came from Robert J. Lieber. Having been to Israel, and being inclined to view international politics in a way that was—and still is—very similar to my own, Lieber engaged me in a lively discussion which forced me to go deeper into some of the questions I had raised in the formal presentation. Several weeks later I was invited by the office of the Secretary of State of the United States to give a talk to the department's Open Forum, where some 200 Foreign Service officers reacted in much the same way as my Georgetown colleagues. This experience, as well as similar presentations in seminars at Stanford and at the University of Maryland during the following weeks, convinced me that I was on to an exciting and challenging project. I therefore pursued it further with Lieber. The result was an article we coauthored which was published in the fall 1983 issue of *International Security*, one of the few professional journals that still shares, broadly speaking, the harsh Realpolitik assumptions of scholars such as Lieber and myself.

Our main hypothesis was that Israel was impelled to invade Lebanon not merely by the ambition of Ariel Sharon but by a discernible strategic logic. We sensed that a certain game of deception was involved; but, rather than assuming that Sharon personally deceived his colleagues, we thought that the Israeli government had maneuvered vis-à-vis the United States and the Israeli public for coherent and explainable reasons, as other Israeli governments had done, for example, under Ben Gurion in the 1950s and Eshkol in the 1960s. We also argued that the convergence of domestic uproar in Israel and pressures from the United States was the main reason the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) besieged Beirut instead of breaking straight into it in pursuit of the PLO.¹

By the time this article was published a great deal of additional information had

become available, and the central role of Sharon had been clarified. Moreover, by then the conclusion and then abrogation of the May 17, 1983, accords between Israel and Lebanon had become established facts, and the first phase of the Israeli withdrawal to the Awali line had been completed. Although Lieber and I had meanwhile authored another article on some of these later developments,² it was clear that a far more thorough reappraisal of the entire issue was needed.

Pursuing this alone I became convinced that the Lebanese experience of the Jewish state raised far deeper questions than just Sharon's ambition and Begin's ideological simpleness. The latest phase in the Arab-Israeli conflict raised fundamental issues about the assumptions on which Israel's national security policy had been predicated and, in a sense, about the general nature of international conflict. Assuming this I searched the general international relations literature for an inspiring concept powerful enough to illuminate this Israeli predicament. This reflective phase ultimately led me to the work of Robert Jervis and in particular to his insightful and refreshing attempt to refocus attention on Jean-Jacques Rousseau's explanation of the sources of international anarchy. Though not excited by Jervis's somewhat ponderous search for cooperation under the security dilemma, I found the main thrust of Jervis's rediscovery of Rousseau profound. Its attraction lay, I felt, in its emphasis on the assumption that people do not have to be as bestial as Hobbes's gloomy writings portray them to act in a manner that perpetuates anarchy on planet Earth. Even if they were all rational, enlightened, and well meaning—which I believe many people are—they are still prone to act in a way that in the long run exacerbates their own predicament. This notion appealed to my instincts, seemed to explain a great deal about the particular historical setting I set out to explore and as such was ideally suited as both an organizing concept and a main title.³ Accordingly I found it appropriate to start out with a detailed explanation of the notion of "security dilemma," with some illustrative applications to the case of Israel. Such, in brief, was the genesis of chapter 1.

Having chosen an explicit philosophical framework, I turned to the substance. Here I drew upon my formal academic training at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the London School of Economics and Political Science, and Oxford University. I also relied upon my decade-long service in one of the IDF's most prominent combat units and a stint as a civilian consultant with the planning division of its general staff. This practical experience convinced me that the Israeli decision to go to war in June 1982 was not made only by Begin and Sharon, but was the outcome of a long and painful attempt by Sharon's predecessors to find a solution to the problem through less drastic means. Guided by such a working hypothesis I spent a great deal of time and effort reviewing the background of this onerous decision. The results of this investigation became chapter 2, which takes the story from the latter part of the First World War to July 1981.

The next step was to review the war itself as it unfolded in the summer of 1982. It did not require much insight to conclude that the course of the war was greatly affected by how the decisions to launch and then expand it had been made. In researching these issues I drew some inspiration from a short monograph by Shai Feldman and Heda Rechnitz-Kijner of the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University, which was published when I was halfway through chapter 3. To be sure, I did not entirely accept the authors' implicit assumptions about the origins of this fiasco; but I found their method of investigation sound and coherent.⁴ The result was the specific structure of chapter 3.

By the time I had completed chapter 3 Israel had decided to disengage from Lebanon altogether. This decision and, in particular, the way it was influenced by the complex

political processes of the Jewish state, was obviously one of consequence. It not only explained many of Israel's actions in Lebanon but also seemed to underline some basic universal traits of beleaguered democracies which had intrigued scholars from Thucydides through Tocqueville to many of their contemporary heirs. And, assuming that, I proceeded to deal with it in great detail in chapters 4 and 5.

During the last phase of writing, my own work advanced in tandem with the history it sought to explain. Facing this challenge I felt that the open nature of the Israeli political system and the detailed coverage by the international media of virtually everything that happened in Israel made such a task feasible. Obviously I could not hope to have the full advantage of perspective, but I was reinforced by the benefit of a powerful philosophical frame of reference and, above all, saved from the allure of hindsight. Assuming that because of the lack of historical perspective my work could not be definitive, and taking for granted that it would be one phase of a long scholarly process that would last decades, I sought to protect the piece from a quick decay into oblivion by providing as detailed an account of almost day-by-day developments as space and the available material would permit. In carrying this out I was greatly assisted by talks and interviews with a number of Israeli, American, and Lebanese officials, scholars, and members of the press who had been involved in one capacity or another. This part of the research was both exciting and rewarding. A regrettable but unavoidable result was that in many instances the only way to obtain the maximum amount of help was to promise not to divulge names.

Apart from thanking warmly all these unnamed officials, I wish to thank many colleagues and friends from whose wise advice I benefited greatly in preparing this manuscript. These people include the members of the government department at Georgetown University, in particular Marver Bernstein, Robert J. Lieber, and William V. O'Brien, who offered all along the most generous encouragement, comments, and criticism. Chairman George C. Quester of the department of government and politics at the University of Maryland, College Park, where I was a visiting professor during the preparation of chapters 4, 5, and 6, in the winter and spring of 1985, was equally helpful, as were many members of this large department, including in particular Edward A. Azar, Davis Bobrow, Ahmed Moussalli, Jonathan Wilkenfeld, Bartek Kaminski, James M. Glass, Catherine M. Kelleher, Joe A. Oppenheimer, and, above all, the department's administrative staff, whom I enslaved unashamedly in my struggle to meet a deadline. Back in Israel I received generous financial support in the form of a paid sabbatical leave from the University of Haifa. I benefited greatly from a number of talks with Major General (ret.) Abraham Tamir, currently Director General of the Prime Minister's office, and I gained invaluable inspiration, encouragement, and advice from David Vital of the department of political science at Tel Aviv University and from Alan Dowty, on leave from the University of Notre Dame, at the department of political science at Haifa University. My toughest critic and most inspiring source of support in the entire enterprise was, without any question, my wife, Michal.

A.Y.

Mount Carmel, Israel
May 1986

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1

The Sources of Israeli Conduct

The Problem

Shortly before noon on June 6, 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon. A mechanized division landed by sea north of Sidon and started toward Beirut. Another division headed north on the coastal road connecting Rosh HaNikra (in Israel) and Tyre (in Lebanon). A third division crossed the border near the Israeli town of Metulah and headed toward the Druze towns of Rashaya and Hasbayah. Additional forces crossed the Lebanese border on a wide front stretching between Rosh HaNikra in the west and Metulah in the east. During the following six days these forces would occupy every part of Lebanon south of the Beirut–Damascus road. They would then lay siege to the western part of the Lebanese capital and eventually enter it and stay there for several weeks.¹

For the eighteen-year-old Israeli conscripts who spearheaded the operation, this was the first war. Their own twenty-four-year-old company commanders might have participated in Operation Litani, a limited Israeli incursion into southern Lebanon that took place in March 1978. For scores of thirty-year-old battalion commanders and thousands of reservists of roughly the same age who also took part in Operation Peace for the Galilee (as the 1982 invasion was officially called), this was quite possibly their third war. In October 1973 when the Yom Kippur War was fought, these men were either still doing their national service as conscripts or had just been assigned to the reserve units in which they would serve for the next decade. Participants in the 1982 invasion who were at that time roughly thirty-five years old might have seen battle also in the 1969–70 war of attrition Israel fought against Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and the PLO. For these men the 1982 war might well have been their fourth. Older reservists and colonels, even brigadier generals, in the 1982 war had almost certainly participated in the 1967 war. Within a period of fifteen years, therefore, their war experience would have included no less than five wars. Their superiors, brigadier generals and major generals, would add to their account a sixth war, the 1956 Sinai operation. Finally, the chief of the general staff during the 1982 invasion, Lieutenant General Rafael Eitan (Rafal) and his own superior, Minister of Defense Ariel Sharon (Arik), would be perfectly entitled to count the latest war as their seventh, since both had participated in the 1948 war. Both had begun to rise in the ranks during that war and, indeed, had participated in paramilitary operations during the eventful years preceding Israel's inception as an independent state.

Behind the Israeli-Lebanese armistice lines the 1982 war was watched with increasingly mixed feelings by a war-weary Israeli population. For the real old timers this was not the seventh war but possibly the eighth, the ninth, or even the tenth. Israelis of sixty to eighty years old had lived through World War II, through the insecurity and violence of the Arab Rebellion of 1936–39, and possibly even through the bloody riots of 1929. The younger population for the most part had either seen action in one of the previous wars, or at the very least had a son, brother, or grandson in the raging battle up north. Most of them expected a reprisal operation in retaliation for the attempt on the life of the Israeli ambassador to London two days before the outbreak of the 1982 war. Very few expected this act of terrorism to lead to a full-scale war. Very few had any empathy, let alone sympathy, for the PLO; and most would have been greatly relieved to see the PLO disciplined once and for all. But these same people had also lost their patience with war, even with a successful one.

The fact that the 1982 war was not even perceived as a victory made its casualties seem oppressive. The daily announcements of military burial ceremonies; the large number of black-framed names of the fallen in the back pages of the daily press; the horrors of the siege of Beirut; the outrage at the world's reaction to the siege; the introduction of the (familiar) emergency economic measures; the glaring gaps between official declarations and what people knew was happening in the field; the shame and humiliation following the gruesome Sabra and Shatilla massacres—all these things taxed the endurance of most Israelis, irrespective of what they felt about Begin's government or about "Arik" and "Raful."

The immediate result was a domestic division of a scale without precedent in Israel's history. Mothers of soldiers in the battlefield set up an organization called "Parents against Silence" to protest the war and force the government to bring the boys home. Other protesters set up a rival organization under the name "Yesh Gvul" ("There's a Limit" or "There's a Border"). The Peace Now movement succeeded in organizing a demonstration in which some 400,000 people, that is, some 12 percent of the Israeli population, called on the government to resign or at least to set up an independent commission of inquiry.²

Begin's government at first dismissed this outcry as politically motivated propaganda—even implying outright disloyalty—inspired by the Labor opposition.³ But sustained and massive pressure from the protestors forced the government to yield. The Kahan Commission, a judicial commission of inquiry, was set up with full authority to investigate how the Sabra and Shatilla massacres could have taken place in an area controlled by Israeli forces. Its report appeared several months later and implicated the minister of defense, the chief of staff, and several other high-ranking officers with indirect responsibility. Sharon was forced to resign a post he had sought all his life. Other officers stepped down as well. Prime Minister Begin lapsed into a melancholic apathy and ultimately resigned, too, without any clear explanation and retired from political life altogether. Itzhak Shamir, hitherto the foreign minister, succeeded Begin as premier, and Moshe Arens, an aeronautical engineer with no military experience, became the new minister of defense.

Viewed superficially these events should have brought Israelis peace of mind. To a certain extent this was the case. But, in a deeper sense, the war in Lebanon, the prolonged and painful occupation of parts of Lebanon thereafter, and finally the retreat amid chaos and bloodshed, touched off a crisis that could not be contained by undoing some of the least palatable consequences of the war. In a moment of exhilaration during the war Prime

Minister Begin claimed that Operation Peace for the Galilee healed Israel from what he termed the trauma of 1973.⁴ What the invasion of Lebanon did to his people, however, may be quite the opposite. A respite in the struggle with the PLO has been bought. Yet, in a more profound sense the war in Lebanon has been a moment of truth for the Israeli nation. It led to tormenting soul searching, deep doubts, and, for many Israelis, even guilt.

Was this war a mere aberration? Was it only a case of an absentminded government allowing itself to be led up the garden path by a shrewd and ruthless minister of defense? Or did the war reflect a far more complex posture, a state of mind, an ingrained disposition of many Israelis? Did Ariel Sharon (Arik) and Rafael Eitan (Rafal) represent in an uncommonly blunt fashion the world view, if not the typical *modus operandi*, of a whole generation? And if that were the case, could it be that not only the 1982 war but, indeed, most previous wars were misguided and even unnecessary? Can it be that Israel's self-image has become too self-righteous? Are all the old truths of the Zionist Movement and its successors in the leadership of Israel still valid? Is it entirely plausible to assume that Israel, by her own actions, has made an Arab-Israeli peace less likely? And, among Israel's political leaders, were Moshe Sharett, Ariele (Lova) Eliav, General Mati Peled, Uri Avneri, Abba Eban, and Yossi Sarid, to name but a few famous "doves," always wrong and "hawks" such as David Ben Gurion, Golda Meir, Moshe Dayan, Yigal Allon, Itzhak Rabin, and Menachem Begin always right?

Questions such as these are subsumed under a wider unifying query: What makes Israel tick? What, in a language recalling the voluminous literature on that enigmatic giant, the Soviet Union, are the sources of Israeli conduct? Is the Jewish state a tightly programmed instrument of the Zionist ideology that originally begot it? Is it merely reacting to a relentless, organized, and rather centralized Arab drive intended to erase it from the map of the Middle East? Or, is Israeli behavior shaped by a small group of decision makers who themselves are totally conditioned by their sense of past Jewish traumas? Would it be more accurate to ascribe Israel's external conduct to the response of decision makers to a turbulent domestic environment? Finally, was Israel under Begin—as under all previous governments—not reacting to a fundamental strategic dilemma that had haunted it since its inception?

In a sense, each of these propositions captures the gist of a general interpretation of Israel's conduct. The argument that Israel is the product of an aggressive ideology and therefore cannot but act aggressively toward its neighbors is the main theme in the vast anti-Zionist literature.⁵ The obverse argument, namely, that Israel is the innocent victim of a fanatical pan-Arab drive for hegemony in the Middle East, is the core thesis of a second interpretation which can be loosely described as Zionist Fundamentalism.⁶ A third interpretation of the sources of Israeli conduct shifts attention from the overpowering impact of ideology to the personality traits and the historical-psychological "baggage" of Israeli decision makers. The latter, it is argued, are prone to act harshly because they cannot help observing their Arab environment through the distorting lens of their Jewish legacy of suffering and persecution.⁷ By contrast, the fourth proposition shifts the focus from the psychology of decision makers to the impact of domestic politics. Israel's conduct toward its environment, according to this domestic-political perspective, is chiefly determined by the pulling of political forces to which Israeli decision makers have to respond at home.⁸

These four perspectives on the sources of Israeli conduct are, to be sure, neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive. Nonetheless each has a certain distinctiveness. All

four perspectives, deal with the “sailing attributes” of the Israeli ship of state. They are at one in assuming that the vessel sails, in the words of a leading Israeli scholar, in “a boiling hot sea which is known to be strewn with reefs and pirates. . . . It has not yet been mapped and occasionally it becomes tempestuous.”⁹ Beyond consensus on this point, however, differences among the four perspectives abound. The anti-Zionists imply that the Israeli ship of state has neither a navigator nor a captain, but is kept on course by an automatic pilot which, lacking judgment of its own, inexorably directs the vessel toward a predetermined destination. The Zionist Fundamentalist perspective presents the Israeli ship of state as a victim of a fearsome tempest. The vessel has a pilot as well as a clear destination, but must struggle to stay on course in a stormy sea.

The Psychological-Cultural perspective perceives the pilot of the Israeli ship of state as a kind of Captain Queeg. He has at his disposal both navigational aids and a crew, but he is overpowered by a mental state that puts both the course and the destination at the mercy of his personality and disturbed imagination. Finally, the Domestic-Political perspective portrays the Israeli ship of state as being in a state of near mutiny. The captain has only the semblance of control. In fact, the course and the destination are determined by an unruly crew. The captain has a compass and is at the helm, but, weak and lacking real judgment, he responds erratically to the cacophony of contrasting and often irresponsible suggestions made by the entire crew.

Each of these contending images provides valid insights. The anti-Zionist perspective is probably correct in contending that the Zionist enterprise was bound to lead to an Arab-Israeli conflict and that a persisting commitment to Zionism has had an important bearing on Israel’s conduct. Zionist Fundamentalism is probably correct in arguing that the acceleration and expansion of the Arab-Israeli conflict was propelled not only by Israel but also, and quite considerably, by the Arabs. Moreover, the contention of this school that the vision of pan-Arabism has had a critical impact on Arab conduct and has introduced an element of pervasive ambiguity into Arab thought and action alike is not without merit. Equally, the Psychological-Cultural perspective is on firm ground in arguing that the personal traits of decision makers and the weight of Jewish history have a bearing on Israeli policy. In the international arena Israel *is*, as the proponents of this perspective suggest, largely what its key decision makers do. In trying to account for Israeli conduct, it is wise to focus on the psychological and cultural world of Israeli decision makers. Finally, the Domestic-Political perspective is clearly correct in arguing that Israeli policy is not made in a political vacuum. The Israeli political scene is turbulent and, by its own ground rules, it impels the political elite to be sensitive and responsive to domestic demands.

The main shortcoming of the proponents of each of these approaches is not that they are misguided but that, anxious to make their point, they tend to mistake secondary (intervening) variables for the primary (independent) variable and thus end up overemphasizing the unique features of Israeli conduct while underemphasizing that part that is common and universal. All four approaches, to different degrees, tend to underestimate the pervasively pragmatic—and, as such, often shortsighted and narrowly focused—strategic logic on which, arguably, most Israeli decisions, big and small, critical or routine, have been predicated. Either Israel has no legitimate anxieties (as in the anti-Zionist perspective) or is totally dominated in every move by existential fears (as in the Psychological-Cultural perspective). Either Israel proceeds mechanically in accordance with a divine, or at least a historical blueprint (as in the Zionist Fundamentalist perspective) or its policy is shaped by a wild domestic political game (as in the

Domestic-Political perspective). Sharing in a universal, systemic, existential predicament, and acting incrementally in response to the specific challenges such a predicament entails seem to be the (dubious) privileges of other states in the world. Israel, on the other hand, is a *sui generis* state whose conduct should be measured by yardsticks that stress uniqueness and idiosyncrasy. Or should it?

Israel's Conduct as a Response to the Security Dilemma

A sizeable and ever-growing body of literature predicated on the axioms and theorems of strategic theory and employing its stock-in-trade terminology implicitly challenges these views of Israel's conduct. It consists of histories of the Israeli military,¹⁰ military-strategic histories of the Arab-Israeli conflict with an emphasis on Israel,¹¹ broad attempts to spell out the hidden assumptions of Israel's strategic-military doctrine,¹² and a number of prescriptive studies.¹³ Without actually saying so, proponents of this alternative interpretation begin from the assumption that even though Israel is the unique product of a quasi-messianic idea of redemption, it ended up playing the game of the world. Differently stated, no matter how or why Israel has come into existence, and quite irrespective of the psychological makeup of its leaders and its domestic politics, Israel's conduct has been more critically affected by the rules of the international system of which it constitutes a part than by any idiosyncratic feature of its own.

The precise nature of these systemic rules remains, of course, a subject of major controversy. But for proponents of strategic theory the answer rests upon one critical assumption: in the absence of a supreme world arbiter, nations are impelled to take care of their security unilaterally. As a typical proponent of this approach recently put it, there are obviously many idiosyncratic

reasons why nations go to war: greed for resources, dynastic or ideological ambitions, the sheer lust for domination. But an irreducible reason is built into the very structure of the state system whose members must ultimately rely on themselves to protect their security and independence. In an anarchic, self help system, the very search for security turns into the root cause of insecurity as each nation's quest poses a threat to the other. Because there is no ultimate guardian, nations must assume the worst. Because they act in terms of their worst assumptions, they excite the worst suspicions of their neighbors and rivals whose countervailing responses merely seem to buttress the former's initial anxiety.¹⁴

Philosophically, the godfather of this view of the world was neither Machiavelli nor Hobbes but the supposedly less cynical Rousseau. "It is quite true," wrote Rousseau,

that it would be much better for all men to remain always at peace. But so long as there is no security for this, everyone, having no guarantee that he can avoid war, is anxious to bring it at the moment which suits his own interests and so forestall a neighbour, who would not fail to forestall the attack in his turn at any moment favorable to himself, so that many wars, even offensive wars, are rather in the nature of precautions for the protection of the assailant's own possessions than a device for seizing those of others. However salutary it may be in theory to obey the dictates of public spirit, it is certain that, politically and even morally, those dictates are liable to prove fatal to the man who persists in observing them with all the world when no one thinks of observing them toward him.¹⁵

To make the point clearer Rousseau resorted to a colorful analogy. The quest for security of the society of states, he argued, is reminiscent of a stag hunt:

Assume that five men who have acquired a rudimentary ability to speak and to understand each other happen to come together at a time when all of them suffer from hunger. The hunger of each will be satisfied by the fifth part of a stag, so they "agree" to cooperate in a project to trap one. But also the hunger of any one of them will be satisfied by a hare, so, as a hare comes within reach, one of them grabs it. The defector obtains the means of satisfying his hunger but in doing so permits the stag to escape. His immediate interest prevails over consideration for his fellows.¹⁶

The same logic also explains the behavior of an individual consumer, in an inflation-ridden economy, to offer a contemporary analogy. The surest way to contain an inflationary spiral is to stop buying and thus force prices down. Every consumer knows this but is afraid that if he alone stops buying, others will cut their losses in the short run and he will be the only sucker. This impels all consumers to spend every cent they have as soon as they can. In turn, inflation is accelerated and the predicament of the average consumer becomes worse.

Game theorists have described this order of preferences in terms of a "prisoner's dilemma."¹⁷ In simple terms it sums up the order of preferences of hunters, consumers, or states as follows:

1. Work together and trap the stag or slow down inflation (the international analogue being accommodation and disarmament).
2. Desert the party and chase a hare while other hunters stay with the party, or, in an inflationary economy, buy as much as you can when others stop buying. (In international political terms, act assertively, follow the instincts of amour propre, while others adhere to policies of accommodation and joint action.)
3. All chase hares or rush to buy (that is, all states abandon accommodation and joint action and rely on a policy of assertion).
4. Stay with the party of hunters even if others desert and proceed to chase hares or, as a consumer, avoid spending even when others do not. (Steadfastly adhere to a policy of unilateral accommodation even if other states act assertively).¹⁸

In the long run the optimal policy for all states is obviously accommodation and joint action. Such a policy will create an international atmosphere in which security is enhanced equally for all. But pursuing this course regardless of what other states do involves, at least in the short run, mortal risks. A state offering only cooperation could encourage its neighbors to believe it is acting out of weakness and hence lead them to exploit its behavior to their advantage. States acting upon such an assumption would be impelled, irrespective of regime or declared ideology, to act assertively in the hope that their own one-upmanship will benefit from other states' accommodation. But since this logic affects the behavior of most states, the ultimate result is that most states act assertively. The system of which they are the constituent parts thus turns into a scene of more or less perpetual anarchy. This is the essence of what Herbert Butterfield aptly described as "the tragic element in modern international conflict," a "condition of absolute predicament or irreducible dilemma" which "lies in the very geometry of human conflicts. It is the basis of the structure of any given episode in that conflict. It is at the basis of all tensions of the present day, representing even now the residual problem that the world has not solved, the hard nut that we still have to crack."¹⁹

Butterfield, like Rousseau two centuries before him, basically expanded an interpretation of human nature into a macro theory of state behavior, a point which Kenneth Waltz was to make very forcefully six years later.²⁰ What they were saying was that most individuals are neither particularly malevolent nor unintelligent and that states—composed of and run by individuals as they are—should be also for the most part disinclined to be aggressive. Yet states are inherently prone to act aggressively more out of fear than ambition, greed, lust, or any other vice. They are faced, in other words, by a fundamental security dilemma.

This view does not preclude the possibility of poor judgment, mischief, ambition, ideological drives, responses to domestic pressures, or, indeed, sheer lunacy. Such aberrations are probably common enough and certainly have an important impact on the way both individuals and states conduct themselves. Nevertheless, in the final analysis, even if all such traits were utterly absent from state action, even if all leaders were perfectly rational and all states utterly peace-loving, the international system would still remain an anarchic environment—all the more so when, at any given time, some states are ruled by individuals who are either fools, or knaves, or both.

To be sure, the world today is not equally anarchic everywhere and may in fact never have been. Western Europe provides an excellent example of institutionalization and regulation of interstate relations; so do the North Atlantic area and, in a hierarchical and far less equitable way, the Soviet bloc. But even in these islands of institutionalized cooperation and stability, even in formal alliance politics, one can trace nonviolent manifestations of assertive behavior as each member of the alliance attempts to maximize its benefits from the alliance and minimize its costs.²¹ It is thus not surprising that in the Middle East, arguably the world's most anarchic region, the tragic existential predicament leading to and resulting from a response of all actors to the security dilemma is so readily apparent. Bewilderment, ignorance, and cultural ethnocentrism may have led many Western observers to assume, somewhat patronizingly, that politics in the Middle East is so violent mainly because it is embedded in a cultural and religious heritage that condones violence and fanaticism. Yet, if one recalls the violence in Europe during the Middle Ages when weapons and communication systems were incomparably less advanced than they are in the Middle East today, it appears that the cultural background is, at best, an intervening variable—a secondary factor. Conversely, what does seem to explain the violent nature of Middle East politics is the deep sense of insecurity which pervades it. It starts from objective material deprivation. It is reinforced by an accumulation of pent up frustrations. And it ultimately takes the form of a ceaseless and unrestrained scramble for resources, for status, for affection. Together these are the typical elements of personal and collective insecurity. And if this is the case, the Middle East is plagued by more violence than, say, Europe, not because of its different languages and religions, but because the sense of responding to the security dilemma is stronger among all local actors. In turn the more violent nature of politics in the region acts as a self-fulfilling prophecy. The inclination of all to act assertively is enhanced, the propensity of all to take the risks involved in assuming an accomodative posture is reduced, and the region turns into a scene of ever escalating violence.

If such a perception of politics in the Middle East region is strong among Arabs, Turks, Iranians, Somalies, Ethiopians, Kurds, Berbers and Maronites, it makes an even harsher impression on the Jewish population of Israel. This is to a certain extent the result of an intense sense of a tragic Jewish predicament, the legacy of the two thousand years of persecution and dispersal culminating in the Holocaust. It also stems from the simple

fact that Israel is a small and isolated country facing a large Arab coalition. But such discrete factors do not create the security dilemma. They merely make it more agonizing. The root cause of it all for Israel, as for other states in the Middle East, is the anarchic nature of the regional environment.

David Vital explained the nature of the Israeli predicament in this regard with remarkable cogency. The Arab posture, he observed, contains a basic duality resulting from a split commitment to the greater Arab family on the one hand and to self-interest on the other.

The duality of Arab interests encourages Israel to seek to deter pressure and disrupt the coalition by maximizing the actual or potential costs of conflict to individual Arab states and organizations. Like the Arabs, Israel must therefore seek to build up as large and efficacious a military establishment as possible. But, in fact, Israel's ability to deter the Arab coalition is very uncertain . . . [objectively] the Israeli military potential cannot but seem small when set against the vast human and financial resources and great military buildup available to the Arabs. And the more powerful the members of the Arab coalition grew—and the more effectively the coalition may be expected to operate—the greater must the imbalance appear. Israel therefore attempts to deter not only by amassing and parading its military capabilities, but by repeatedly demonstrating their effectiveness in the field. And when the level of arms on the . . . Arab side appears to be rising too far relative to that of Israel's, the balance of advantage for Israel will always lie in a preemptive war. But here, again, each one of Israel's military successes, each attempt to deter or disrupt or incapacitate the coalition, serves equally to confirm and intensify the Arab tendency, however unsteady, to act in unison and to see in Israel a threat to the Pan-Arab cause as a whole, and in its very presence in the Levant a painful and open wound in the Arab body politic. Finally, that military encounters should occur against a background of repeated insistence by Israel that it wishes for no more than peace and security, it is generally held on the Arab side to constitute so much additional evidence of Israel's essential perfidy and malevolence. For their part, the Arabs can argue that they, at any rate, never have and do not now, proclaim their aims to be peace and coexistence. To which the ever more conscious and explicit response of the Israelis is to discount the expectation of an eventual resolution of the conflict in terms of peace and security for all, and to accept a prospect of interminable warfare punctuated from time to time by major clashes.

"Each side," concludes Vital somberly, "is thus either committed or constrained to see in the other an opponent to be confronted by nothing less than unremitting hostility. The goals are on each side such that the closer they are to attainment, the more strongly the parties are impelled to pursue them. In these circumstances it is not surprising that the chronology of the Arab-Israeli conflict should be one of spiraling violence."²²

Robert J. Lieber made much the same general point—that is, that Israel's conduct is primarily a response to a systemic predicament—by applying Rousseau's ideas to the Jewish state's preference order before launching the 1967 war.

At this point [May 1967] the Israeli predicament reflected the reality of Rousseau's vision that no authoritative international arbiter exists with the means of imposing order. Existing international guarantees had been vitiated, Egyptian armor had poured into the Sinai, and speeches of Arab leaders promised to drive the Israelis into the sea. Israeli decision-makers were then faced with two possible choices: to do nothing in the hope that the Arabs would not in fact attack (or that if they did attack the international community would not acquiesce in the destruction of Israel), or to seek to preserve Israel's own security by a preemptive strike. In a sense, the nature of the international

system compelled what in game theory would be termed a mini-max strategy: the choice of the second alternative. For if the worst possible outcome were to take place after Israel had elected the first option, a sudden Arab onslaught might well have succeeded in decimating the Israelis, who had little room for tactical retreat and maneuver on dry land. But if the Israelis chose to preempt, they would in effect play it safe. At worst they would fight a (possibly unnecessary) war from an initially favorable position and possibly stand to occupy additional territory as a buffer. Given the facts that the Israelis had no room for retreat or mistake, that to wait for an absolute certainty that the Arabs would actually attack might conceivably have meant the slaughter of their entire population, and that the international system provided absolutely no means of security upon which Israel could rely, the Israelis thus had a strong inducement to launch the preemptive attack that began the Six Day War.²³

Both Vital and Lieber focus on what is assumed in this study to be the heart of the problem. To account for Israel's conduct, there is no need to invoke any of the factors that the four perspectives discussed earlier emphasize. Whatever its guiding ideology, whatever its domestic political makeup, and no matter what historical legacy hangs over the minds of its policy makers, the Jewish state's conduct, like that of her own adversaries, remains motivated chiefly by the patently anarchic nature of the regional and the wider international environment in which it has existed since its inception. Zionist ideology may have enhanced the determination of some Israelis to protect their interests. Two thousand years of Jewish suffering and the more recent holocaust experience have had a similar effect on the world view of some Israeli decision makers. And the latter's personalities, attitudes, and whims may have often played an important role. Nor can the exigencies of Israel's domestic scene be entirely ignored. But in the final analysis the most important factor has been the Jewish state's response to an existential, systemic, and persistent predicament which in the Middle East, with its civil wars, endless interstate conflicts, terrorism, coups d'état, arms races, assassinations, and mass massacres, must have a greater impact on the conduct of all, not just on Israel.

In practical terms, the response to a security dilemma suggests not just rationality but, indeed, a high degree of hard-nosed pragmatism, an emphasis on the short term, incrementalism, and an unemotional attitude to any proposition that force might have to be employed. Such are also the typical traits of strategic theory. To say that Israel's conduct is mainly a response to the security dilemma is thus only one step from contending that Israel's conduct is overwhelmingly strategic. As a leading Israeli thinker puts it, "Israeli foreign policy approximates the strategic studies model of national security more than [the policies of] states enjoying a wider security margin [which are therefore] less impelled to emphasize considerations of national security over economics, prestige or ideology."²⁴

But such a view of the predominant trait of Israeli conduct is not entirely incompatible with the arguments of some other explanations. An emphasis on strategy and the assertion that it all boils down to a response to the security dilemma do not imply an automatic, deterministic chessboardlike style of interaction in which decision makers are not at all influenced by factors such as ideology, personality traits, or domestic political pressure. Every policy choice, every decisional juncture, especially when it entails the use of force, tends to generate differences of opinion, even controversies. And it is within such a context that the strategic response to the security dilemma should be evaluated.

Broadly speaking, to say that Israel's conduct is a typical response to the security dilemma is to make a probabilistic statement. It implies that given a choice between

assertive and accommodative response to a specific situation, most decision makers would opt for assertion. But it does not mean that all decision makers would do so in the face of any kind of threat. For some, a preference for assertive behavior would be almost instinctive. For others the opposite choice would be a natural reflex. But for the overwhelming majority of decision makers at most conceivable decision junctures, the choice is a hard one. Ultimately they will make a decision that in most, but not all, cases will be assertive, or so the notion of a security dilemma would predict.

The main factors that will presumably affect the final decision are ideology, personality traits, and domestic political pressures. For Begin, to cite an obvious example, ideology would always be a beacon pointing out specific policy objectives. For his predecessor, Rabin, on the other hand, Zionist ideology would not be anything more than a source of general inspiration and legitimization. Most other Israeli prime ministers fell somewhere between Begin and Rabin on this issue, but closer, it seems, to the pragmatic Rabin than to the dogmatic Begin. They would tend to articulate their positions in public in the ringing rhetoric of Zionism but not necessarily to analyze specific situations in these same terms.²⁵

As for personality traits, determined, decisive, and pugnacious types such as Ben Gurion, Dayan (in the 1950s), Meir, Begin at certain times, and Sharon would be more inclined to react forcefully and take risks; less assertive leaders such as Sharett, Eshkol, and Peres would react more timidly—but the distinction is not at all an absolute one. Ben Gurion and Begin had their moments of doubt, whereas Eshkol and even Sharett had moments of resolve.

One factor which weighed heavily in all major decisions by all these leading policy makers was their perception of what their domestic constituency would wish them to do, of whether they should make an assertive decision that the public would not support. Moreover, some leaders dared to challenge perceived public preferences more than did others. The former, especially Ben Gurion, Meir, and Begin, took greater risks in this regard on the assumption that the public could be won back later. Other decision makers avoided such risks to the best of their ability.

The same, moreover, could be said about the public itself. Citizens, like their leaders, are not made of one mind. Some are more inclined than others, to support assertive action just as some are more prone than others, to take risks. Thus, whenever a critical decision has to be faced, the public can be expected to be divided no less but no more than the decision makers who act on their behalf. A decision juncture is thus inevitably an occasion for public controversies which are at once influenced by the public mood and the main factor that shapes this mood.

Such factors as ideology, personality, and domestic response can be isolated only analytically. In practice they operate simultaneously and interconnectedly. Broadly speaking, the pattern in Israel has been as follows. Every critical decision juncture led to a variety of responses by key decision makers. Those who adopted a rigidly maximalist interpretation of Zionist ideology would also tend to have a conspicuously harsh view of the world. They would also be responsive (quite congruously) to a more or less likeminded domestic constituency. Such decision makers would normally tend to advocate a hyperassertive response to the situation at hand. In the language of the post-Vietnam era they would be the “hawks.” In Israel they would also be described as “activists.”

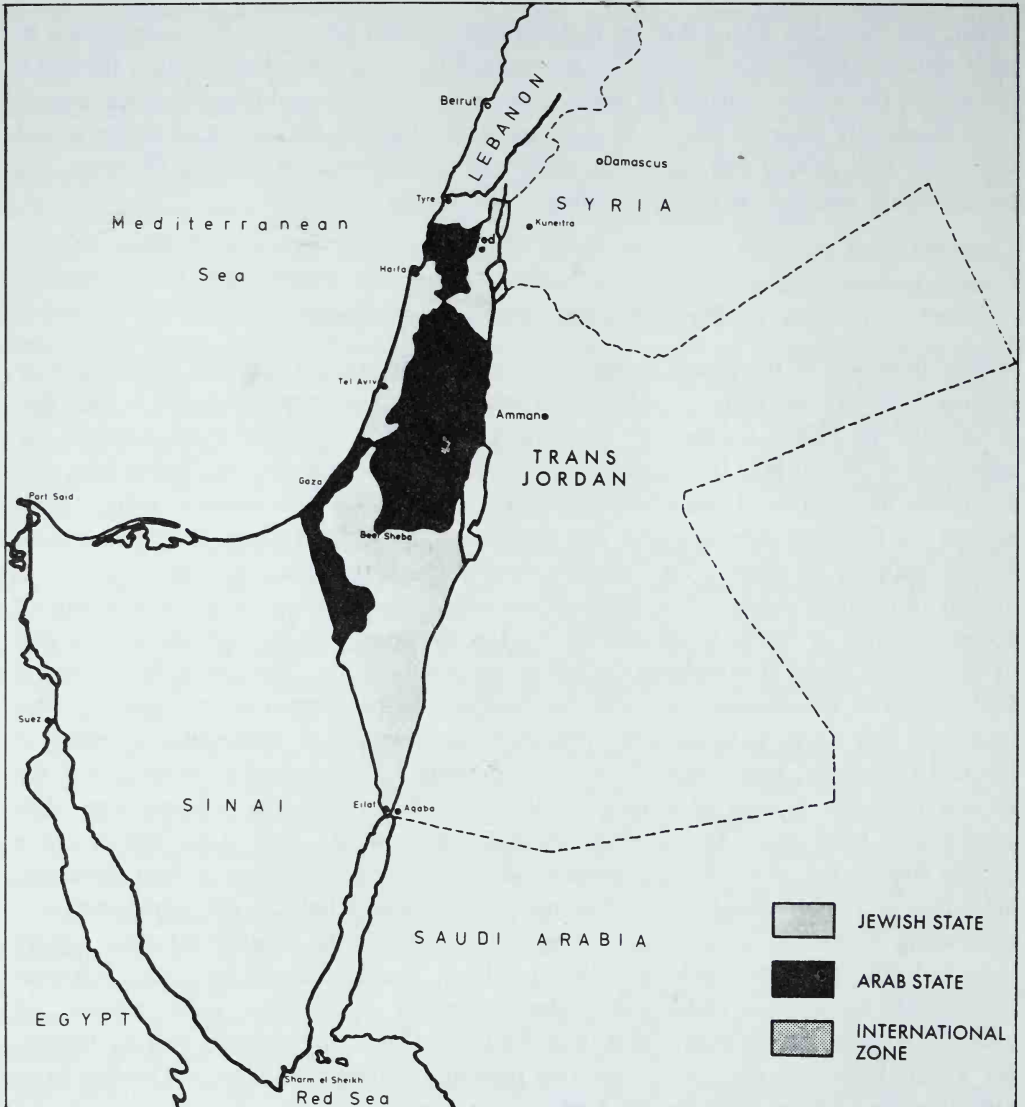
Side by side with the hawks, every critical issue would also generate more “dovish” responses. To be sure, few doves in Israel’s history ever denied the existence of a genuine

threat, and those few who did never had any real political following. But, minimalists in their view of Zionist objectives and more inclined to be cautious, Israeli doves showed a preference for accommodation by default, namely, a cautious and piecemeal application of an essentially assertive policy. In most situations, though, the dovish advocacy would ultimately lose ground and, as in fact predicted by the notion of security dilemma, the hawks would win and an assertive policy would follow.

Israel's Conduct: A Retrospect

A brief overview of the Israeli experience since the pre-statehood period illustrates how persistent the hawkish pattern has been. An autonomous Jewish polity existed in Palestine as early as the 1930s. By then the international system was rapidly moving toward the cataclysm of World War II. Simultaneously, and partly as a result, the Middle East was set ablaze by a series of nationalist upheavals. Increasingly this upsurge focused itself against the fledgling Jewish entity, and the leadership of the Yishuv (the pre-statehood Jewish political community in Palestine) had to make its first important decision in matters of national security. The choices were clear: the Yishuv could adopt a posture of accommodation or choose to act assertively. The revisionists on the right and a small part of the activist *Ahdut HaAvoda* on the left advocated assertion. The rest of the Yishuv at first preferred accommodation, and the World Zionist Organization supported this response. *Brit Shalom* (alliance for peace), a small group of intellectuals centered at Hebrew University, even went as far as to advocate a fundamental reorientation of the Zionist program. Instead of continuing the struggle for ultimate independence, they advocated a binational (Arab-Jewish) solution which would lead to the creation of a unitary state in Palestine. As the pressure increased owing to the rise of Nazi Germany, the influx of Jewish refugees from Europe, and the Arab rebellion, the configuration of contending Zionist advocacies concerning the response to the security dilemma rapidly polarized. The revisionists held on to their positions. Ben Gurion and the Zionist left were increasingly inclined to endorse a moderate version of the same view, namely, an assertive response. It ultimately prevailed. Renewing its failing alliance with the British, the Yishuv leadership engaged for the first time in a sequence of decisions leading to an offensive use of force vis-à-vis the Arabs.

World War II and its aftermath made the Yishuv's security dilemma far more acute. The war precipitated Britain's departure and created an urgent need to absorb hundreds of thousands of European refugees. Alarmed by the influx of refugees but encouraged by the prospect of British departure and by the support of the Arab states, the Arabs of Palestine, adopting a clearly assertive posture, stepped up their diplomatic and military preparations for the imminent showdown. The accommodative option before the Yishuv was thus reduced sharply to one alternative which was equally unacceptable to most strands of opinion: giving up altogether the idea of Jewish independence. The revisionists and the militant Stern Group called for an all-out war against both the British and the Arabs. Weizman, the aging leader of the world Zionist organization, and a segment of the Yishuv advocated a defensive military posture and utmost restraint toward the British. Ben Gurion and the Labor movement advocated a mixed strategy consisting of a selective military effort against the British, a defensive military posture vis-à-vis the Arabs, an attempt to prevent an Arab invasion through a bilateral agreement with the Hashemite ruler of Jordan, and a parallel attempt to obtain U.S. support for independence.



U.N. Partition Plan, 1947

The United Nations decision of November 29, 1947, to partition Palestine was followed by an explicit threat of Arab invasion. Strictly speaking this assured Arab attack should have led the Yishuv to a decision to act in a similar fashion, namely, to preempt. But military weakness, a certain hope that the Arab invasion might not take place after all, and fear of British and American reactions in the event of a preemption by the Yishuv led to the choice of an accommodative rather than an assertive posture. The Yishuv accepted the partition idea, resigned itself to the truncated boundaries offered under this scheme, prepared frantically for an all-out war, but meanwhile restricted itself to defensive action in the face of the Palestinian Arab attack and to secret diplomatic negotiations with the Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan.

The final moment of truth came in May 1948. If the Yishuv were to avoid a declaration of independence, the departure of the British could still be followed by an Arab invasion.

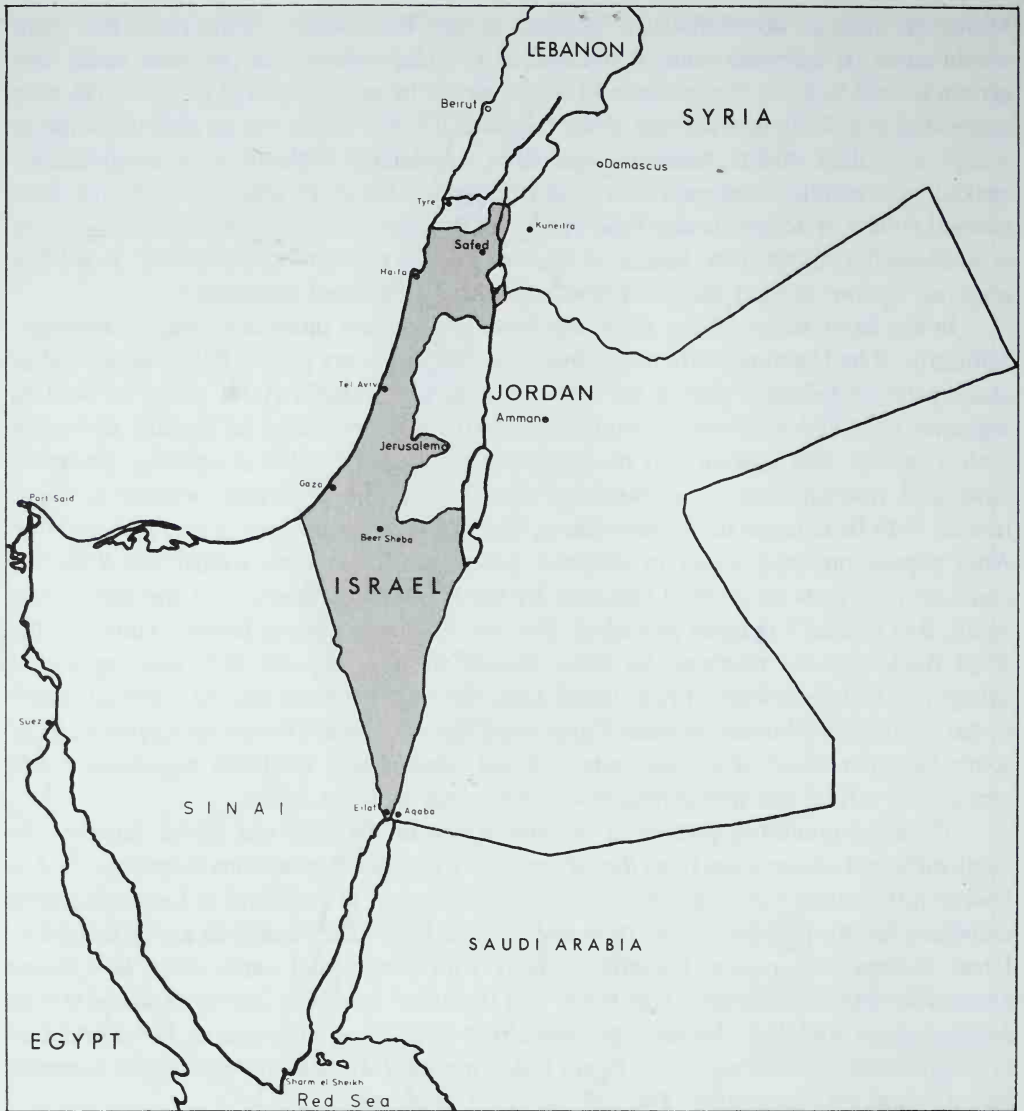
Moreover, such an accommodative gesture, argued Ben Gurion, could mean that there would never be a Jewish state. A declaration of independence, on the other hand, was certain to lead to a war the outcome of which would be uncertain. But if the Jewish state succeeded in holding its own, the Arabs might realize that there was no alternative but to accept it in their midst. Assertion—namely, a unilateral declaration of independence backed by a manifest determination to defend itself—therefore appeared to be the most rational course of action. It was followed by an Arab invasion with the declared purpose of undoing the young state. Hence, at least as long as the fighting continued, Israel had only one option: to fight back and thwart the Arabs' declared intention.

In the latter stages of the 1948 war Israel once again faced the security dilemma. Militarily, it had become sufficiently strong to conquer every part of Palestine as well as small parts of Lebanon and of the Sinai. Menachem Begin's Herut party, as well as segments of MAPAM (Hebrew acronym for United Workers Party) on the left, advocated such a policy. Ben Gurion and the mainstream of Israeli political opinion, however, advocated restraint and accommodation. Ben Gurion, in particular, wished to avoid friction with Britain and the United States, recoiled from incorporating into Israel a large Arab population, and hoped to obtain a peace agreement with Jordan based on the annexation of parts of western Palestine by the Hashemite monarchy. Ultimately, once again, Ben Gurion's opinion prevailed. The area that from then on became known as the West Bank was not occupied by Israel despite the fact that the IDF was capable of occupying it within a week or two. Israeli forces in the Sinai were ordered to retreat to east of the international border between Egypt and Palestine. Israeli forces occupying parts of south Lebanon received similar orders. Israel entered into armistice negotiations and pressed for a final and irreversible peace settlement with the Arabs.

The accommodating posture in the final stages of the 1948 war failed, however, to elicit sufficient cooperation from the Arabs. The Armistice Agreements were supposed to lead to full-fledged peace agreements. Two conferences, in Paris and in Lausanne, were convened for this purpose late in 1949 and early in 1950. They ended in a total deadlock. Israel attempted to pursue bilateral contacts with Jordan and came close to a peace agreement with that country. This move was thwarted, however, by the assassination of Jordan's King Abdullah. Increasingly despairing of cooperative gestures, Israel nonetheless welcomed the new regime in Egypt following the July 1952 revolution and resumed its invitation for peace talks. The call, however, was ignored.

Meanwhile, Israel was increasingly faced with a problem of border insecurity. The initial Israeli response was both defensive and, in terms of the security dilemma, accommodative. A system of rudimentary border fortifications based on a combination of mobile patrols with territorial defenses, in which villages along the frontier became part of an integrated system, would take care of the military aspect. Reliance on United Nations mechanisms and on Western mediation would add a wider political dimension. Both parts of this policy led, however, to nought. Security along the frontiers deteriorated. The UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) proved incapable of anything but *ex post facto* "reporting," and neither Great Britain nor the United States would offer any security guarantees. The temptation to fall back on a policy of self-reliance, or, in the language of the security dilemma, on an assertive posture, became virtually irresistible. Reprisals, escalation, and ultimately a full-scale war in October 1956 were the main consequences of this shift.

The sequence of Israeli decisions leading to the 1956 war can be easily explained without any reference to Zionist ideology even though official statements at the time



Armistice Boundaries, 1949

echoed many Zionist themes. It constituted a response to the security dilemma and as such it had important ramifications in both Israel and the Arab world. Within Israel the acuteness of the emerging threat caused a split between Ben Gurion, Dayan, and others on the one hand and Sharett and several other cabinet members on the other hand. The dispute boiled down to slightly different prescriptions for action. The Ben Gurion “school” tended to prefer a somewhat more forceful response, the Sharett school a slightly more accommodative one. But the latter, it should be emphasized, did not dispute Ben Gurion’s diagnosis, which stressed Israel’s limited range of policy choices and advocated an assertive conduct.

The Ben Gurion “school” once again prevailed. Its policy was intended to exact a high price from the Arabs for their own policy of assertion. In other words, it intended to enhance Israel’s security by increasing Arab insecurity. The Arabs were thus facing a

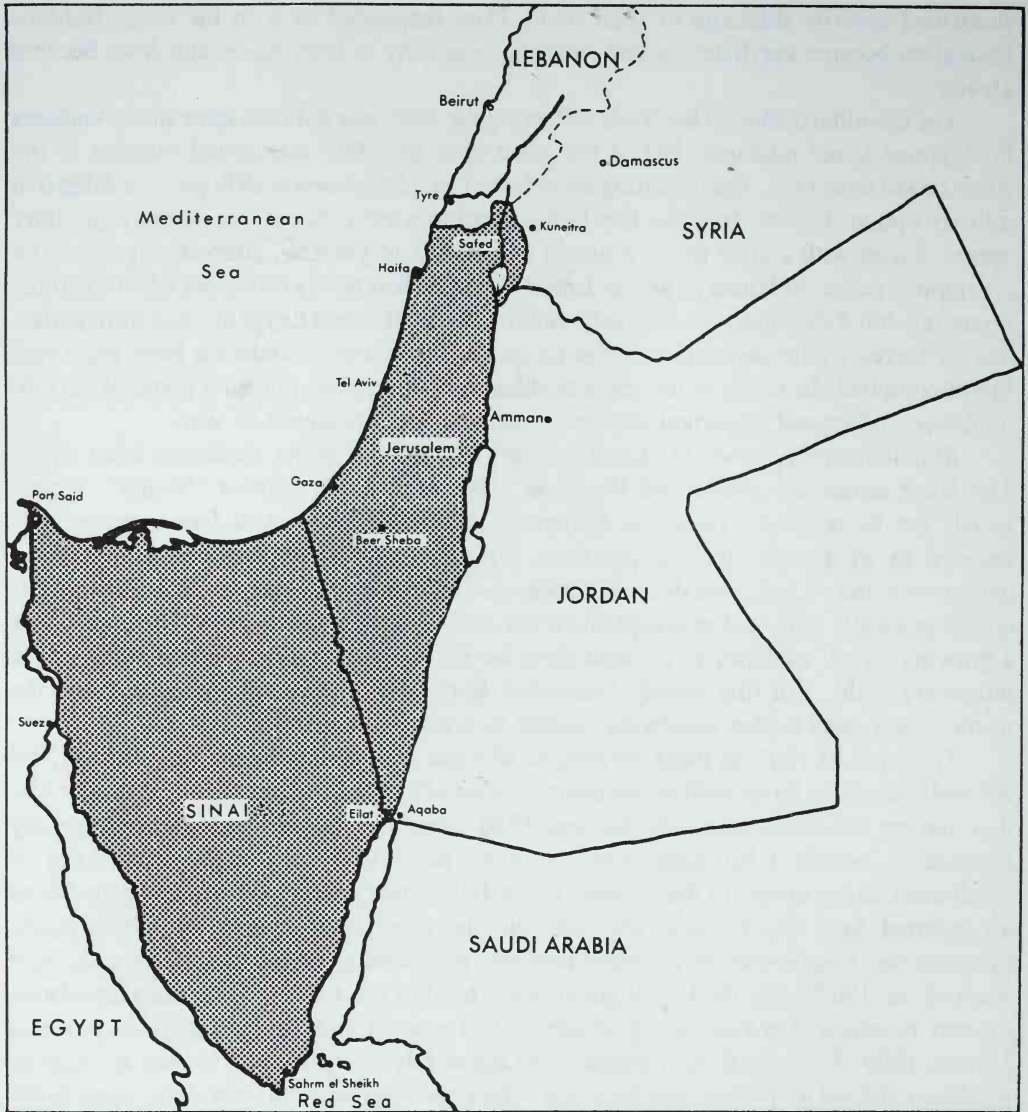
sharpened security dilemma of their own. They responded to it in the same fashion. Escalation became inevitable in turn, and the insecurity of both Arabs and Jews became greater.

The demilitarization of the Sinai following the 1956 war defused some of the tensions in Egyptian-Israel relations. But at the same time the 1956 war added impetus to the Arab-Israeli arms race. The mounting costs forced Israel to abandon all hope for a defensive military option. Indeed, from the late 1950s Israel was left with only an offensive military option. Faced with a clear threat it would either have to yield or, alternatively, launch a preemptive strike. In January 1960 an Israeli-Egyptian war nearly broke out when Egyptian forces reentered the Sinai. Israel quietly mobilized but informed Egypt through third parties that its forces would demobilize if the Egyptian forces were withdrawn from the Sinai. Egypt complied. In terms of the security dilemma both parties played a game of accommodation and reaped important dividends, namely, the avoidance of war.

Simultaneously, however, Israel increasingly faced a major challenge from Syria. The latter repeatedly challenged President Nasser to launch another "round" against Israel, but he resisted. Alone the Syrians could not have attacked Israel, hence they resorted to small-scale attrition practices. Up to a point Israel was prepared to react defensively and to forgo harsh countermeasures but, as during the pre-1956 period, this course gradually appeared unacceptable if not entirely counterproductive. The upshot was a growing Israeli tendency to escalate these hostilities in the vain hope that Syria would ultimately yield. But this merely intensified Syria's own sense of insecurity, and the result, again, was further escalation leading to a major showdown.

The crisis of 1967, in itself the product of escalation during the previous decade, did not really confront Israel with an immediate threat of total extinction. The real danger was that, having succeeded in erasing the post-1956 status quo, Nasser could be subsequently tempted to launch a full-scale war, or, even more likely, to begin some form of small-scale harassment. In the estimate of the IDF, Israel could hold its own against even a concerted Arab attack—this, after all, was the worst case scenario on which Israeli planning was based—but the potential cost was perceived as prohibitive. During the first week of the 1967 crisis the Israeli government tried to react in the same accommodative manner in which Ben Gurion's government had reacted to a similar Egyptian move in January 1960. This conciliatory posture was apparently interpreted by Nasser as a sign of weakness and led him to escalate the crisis. The Israeli government, therefore, came to the conclusion that sooner or later a war would have to be fought anyway, as a result of either an Arab attack or an Israeli preemption. Given the absence of a viable defensive military option, and given the assumption that the cost of sustaining a war initiated by the Arabs would be far greater, the choice of a preemptive strike became well nigh inevitable.

To some Israelis the experience invoked the specter of the holocaust. Yet, on balance, with or without the memory of the Jewish past and, needless to add, with or without Zionist ideology, the decision to launch the 1967 war was quite predictable. It was a classical response to the security dilemma. Having attempted limited accommodative moves and having failed to elicit a cooperative response, Israel was left with preemption as the only viable alternative. Given the clarity with which the problem presented itself, it is not surprising that this time the Israeli government was hardly divided. There were, to be sure, some who insisted that diplomacy had to be exhausted before resorting to force. But, when all the attempts to secure international help foundered, Eshkol's National Unity Cabinet closed ranks and voted unanimously to launch a preemptive strike.



Cease-fire Lines, 1967

Furthermore, nothing explains Israeli conduct in the course of the period from 1967 to 1973 more than the lessons of the 1967 crisis. Having given back the Sinai in 1956 for little more than vague international promises, having accepted the presence of the UN force in the Sinai as an additional substitute for peace, having attempted to invoke these promises in May 1967, Israel became determined not to rely again on anything other than its own resources. This typical response to the security dilemma meant, however, one important thing: Israel would have to hold on to all the territories that were occupied in the 1967 war until such time as its adversaries were ready to exchange territories for peace. Moreover, assuming that negotiations would mean bargaining, the Israeli government would not divulge in advance which territories would be returned. Individual members of the government had their different ideas about what should not be returned. Some of them made their views public, but, at least with regard to the West Bank, no authoritative decision, let alone a public statement of the minimally acceptable, was ever made.

This decision not to decide had fateful ramifications. It increased Arab suspicions that Israel had no intention of returning any occupied territory. It revived Israel's long-dormant dream of expanding the state's territory to the whole of Palestine. It made impossible even a tactical decision about partial withdrawal in the Sinai—which could have prevented the 1973 war. It tarnished Israel's image with those segments of international opinion with which the Jewish state had no basic quarrel. Yet, in the final analysis, the main initial motivation for this posture was not ideologically inspired, nor was it particularly influenced by the peculiarities of individual decision makers or by domestic opinion; rather, it was once again a not particularly unique response to an essentially universal problem.

The same logic also applies to Israel's response to the war of attrition along the Suez Canal, as well as to the Palestinian issue, the PLO, and the question of whether to preempt Syria and Egypt in October 1973. To be accommodative, Israel would have to withdraw unilaterally from the Sinai, the West Bank, and the Golan, to recognize Palestinian rights, to accept the PLO as a legitimate spokesperson for the Palestinians, and to be resigned to the creation of a Palestinian state on the West Bank. This, it was instinctively assumed by all Israeli governments, could conceivably lead to a piecemeal submission ultimately resulting in suicide. Given Arab rhetoric and past Israeli experience with the Arabs, there is no need to invoke Zionist ideology or the private complexes of Israeli leaders or, indeed, domestic opinion. Such factors may have made Israeli governments even more determined, but the notion of security dilemma in fact predicts that Israeli policy makers, like any other policy makers, would have reacted in much the same way without any of these unique factors.

The same can also be said about the Israeli posture since the 1973 war. During this period Israel expanded the settlement activity in the West Bank and experienced a change of government resulting in a far greater ideological emphasis in the climate of Israeli politics, both domestic and external. Nevertheless, none of these factors is essential in order to account for Israeli actions such as the decision to raid Entebbe, the decision to raid Osiraq, and, last but not least, the decision to launch Operation Litani, Israel's 1978 mini-invasion of Lebanon. Accommodating the Entebbe hijackers was unanimously assumed to be a prelude to fresh hijackings and greater demands. Hence, in principle, the issue of Entebbe boiled down to a choice between submission to the maximal demands of the hijackers and an attack on them irrespective of the possible costs.

In the case of the Iraqi nuclear program the presence of a veritable security dilemma was even more pronounced. To follow the path of accommodation meant relying on the available mechanisms of international inspection, weak and vulnerable as they may be. But to do so would be tantamount to exposing Israel one day to the possibility of an Iraqi nuclear blackmail, a more hideous scenario than even submission to more conventional forms of terrorism. Israel could, of course, have disclosed a nuclear option itself, but that would have meant exposure to a great deal of international criticism and, worse still, an immediate nuclearization of the Arab-Israeli conflict with all its horrendous implications. Destroying the Iraqi nuclear reactor, seemingly the least attractive alternative, was therefore a logical, perhaps an inevitable move.

Alternative Interpretations of Israel's Involvement in Lebanon

But what about the Israeli invasion of Lebanon? Can this latest phase in Israel's history also be explained as a standard response to the security dilemma? On the face of it the

answer seems to be unequivocally no. In fact, judging by most available interpretations, no Israeli policy to date lends itself less to an analysis based on the notion of a security dilemma than the one that led the IDF to the gates of Beirut. After all, when Israel attacked the PLO the latter was visibly engaged in a process of reorientation leading to a far more compromising approach toward the Zionist state than previously. It was also, as a military force, weak, disorganized, ill equipped, and consequently hardly a match for the mighty IDF, which at the time of the attack was sometimes described as the world's fourth most powerful army.²⁶ Moreover, for close to a year before it was assailed by Israel, the PLO held its fire. Syria, whose forces in Lebanon were also attacked in June 1982, had since 1976 assumed a similarly quiescent posture. In short, the Israeli attack did not appear to be a standard response to the security dilemma but was, arguably, an ill-advised act of aggression, an aberration, or a reflection of personal whims rather than a statesmanlike response to genuine strategic imperatives.²⁷

Indeed, viewed more systematically, the Israeli invasion does seem to lend itself to explanation based on premises of the four perspectives discussed earlier in the chapter. Anti-Zionist writers have claimed that the dream of extending Israel's border to the Litani River inside Lebanon has been a powerful and persisting theme in Zionist and Israeli thinking. In addition, the advocates of this view assert that the war in Lebanon was inspired by Begin's ideologically motivated desire to liquidate the PLO and thus consolidate Israel's own claim upon the West Bank.²⁸

By contrast, the Zionist Fundamentalist argument emphasizes the role of the PLO in Lebanon, and of its representatives on the West Bank, as instruments of Pan-Arab nationalism. It can be argued from this perspective that Syria was deterred by Israel from approaching the Galilee and therefore cultivated the PLO as a proxy. Israel's war in Lebanon was therefore a simple act of self-defense.²⁹

The Psychological-Cultural perspective, too, can be employed to account for the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. An abundance of evidence supports the assumption that Menachem Begin was obsessively preoccupied with the question of the Holocaust. All his life, and no less so during his prime ministership, he used a language that repeatedly stressed that the Arab struggle against Israel was another manifestation of anti-Semitism. Time and again he would talk about the "spilling of Jewish blood" and about the apathy and cynicism of the world whenever Jews were in trouble. Indeed, in the course of the 1982 invasion, he explicitly invoked the memory of World War II. Thus, responding to a birthday telegram from President Reagan, he explained Israel's siege of Beirut in the following terms: "I feel as a Prime Minister empowered to instruct a valiant army facing Berlin where, among innocent civilians, Hitler and his henchmen hide in a bunker deep beneath the surface."³⁰

None of this could be said about Ariel Sharon or Rafael Eitan. Their language is different and certainly does not include many references to Jewish history before the establishment of Israel. Nevertheless, observed from the Psychological-Culture perspective, their conduct too could be richly interpreted. Both of them were socialized into violence. Sharon's childhood memories include hard work on his parents' small farm, and, of course, a permanent and immediate threat from the Arabs in the villages which lay east of his own village, Kfar Malal. As a young man he joined the Jewish underground organization Hagana and fought in the 1948 war. During the early 1950s he was commander of Israel's main instruments of retaliation. He had planned, organized, and carried out so much violence, it could be argued, that his personality must have been deformed. For him, some of his opponents would argue, "a good Arab is a dead Arab."

The thought of reconciliation with the Arabs, and in particular with the Palestinians, would never have crossed his mind. His world is a field of violence and it was therefore only natural that as minister of defense his greatest ambition would be to have "his" own war.³¹

Rafael Eitan's world is not very different. Born and bred in Tel Adashim, a moshav in the heart of the valley of Jezreel, he was formed in much the same way. Hard work on the farm; memories of skirmishes with the Arabs in the neighborhood extending back to early childhood; a brief experience as a volunteer in the Hagana underground; an intensive war experience in 1948 during which he was seriously wounded for the first, but not the last, time; service in the same paratroop unit that Sharon commanded; participation in numerous reprisals, deep penetration raids, and other dangerous missions; a slow but steady rise in the ranks of the IDF from command over a paratroop company to a battalion, a brigade, a division, Northern Command and, finally, the entire army. On this long road he was wounded on several occasions. He lost members of his own family. He saw hundreds of friends and subordinates lose their lives or their limbs and, naturally, he himself took other people's lives. Small wonder, then, that he developed a rather harsh world view in which everything was painted in simple black and white. Zionism in the simplest sense of bringing all Jews to Israel and settling them in every part of the ancient homeland figures in Rafal's world view as self-evidently good and just. The Arabs, all Arabs, are a relentless foe. They are boastful, emotional, bloodthirsty, lazy, and disorganized—a mob, but a dangerous one that can be effectively dealt with only by brute force.³²

The combination of Begin's Holocaust obsession with Sharon's and Eitan's phobia for the Arabs, not to speak of Sharon's ruthless ambition, proponents of the Psychological-Cultural perspective would argue, explain Israel's invasion of Lebanon. After all, the invasion had been preceded by more than a year of effective ceasefire with the PLO and more than five years of stability in Israeli-Syrian relations. Having signed a peace treaty with Egypt, and with Iraq committed to a protracted war with Iran, Israel had become more secure in 1982 than it had ever been. Hence, only a world view as distorted as Begin's, Sharon's, and Rafal's could still find the weak PLO sufficient menace to justify a war.

Such an argument would not be rejected by proponents of the Domestic-Political perspective. But they would emphasize the changing social bases of the Israeli political system. Begin's Likud party had been voted into power by an ascendant populist sentiment. Most of the voters had never read the works of Jabotinsky—Begin's mentor—and have nothing in common with Begin's ideology. Most of Begin's supporters are Sephardi Israelis, brought to Israel in the immediate aftermath of the 1948 war and often insensitively forced to adapt to a political culture and an institutional setting for which they had not been prepared. They were exploited by the established and mainly Ashkenazi Labor elite, and the humiliation and misery of their early years in Israel had turned them into passionate critics of the Labor movement. Yet, if this explains their deference toward Menachem Begin and the Likud party, it does not fully account for their support of Begin's harsh military policy. What does account for it, according to this argument, is the fact that they originated for the most part from Arab countries. Less educated than the average Labor supporter, these Sephardi "Likudniks" do not let Western values interfere with their views of the Arab. They "know the Arab mentality" better than anyone, and this "knowledge" informs them that Arabs understand only the language of force.

This type of populist jingoism is particularly popular in the development towns of the Galilee along Israel's border with Lebanon. Little towns such as Kiryat Shemonah, Shlomi, Ma'alot, Hazor, and Safed, small villages such as Kefar Yuval, Margalioth, Avivim, and Me'onah are inhabited almost exclusively by Sepharadi populists. The standard of living in such places is low. Bitterness toward the Labor movement—represented for these people by the seemingly affluent, arrogant, and exclusionist kibbutzim such as Dan, Daphna, Kfar Giladi, Manara, and Hanita—is intense. Last, but not least, it was precisely these socially vulnerable towns and villages against which most of the PLO's fire was deliberately directed from 1968 to 1981. Hence, it could be argued, it was only natural for such a domestic constituency to press the Begin government to “do something once and for all” about the PLO across the border.³³

Each of these four alternative explanations of Israel's decision to invade Lebanon contains more than a grain of truth. It is true that south Lebanon had attracted the imagination of many Zionist leaders as early as World War I, and that later Ben Gurion and Dayan tried to convince Prime Minister Sharett to set up a Christian Lebanese state and move the Israeli-Lebanese border to the banks of the Litani River. It is also conceivable that Begin's ideologically inspired desire to maintain the West Bank was for him a major incentive to authorize an attack against the PLO in Lebanon. Moreover, in 1982 segments of the PLO were often employed by a variety of forces in the Arab world as instruments in a wider struggle with the Jewish state. There is little doubt, moreover, that the ambitions and simplistic world view of Sharon and Eitan led them to believe that a war in Lebanon against the PLO and Syria might be a worthwhile undertaking. Finally, the increasingly populist climate of Israeli politics and the pressure of an organized Galilee lobby added yet another incentive for launching the invasion.³⁴

Yet, having said all that, there is still sufficient evidence to suggest that, much like Israel's previous decisions to employ force, the invasion of Lebanon was primarily a response to the security dilemma. It did not emanate from any Zionist blueprint; it was not just a matter of personal whim, and it most certainly was not a response to a domestic demand or an attempt to divert attention away from burning domestic problems. It resulted, rather, from a protracted sequence of incremental decisions over a period of fifteen years, all of which sought to avoid drastic action but ultimately increased its attractiveness.

Specifically, the invasion must be evaluated against the backdrop of the thirty-five years preceding it. For twenty years after the establishment of Israel, a succession of Israeli cabinets had maintained a “live and let live” policy toward Lebanon, reflecting a basic lack of interest in Lebanon; but this pattern was broken nearly a decade before Begin's victory in the 1977 elections. A new pattern was initiated under Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, a moderate by all accounts, and was maintained under Prime Ministers Golda Meir, Itzhak Rabin, and even largely under Menachem Begin. The main source of the change in policy was neither the replacement of one individual with another, nor Zionist ideology, nor domestic demand—rather, it was the result of the encounter between Israel and the PLO in which the latter increasingly presented a dual menace. In the short term the danger was confined to the Israeli population along the border with Lebanon, which rapidly became a hostage to the PLO, a means with which to contain Israel's propensity to make the PLO pay dearly for every act of sabotage or terrorism anywhere in the world. In a broader sense the ascendance of the PLO faced Israel with the prospect of either permitting the Palestinians to establish a state on the West Bank or risking a major confrontation with the United States, a choice that, in the view of most shades of

Israeli opinion, including the mainstream of the Labor party, had to be avoided. Moved by its own security dilemma the PLO was impelled to sustain its military and political pressures. Inspired by a not dissimilar logic Israel was prone to do anything it could to avert both the military and the political implications of the PLO's action.

As on other occasions, Israel had essentially two options: a political move leading to a historic compromise with the PLO, or preemptive military action against it. Responding to its own perception of the security dilemma, Israel eschewed accommodation on the assumption most states since time immemorial have made: cooperative behavior could lead to a greater menace than the one it sought to avert. Having thus instinctively opted for the preemptive alternative, Israel faced three policy options: inaction, and a strictly defensive posture; a limited offensive posture; or an all-out form of military offensive. For nearly fifteen years the Jewish state had opted repeatedly for the intermediate—limited—alternative. Even Begin's first ministry (1977–81) followed this pattern. But, increasingly, this policy of limited action brought diminishing returns. By the beginning of the 1980s, it was becoming apparent that as long as accommodation with the PLO remained unacceptable, the number of Israel's alternatives was rapidly decreasing to only two: a defensive posture or a massive operation. A defensive posture at a time when the PLO was prone to avoid military action in order to increase pressure on the United States to bring the Palestinians into the peace process would ultimately bear the same fruits as an abrupt volte-face leading to an Israeli willingness to negotiate with the PLO. Realizing this, segments of Israel's left, including a small number of Labor leaders, began openly to advocate precisely such a historic change in Israeli policy. They were logical and consistent. So were Begin, Sharon, and Eitan, who argued the opposite, namely, that a historic compromise leading to a PLO state on the West Bank would be a prelude to a historic disaster. Hence the Likud leaders were also logical and consistent when they advocated abandoning the defensive posture and launching a military campaign. Essentially the two remaining alternatives were: either Israel should have followed the advocacy of Yossi Sarid, Lova Eliav and Abba Eban, or it should have gone along with Begin, Sharon, and Eitan. As in Rousseau's stag hunt a viable third alternative arguably no longer existed. And, again from the French philosopher's allegory, ultimately Israel, like most states in world history, was more likely to follow the advice of the hawks than the doves. This had been the pattern of Israeli conduct in the past and from this perspective the decision to invade Lebanon was not at all an aberration. Begin, Sharon, and Eitan, owing to their personalities and ideological outlook, may have moved faster and more ferociously than more pragmatic Israeli policy makers would have, but, the nature of the problem was such that, arguably, under any leadership Israel would have been hard put to avoid a large-scale military operation some time in the course of the 1980s.

There were, however, a number of critical differences between the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the Jewish state's previous wars. The first and most important difference lay in a significantly altered ratio between perceived threat and the will to resist. Israel's implicit security doctrine, of which Sharon was one of the most important architects and practitioners, was born in the 1950s and 1960s when the Arab threat was perceived in existential terms and the willingness of Israeli society to resist it was at its peak. By the time Begin and Sharon resolved to go to war, the equation had drastically changed. The peace with Egypt had reduced the perceived military threat to manageable, almost marginal, proportions. At the same time the rise in standard of living, the basic attitudinal changes that rise eventually brought, and the accumulated war weariness from

nearly four decades of war contributed to a shrunken will to suffer the consequences of yet another war. Begin and Sharon were thus implementing a security doctrine that had been largely overtaken by Israel's social, cultural, and political realities.

Had they not failed to appreciate this important change, had they, Sharon in particular, not violated the ethical and political ground rules of the Israeli political system, had Sharon not resorted to unauthorized action, had the military operation gone according to plan, the majority of Israelis would have basked in the invigorating sensation of victory. But the same proclivities led to the opposite result once the full scale of Sharon's failure to come to grips with the realities he proposed to change became apparent. Inadvertently, however, the Israeli public, which revolted against Begin, Sharon, and Eitan, also inflicted upon itself as a direct consequence a greater punishment than it would have suffered had it united in backing up the war once it had begun.

More specifically, one of the main contentions of this study is that strategically the war plan was perfectly logical. What Sharon in particular failed to recognize was that strategy is not an abstract exercise in logic. Military strategy is carried into effect by armed forces, consisting of people whose predispositions, anxieties, hopes, dreams, and systems of values a good strategist should take into account just as he should evaluate seriously the impact of the proposed strategy on the population at the receiving end.

What made things worse was that neither Sharon nor Begin fully realized until it was too late the practical implications of the fact that all of Israel's previous wars had been conducted by Labor-based governments. In 1956 and 1973 Begin's Likud and its antecedents, GAHAL and Herut, were in opposition. And since their entire outlook had always been more hawkish than that of any incumbent government, they could be taken for granted in war and assumed to be a real obstacle in a peace process. But when the tables were turned the opposition was less hawkish and therefore impelled by the nature of its outlook and political constituency to be a reliable source of support in peace negotiations but a residual opposition in a real sense—and quite inevitably—to any Likud-led war, and most particularly to a patently unsuccessful one.

Furthermore, Begin, Sharon, and their colleagues showed an uncommon degree of simplemindedness in their estimates of possible U.S. reactions. In all of Israel's previous wars the anticipated reaction of the United States loomed as large on the planners' minds as the anticipated reaction of the government's domestic front. Sharon, however, was ill-advisedly led to believe that he could orchestrate, single-handedly and simultaneously, both the Israeli public and the U.S. government if only he could throw enough sand in the eyes of both. He was wrong on both accounts and therefore faced within a few days the converging and mutually reinforcing pressures of the Israeli public on the one hand and the Reagan administration on the other.

The result, it will be argued, was a domestic backlash at a moment when the entire enterprise was still hanging in the balance. The military campaign lost momentum; the political follow-up to the military operation became subordinate to an American policy seeking to achieve precisely what Israel wished to prevent; the IDF, the Israeli public, and Begin's cabinet were divided irreparably. Sharon was removed. Begin resigned ignominiously. The Likud declined in the elections that followed. The Labor party, only a small fraction of which had opposed the war as a matter of principle, returned to office committed to withdraw from Lebanon within a few months, irrespective of whether or not the objectives of the war were attained.

The fact that the war was waged within the framework of a response to a real security problem in the widest sense was underlined by the difficulty Israel faced in its attempts

to extricate itself from what came to be known as *HaBitza HaLevanonit*, the Lebanese Swamp. If the problem leading to the war had not been real, if it had been merely the figment of Sharon's violent imagination, Israel would have had no qualms about a clean break, a quick unilateral withdrawal. But this was not so. There was a real problem and, once the IDF was in and around Beirut, it made little strategic-political sense—which even some of the government's most vociferous critics did not fail to see—to remove it from there prior to a serious attempt to achieve significant political results such as the withdrawal of the PLO.

Moreover, responding to the security dilemma in its most aggravating form, Israel was caught in an unenviable situation in which, at any given moment, the cost of unilateral withdrawal appeared as high as the cost of holding on. With the rise in casualties the domestic rift deepened. This heightened domestic schism further undercut the already much-depreciated gains of the war. Indeed, just as Rousseau and his contemporary intellectual heirs would predict, Israel's posture of accommodation since the spring of 1983 fostered an image of weakness and thus encouraged the adversaries (especially Syria), who from their point of view were responding to the same security dilemma to exploit the situation to their advantage.

The result was an ever-widening gap between the dictates of a good strategy and the demands of the government's domestic constituency. The Begin and Shamir governments yielded to a mounting domestic demand to withdraw, but in so doing they ignored their own best strategic judgment. Under these circumstances it was quite unavoidable that Israeli policy would become a snowball of ever-diminishing returns.

By the fall of 1984 when Peres formed his National Unity Government there was no longer any logic in holding on. Fully aware of the fact that before the war the choice was either a war (as advocated by the Likud leadership) or a historic compromise with the PLO (as advocated by Labor's own backbenchers), not willing to support either alternative but afraid to try to stop Begin and Sharon from launching the war, the Labor leadership drifted toward the least logical of all positions: they gave Begin their grudging approval for a military operation, but as soon as it was expanded (as most of them had feared) they came out against it. Their motives sprang from both political considerations and a great deal of genuine conviction. But, whatever their motives, their actions served to undermine the morale and efficacy of the IDF in the course of the war and during the various phases of the withdrawal process. Peres, Rabin, and their colleagues thus enacted unwittingly a self-fulfilling prophecy. They made a difficult war even more complicated, undermined Israel's bargaining posture and accelerated the reappraisal which led to the decision to withdraw. Yet, paradoxically, in order to withdraw with full domestic backing Peres and his Labor colleagues had to adjust the pace to what their Likud partners would tolerate. The withdrawal was thus slower and more costly than it would have been otherwise. Moreover, as the process of withdrawal was gathering momentum, not only the Likud but also the Labor leadership were forced to "unlearn" many of their own preconceived ideas about a variety of critical problems.

This protracted, complex, and painful process of escalation, war, retrenchment, and collapse is analyzed in detail in the next four chapters. The main themes are: (1) Israel's specific response to the security dilemma at every given junction; and (2) the interplay of pure strategic considerations with the real political world. Israel was sucked into the Lebanese quagmire by its own, not entirely imaginary perception of a grave threat; but the magnitude of the problem and the failure of officially held strategic perceptions to take into account the full complexity of the political context aborted the entire enterprise. At

first it was a matter of a government seeking to impose its strategy on an unwilling political system. Then the roles were reversed as a weary, pained, almost hysterical political system forced its leaders to abandon strategy. The decision to go to war was essentially a gamble. The decision to extricate the IDF from Lebanon was a gamble, too. By the end of it all the dilemma that had taken the IDF all the way to Beirut remained as unresolved as ever.

2

Escalation

In the Israeli mind the concept of Lebanon began as an object of cartography, was transformed into an object of diplomacy, and degenerated into an object of strategy. Lebanon was a topic of interest for cartographers, physical planners, hydraulic experts, and agronomists when the founding fathers of Zionism first turned their attention from the vision of a Jewish state to the reality of boundaries. It became a topic of some diplomatic activity when the emergence of a Jewish homeland in Palestine turned into a source of friction and encirclement of the nascent Jewish polity by its awakening Arab neighbors. It degenerated into an object of strategy when Lebanon became, owing to its inherent fragility, the main center of the PLO, that bitter harvest of the success of the Zionist enterprise.

The typical Zionist, and later Israeli, approach to this changing concept of Lebanon was one of utter, almost irreverent pragmatism. The Zionist intent under the leadership of Weizman, later Ben Gurion, and subsequently Eshkol, Meir, Rabin, and even (in this regard) Begin, was first and foremost to develop and preserve a Jewish state in Palestine. The location of its northern and southern borders was a secondary issue. None of these leaders contested the notion that certain borders would be better than others, but none of them, not even Begin, ever advocated going to war as a means of changing them.

Nevertheless, gradually the escalating Arab-Israeli conflict and the appearance of the PLO on the scene drove Israel into an ever intensifying involvement in the affairs of Lebanon. At first this took the form of thoughts about an alliance with elements in Lebanon that could assure that the country would not be transformed into an active anti-Israeli confrontation state. Then it took the form of small-scale involvement in an emerging security sphere of influence astride Israel's border. Then there was a return to the idea of an alliance with friendly elements in the center of Lebanon. Only when none of these steps seemed capable of arresting the conflict in the border zone did Israel begin to consider the possibility of an invasion.

But whereas the main factor propelling this process was the unrest along the border between Lebanon and Israel, the topic cannot be dissociated from the broader context of Arab-Israeli relations within which the issue was approached by all concerned. Though initially insulated from the broader conflict, Lebanon gradually became its main focus.

The Maronite Connection

The roots of the Israeli interest in and connection with the Maronite community in Lebanon can be traced back to the closing phase of World War I. Even before the issuing of the Balfour Declaration, at a time when it seemed that the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire would create an opportunity for the Zionist movement to obtain an internationally recognized entity in Palestine, some Zionist leaders had already paid attention to the borders of the desired Jewish colony. Late in 1915 Shmuel Tolkowski (whose son Dan was to become the Commander of the Israeli Air Force in the Early 1950s) authored a proposal concerning the delineation of the northern border. It should run, he proposed, "north of the first five kilometers of the upper part of the Awali River, and from there a straight line to the south east of the southern point of Mount Lebanon and Mount Hermon."

Tolkowski was particularly sensitive to political and strategic considerations. Another expert who studied the same issue two years later at the behest of the Zionist Executive was Aharon Aronson. An agronomist, Aronson paid greater attention to the maximization of agricultural advantages and therefore the line he proposed was somewhat different. Instead of starting on the Mediterranean, north of Sidon—as proposed by Tolkowski—the border would start south of Sidon. And whereas Tolkowski spoke about a point at thirty-three degrees, thirty-eight minutes to the north as the eastern end of the border, Aronson preferred a point at thirty-three degrees, thirty minutes to the northeast, just above the town of Rashaya.

Yet a third proposal on the same topic was submitted by Haim Kalwariski. For him the natural solution would be to adopt the southern border of the autonomous Christian "canton" which, in 1861, had been determined as the final border. This, he emphasized, would make it possible for the Moslem population south of that line to remain within the same political entity as their brethren further south in the heart of Palestine.

Finally, a more modest proposal was contained in a book coauthored by David Ben Gurion and Itzhak Ben-Zvi during their forced exile (by the Ottoman authorities) from Palestine in the course of World War I. In their view the ideal border would be on the Litani River which forms in many places a deep gorge, rather than further north on the Awali or Zaharani rivers.

Such proposals formed the basis for the demands the Executive of the World Zionist Organization submitted to the Paris Peace Conference on February 3, 1919. The northern border of the Jewish state, the memorandum stated, "starts at a point on the Mediterranean near and south of Sidon and follows the watershed of the heights of Mount Lebanon until the Qar'oun Valley from Tin Valley."

This was the official position of the Zionist movement until the signing of the border agreement between Great Britain and France on December 23, 1923. In order to obtain support for this demand, the movement conducted a vigorous campaign. Emissaries were sent to meet Prince (later King) Faisal, to prevail over the objections of the French government, and to solicit the support of the government of the United States.

Ultimately, however, all this was to no avail. The final boundary was the product of a British-French compromise which was not affected at all by Zionist demands.¹ It runs south of the Litani River and therefore falls short of even the more modest Ben Gurion/Ben-Zvi ideas. Nevertheless, the Zionist movement accepted the verdict without any serious protest. At the same time, already fully alert to their built-in conflict with the Arab world and sensing that the Christians in Lebanon had a similar problem, some Zionist

leaders sought to establish cooperative links with the Arabs. Thus, as early as March 1920, before the final determination of the border, a pact of sorts was signed for the first time between Yehoshua Khankin, a Zionist emissary, and some Maronite leaders. In 1932 another Zionist emissary, Victor Jacobson, traveled to Beirut to discuss with Maronite leaders the establishment of "a Lebanese-Zionist social-cultural association" or even a "joint company for using southern Lebanon's Litani River for electricity and irrigation." Although Jacobson's visit led to naught the Zionist leadership did not despair. World War II had raised the urgency (and the likelihood) of Jewish independence in Palestine and as a result the prospects for an all-encompassing conflict between the Jewish Yishuv in Palestine and a united Arab world as well. Against this background it was essential for the Jews to cultivate links with other non-Muslim factors in the region, namely, the seemingly beleaguered Christians of Lebanon. Thus in September 1944 the Jewish Agency dispatched Eliyahu Epstein to Beirut. His cover was that he was conducting a survey tour on the problems of Jewish refugees passing through Lebanon, but his real mandate was to forge a political entente between Jews and Christians against "the common enemy: Islamic oriented Arab nationalism."²

Nor did the Zionist initiatives remain wholly one-sided. The effect of the creation of a Lebanon wider than its Christian core was Syrian irredentism and the disruption of the demographic balance inside the new state. This led to discord between the traditional Maronite Christian core, which underlay Lebanon's very creation, and the heterogeneous population. Faced with this problem, the Christian community was divided. One school sought a solution based on continued support of the French. A second school, however, advocated the expeditious "territorial reduction of Lebanon in order to enable her to have a more consistent Christian majority." By "amputating" the mainly Sunni area of Tripoli (in the north) as well as the mainly Shi'i southern Lebanon from the Lebanese state, argued Emille Edde (Lebanon's president from 1936 to 1941), "Lebanon will be rid of almost 140,000 Shi'i and Sunni Muslims and will be left with a Christian majority equaling about eighty percent of her population." Edde tried to persuade the French government to adopt such a solution; but failing he turned to the Zionists for help. In 1944 Edde and other Maronite leaders requested Weizman to pass a letter from them to President Roosevelt in which they expressed utter mistrust concerning the intentions of Sunni Arab nationalists toward non-Moslem minorities. Less than two years later, in 1946, Edde sent an emissary to Chaim Weizman (whom he had met in person in 1937) with a proposal that the Zionist movement should demand southern Lebanon between the international border and the Litani River—with its Muslim population—for the Jewish national home.³

Edde's demarche to Weizman was not an isolated move. Indeed, during the same year, there were two more events of some significance suggesting that the Maronite leadership, or at least elements in it, pinned some hopes on cooperation with the Zionist movement. The first was the public expression of support for Zionist aspirations by Patriarch Antoine Arida, who also signed a document with Bernard Joseph of the Jewish Agency for Palestine in which the Jewish demand for independence and the Maronite demand for a Christian Lebanon were mutually recognized. The second event was the testimony of Archbishop Ignatz Moubarak, Maronite Bishop of Beirut, to the Anglo-American Commission of Inquiry in favor of partition in Palestine and the creation of a Jewish state.

Given such clear signs of Maronite support for the Zionist cause, the Jewish Agency was prompted to attempt to translate words into deeds. In March 1947 the agency's Arab department sent one of its officials, Alexander Lutski, to Beirut. His instructions were to establish contacts with the Ketaeb (Phalange) party and in particular with its leader,

Sheikh Pierre Gemayel. Lutski succeeded in meeting many Phalange leaders but the overall impression he brought back to Jerusalem was that the Phalange were neither entirely serious nor altogether genuine in their attitude to the Zionist cause. Gemayel acknowledged the existence of a common interest but declined to mention any concrete measures of cooperation. Another Phalange leader, Elias Rababi, editor of the party's newspaper, *Al Amal*, was far more forthright than Gemayel but his suggestions for practical steps must have sounded somewhat eerie to Lutski. The Jewish Agency, Rababi proposed, should bribe Lebanese politicians and journalists in order to ensure their vocal support for the idea that Lebanon should not take part in any war the Arab League might launch against the Zionist if and when the latter established a Jewish state.⁴

Given the disappointing results of the Lutski mission the Jewish Agency apparently reached the conclusion that the Maronite connection did not really deserve undue attention. Yet it did not take long before the issue was brought back to the forefront as a result of a Maronite initiative. In March 1948 there were some contacts between Father Joseph Awad of Waterville, Maine, and members of the American Zionist Emergency Council (AZEC). Awad was an ardent supporter of the idea of Christian Lebanon in alliance with a Jewish state and he was trying to influence Lebanese politics from his base in the United States. Apparently lacking in resources he turned to the AZEC for help. This organization subsequently contributed funds to Phoenicia Press, a propaganda organization preaching the cause of Phoenician (that is, Maronite) separatism. In turn, Awad agreed to undertake a visit to Lebanon with a view to exploring the possibilities for Maronite Jewish cooperation.

Awad was in favor of a Lebanese-Israeli pact of nonbelligerency. But his visit to Lebanon in the summer of 1948, at a time when Lebanon took part in the first Arab-Israeli war, rendered these ideas quite unrealistic. Angered, he blamed this turn of events on the policies of Sunni Moslem Premier Riyadh al Solh. His views apparently were well received by some Phalange leaders, including Elias Rababi. Moreover, the fact that Lebanon was now at war with Israel turned any direct contacts between Rababi and the Israelis into an act of treason. Consequently, Rababi and his supporters could turn to Awad, an American citizen, and employ him as a contact with the Israelis.

The indefatigable Awad returned to the United States late in the summer of 1948. He then proceeded to advocate the idea of Israeli-Maronite alliance to the Maronite community in the United States. Simultaneously, he resumed his contacts with the AZEC. Meanwhile the participation of Lebanon in the 1948 invasion of the Jewish state, which at first endowed Lebanon with some minor territorial gains, had turned into a defeat and ultimately led to the occupation by Israel of fourteen Lebanese villages.

From Awad's point of view this was not a Lebanese national calamity. In fact he chided the Israeli and Zionist representative who met with him for Israel's "failure" to go deeper into Lebanon. In his opinion Israel should have taken advantage of the fact that Lebanon had started the war (along with the rest of the Arab states) and should have sent the IDF all the way to Beirut. If that had been done, Awad argued, it would have created an opportunity for installing in Lebanon a government that would make peace with Israel and perhaps even enter into an alliance later.

Still utterly convinced that this was a sound idea, Awad proceeded in the fall of 1948 to win the support of Israeli and Zionist representatives. Early in September he approached Eliyahu Ben Horin, Middle East Affairs Advisor of the American Zionist Emergency Council, which had supported Awad's activities (and his trip to Lebanon) since the previous March. Things in Lebanon had reached such a state, he told Ben Horin (as the latter reported

on 13 September to Moshe Sharett, Israel's Foreign Minister) that the Ketaeb party was ready "to begin a military insurrection to overthrow the Riyadh al Solh government and gain power." But to succeed, Awad added, the Ketaeb would need "real aid." He said that the French, since 1860 the mentors and supporters of the Christians in Lebanon, were "ready to help" and the Ketaeb "wanted to know" how Israel could help, too.

Ben Horin replied circumspectly that while Awad's views were clear, the Phalange official policy toward Israel was "unknown." Faced with this response Awad hurriedly consulted Elias Rababi, the editor of *Al Amal*, then on a visit to the United States. Rababi's answer, as Awad told Ben Horin, suggested that he—and thus the Phalange party—was "no less pro-Zionist than Archbishop Moubarak." Indeed, Rababi instructed Awad to arrange for him a meeting with Israeli officials.

The three ranking Israeli diplomats in the United States were Eliyahu Epstein (later Eilat), Head of the Mission in Washington, Aubrey (Abba) Eban, Head of the UN Mission, and Gideon Ruffer (later Rafael), Councilor to the UN delegation. All three were, however, absent at the time of Rababi's request for a meeting. Ben Horin therefore suggested that Rababi talk to Abba Hillel Silver, Head of the AZEC, and possibly to Arthur Lurie and Uriel Heid, at the time junior members of the Israeli diplomatic mission to the United States. If that were not enough, added Ben Horin, Rababi could stop in Paris on his way back to Beirut. There he could talk to more senior Israeli officials such as Gideon Ruffer and Tuvia Arazi. Rababi took Ben Horin's advice and held talks with Silver in the United States and with Tuvia Arazi in Paris. Significantly, it seems, Arazi was accompanied at the meeting by Eliyahu Sasson, then Director of the Middle East Department in the Israeli Foreign Ministry, who also had extensive contacts throughout the Arab world.

Evidently Rababi failed to convince his Israeli interlocutors of the viability of his ideas. Indeed, during the following year (1949) nothing of consequence was to happen in this regard. But Rababi did not give up hope and late in 1950 he was back in the United States trying to revive these links. His starting point was, again, the Zionist establishment in the United States. Having made contact with Shulamit Schwartz (later Nardi) of the American Zionist Council on November 7–8, 1950, Rababi seemed at least to have succeeded in making a good impression. When she advised Reuven Shiloah, Director of the Political Division in the Israeli Foreign Ministry, of these talks, he urged her to compile a special report for the minister, Moshe Sharett. Encouraged, Schwartz wrote to Sharett on November 20 emphasizing the following points: The Ketaeb mustered "40–60,000 members . . . organized on the model of the Hagana" and it was "by its very nature a democratically based mass movement." "This is no matter," she added,

of a beautiful theocracy (though the Patriarch Arida and the Archbishop Moubarak are ardent supporters of al Ketaeb). This is no matter, either, of a group of wealthy landlords. This is something new in the Middle East—a democratic, more than half socialist mass movement, openly dedicated to breaking the power of the feudal landlords of Lebanon, and though primarily Christian in creed, culture and membership, still modern enough to jump over the confines of need and accept the fellowship of the true Lebanese, even Moslem and Druse, who value Lebanese independence more than Arab unity.

The youthful Schwartz may have been incredibly naive but she was also remarkably articulate and persuasive. Her operational proposals were to embrace Rababi's thesis of "taking Lebanon out of the Arab League" and "making peace and reestablishing economic relations" with her. Sharett, who could not be accused of naïveté, was duly enthused. With

characteristic caution he hastened to write to the Director General of the Foreign Ministry, Walter Eitan, that “perhaps . . . she [Schwartz] exaggerated the importance and chances of the (Ketaeb) organization and its leaders.” But, he added, this

group is worthy of serious attention on our part. The picture drawn in . . . Schwartz’s presentation . . . —the taking of Lebanon out of the Pan-Arab circle and its affiliation with Israel—is extremely heartwarming and opens the door to a farreaching alignment in the whole structure of the Middle East. . . . Moreover even if this goal is not swiftly attainable . . . it nevertheless remains a goal that is well worth striving for and investing energy and means in.

Sharett was so impressed by Schwartz’s memorandum that he instructed Eitan to seek permission, presumably from the prime minister, to have Gideon Rafael meet Rababi. Early in December 1950 the foreign minister was in the United States. He received a telegram from Eitan advising him of the clearance for the proposed Rafael-Rababi meeting. Sharett therefore instructed his own private secretary, Ephraim Evron, to set up the meeting and take part in it himself. Flanked by Evron and Schwartz, Rafael met Rababi on December 12, 1950. His impressions, reported to Sharett on December 28, were positive but far more cautious than those of Shulamit Schwartz.

“The leaders of the Ketaeb,” Rababi told Rafael, “have always been convinced that the destiny of Lebanese Christianity is linked to the existence of friendly ties with the state of Israel.” One indication of that, Rababi pointed out, was the recent expression of the idea of “peace and cooperation with Israel” in the Ketaeb (namely Rababi’s own) newspaper, *Al Amal*. At the same time, however, “the Ketaeb have become somewhat less enthusiastic about the idea of seizing power in Lebanon through a coup.” While those are “plans for a revolution, the responsible leaders believe the hour has not struck for energetic actions, and more active political preparations must first be made.” What Rababi had in mind was that Ketaeb leaders should “run in the Lebanese elections due to be held in the spring of 1951.” In their estimate they could capture three or four seats if they were given sufficient assistance. Rababi wondered whether Israel would consider offering such help. More specifically, would it offer “financial assistance for the election campaign which would be expensive in terms of bribes and vote buying?”

Unlike Schwartz, Gideon Rafael was not carried away by the tête-à-tête with Rababi. His reasons were more strategic-political than personal. Rababi was in Rafael’s view an “honest and frank person” who should not be treated in the “manner of oriental bargaining.” But beyond Rababi’s demeanor loomed a larger issue. If the Phalange were successful in seizing power, would they really break from the Arab world and strike an alliance with Israel? Rafael’s answer was decisively negative:

In the present circumstances in the Middle East, I cannot imagine that a Christian movement, when it reaches power in Lebanon, will dare enter into a conflict with the Moselm World by maintaining friendly ties with Israel. On the contrary . . . so long as the other Arab states persevere in their stubborn policy towards Israel, Lebanon will not be able, even under a friendly Christian government, to give concrete expression to its friendly proclivities.

This did not mean that Israel should turn down the Rababi request for help. He advised Foreign Minister Sharett that “Israel should be interested in the existence of an important friendly force in Lebanon, without expecting too much in the near future.”

What did that mean in concrete terms? In Rafael's view it boiled down to an offer of IL 5,000–10,000 (approximately 25,000–50,000 U.S. dollars in 1951 value) to the Phalange and an attempt to establish with them some sort of a permanent liaison.

Thinking about such a limited tie, Rafael advised Emile Najjar, a senior Israeli diplomat in Paris with a rich Middle Eastern experience, to see Rababi on his way back to Beirut. He mentioned that Rababi might ask for help and cautioned Najjar against making any concrete promises in this regard. At the same time he appraised Rababi in positive terms and emphasized to Najjar that the Phalange "represents the militant part of Lebanese Christianity and . . . [had] always considered cooperation with the Yishuv. Following the establishment of the state of Israel they see in this cooperation the only possibility of saving Lebanese Christianity."

Najjar for one seems to have endorsed Rafael's view and even added that "every Arab political figure says behind closed doors what he would dare not say in public." Shulamit Schwartz, however, continued to cling to her sanguine opinion that the message of Rababi was of great significance. She urged Foreign Minister Sharett not to miss "the great possibilities latent in the movement"; she compared Rababi to the Zionist socialist pioneers who had transformed Palestine from a wasteland to a modern state; and she advised Sharett to meet Rababi in person in order to "sense . . . the virile, modern flowering of an ancient stock, so close to ours, so much inspired by our rebirth and so eager for cooperation with us."

Possibly as a result of this great difference in the evaluation of the whole issue, the matter was turned over to the Foreign Ministry's research department for further study from a broader perspective. Their report, signed by G. Tadmor and dated January 25, 1951, went even further than Rafael's opinion in unequivocally dismissing the Phalange. They did not have 40,000–60,000 members, Tadmor wrote, but barely 5,000 with perhaps another 20,000–30,000 supporters. There was "no chance" that they would succeed in electing three to four representatives to the Lebanese parliament and there was "no taking seriously" Rababi's promise of a Phalange revolution. "One should not put too many hopes in the Ketaeb." Rababi's statement about a pro-Israeli note in *Al Amal* was simply not true and, concluded the research department evaluation, "we believe that a large investment in this organization will not be worthwhile. IL 5–10,000 is an enormous sum in Lebanon . . . past experience teaches us that there is no relying on this organization or those like it. And in any event there is no expecting great things of them, and no reason to hope that with their assistance, a change will take place in Lebanon's stand toward Israel." The only thing that could perhaps have been worthwhile would have been for Israel to furnish the Ketaeb with a "small sum" in order to "display goodwill." Tadmor's recommendation was endorsed and Israel paid the Phalange the sum of IL 3,000. On April 15, 1951, when the elections to the Lebanese Parliament took place, however, not even one Phalange candidate was elected.⁵

If this experience shaped the foreign ministry's view for years to come, it did little to persuade other Israelis that the link with a Christian Lebanon was essentially a nonstarter. Those Israelis who continued to believe in the Maronite connection were inspired neither by ideological irredentism nor by a desire to lay a hand on the waters of the Litani. Their reasons, rather, were strictly strategic. Israel's deepening sense of isolation and encirclement in the early 1950s, the rise of Nasserism, and the radicalization of the Arab world soon revived the Lebanese scheme. As during the debate in the foreign ministry, this had nothing to do with Zionist ideology, with the holocaust syndrome, or with any particular domestic pressures. It stemmed from a desperate search

for a more secure existence manifested by a quest for a regional arrangements that would loosen the tightening Arab noose. Moving the Israeli border to the Litani would bring two main advantages: first, the northern border would be a more defensible barrier against a surprise attack; second, a Christian state of Lebanon in alliance with Israel would offer a buffer against the rampant forces of Nasserite Pan-Arabism. Ben Gurion, who revived the scheme in February 1954, probably had no illusions about the military capability of such a Lebanese state. But if it entered into an alliance with Israel its borders would become a 'red line' whose crossing by any hostile Arab forces, for example, from Syria, would become a *casus belli*. Such a deterrent posture could, of course, be obtained with or without Lebanese consent—all Israel had to do was to declare Lebanon's eastern and northern borders a 'red line'. But since such a move would elicit negative reactions from the West, an alliance with Lebanon, turning its borders into Israel's red lines with voluntary Lebanese consent, may have appeared a more attractive proposition.

The required changes in the relationship with Lebanon could not, of course, be implemented at a time when Syria, in particular, could interfere. Appropriate timing was, in other words, essential. Such a propitious moment seemed to present itself late in February 1954. Syria had just experienced yet another coup d'état. With the new regime preoccupied in consolidating power, and with the entire Arab world focusing its attention on events in Syria, the moment for a bold move concerning Lebanon (and possibly Syria, too) seemed to have arrived, according to former Premier David Ben Gurion. His reasoning, with its exclusive emphasis on the strategic aspect of the issue, is worth quoting at length. Lebanon, he said "is the weakest link in the chain of the [Arab] League." The Christian Community there constitutes

the majority in the historical Lebanon and this majority has a totally different heritage and culture from the rest of the League. Even in the expanded border (and France's most serious mistake was to expand the borders of Lebanon) the Moslems are not free to do as they wish, even if they are a majority there (and I do not know whether they are a majority) for fear of the Christians. The establishment of a Christian state therefore is a natural step. It has historic roots and it will find support from large forces in the Christian world, Catholic and Protestant alike. In normal times this would be virtually impossible. First of all due to the Christians' lack of initiative and courage. But in a period of confusion, upheaval or civil war things change and the weak shall say: I am a hero. Maybe (of course nothing is certain in politics) now is the propitious moment to bring about the establishment of a Christian state as our neighbor. Without our initiative and our energetic help it will not come about. And it seems to me that this is now the central task or at least one of the central tasks of our foreign policy, and we should invest means, time and energy and act in all ways likely to bring about a fundamental change in Lebanon. [Eliahu] Sasson and the rest of our Arabists must be mobilized. If money is needed, the dollars should not be spared, even though the money may go down the drain. All our energies must be concentrated here. Perhaps Reuven [Shiloah, another Arabist] should be brought here immediately to this end. We will not be forgiven if we miss the historic opportunity. There is no provocation here of the world's powers. In fact we need not do anything "directly"—but everything should, I think, be done with alacrity and full steam.

Without a narrowing of Lebanon's borders, of course, the goal cannot be attained, but if there are persons in Lebanon or exiles outside who can be recruited for the establishment of a Maronite state—they will have no need for expanded borders or for a large Moslem population and such considerations need not count.

I do not know if we have people in Lebanon, but there are all kinds of ways if it is decided to make the suggested attempt.⁶

Ben Gurion wrote this analysis as a private citizen. It was sent from his retreat at Kibbutz Sedeh Boker in the Negev to Moshe Sharett who, three months earlier, had succeeded him as prime minister. Sharett, who grew up in an Arab village and prided himself on his intimate knowledge of the Middle East, rejected Ben Gurion's plan out of hand. Echoing the views of his advisers during the 1949–51 contacts with Rababi, he stressed in his reply to Ben Gurion that there was "no point in trying to create from the outside a movement which is non-existent inside. One can reinforce a spirit of life when it is already beating. One cannot inject life into a body which shows no signs of life. Now, as far as I know, there is no movement in Lebanon today seeking to make that country a Christian state in which the final say would be in the hands of the Maronite community." If Ben Gurion's plan were implemented, he added, it could "rend with one motion the fabric of Christian-Moslem cooperation within the framework of present Lebanon, which has been woven with stubborn labor and considerable sacrifices for a generation now." It could "throw the Lebanese Moslems into the arms of Syria, and at the end of the process bring on Christian Lebanon the historic catastrophe of its annexation to Syria and the utter blurring of its personality within the greater Moslem state." Turning to the implications for Israel of a hasty attempt to restructure Lebanon, Sharett warned that the venture could make Israel's position in the region far worse:

I fear that any attempt by us to raise the question would be taken as a sign of frivolousness and superficiality or perhaps worse: as adventurist profiterring in the well-being and survival of others, and as readiness to sacrifice their fundamental welfare for the sake of temporary Israeli tactical advantage. Moreover, if the matter did not remain secret but became public knowledge—a risk which cannot be ignored in the Middle East context—there is no calculating the damage this would cause us vis-à-vis the Arab states and the western powers alike, damage for which the eventual success of the operation itself would provide no compensation.⁷

Ben Gurion accepted Sharett's judgment without conviction. In February 1955 he returned to the Government as minister of defense and as soon as Iraqi-Syrian tensions presented an opportunity to implement the plan, he brought it up for discussion. This time he was strongly supported by Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Moshe Dayan. But Sharett's forebodings ultimately prevailed. He agreed to set up an interministerial committee to study the plan; but this was a barely veiled way of burying the scheme altogether. Ultimately, the only steps Sharett authorized were very limited in nature, namely, maintaining the covert liaison that had been established with segments of the Christian community back in December 1950.⁸

Sharett's decision appears to have shaped Israel's strategy vis-à-vis Lebanon until the aftermath of the 1967 war. However, another, not entirely implausible possibility is that Israel's resourceful intelligence community, in particular the Mossad, did try to go beyond Sharett's guidelines but failed to elicit from the Lebanese themselves any enthusiasm for an explicit alliance. Eventually forcing Sharett to resign, Ben Gurion returned to both the premiership and the ministry of defense. In this capacity he worked actively toward establishing a network of alliances with non-Arab or non-Muslim states and minorities such as Turkey, Iran, Ethiopia, the Kurds in Iraq, and the Christians in the Sudan. The ideological underpinning of this policy was that the Middle East was not a homogeneous Sunni "ocean" waiting eagerly to be reorganized by Pan-Arabism but

rather a mosaic of cultures, religions, and races. In such an area a Jewish state had a legitimate place, whereas in the Pan-Arab alternative it appeared an alien intruder. Moreover, strategically, the cultivation of such relations could lead to friction between Israel's enemies and other minorities and nations. In turn, there was evidently some hope that Arab armies could be pinned down to theaters of operation other than Israel's borders, thus alleviating Israel's pressing security situation.⁹

Since these ideas were widely shared in Israel's foreign policy and security establishment, it seems likely that the dormant link with certain elements in Lebanon was maintained throughout the 1950s and 1960s. It was therefore in existence when the events following the 1967 war augmented its value from the point of view of the Lebanese in question. Most important was the rise of the PLO and its attempt to turn Lebanon into its main base of operations. To be sure, this in itself does not explain every aspect of the Lebanese problem. Had it not been for the weakness of the Lebanese polity, as well as the coincidence of religious, ethnic, geographic, social, and economic cleavages in Lebanon's society, the appearance of the PLO might not have had the consequences it did. But given the intensity of strife among Lebanon's competing groups, the weakness of political institutions, the absence of effective means of conflict resolution, and the accelerating disintegration of the Lebanese state under the strain of rapid economic growth, the appearance of the PLO and its activities against Israel were critical. In a sense it created conditions under which even the cautious Sharett might have accepted the need for a new policy toward the Maronites.

Vehement as Sharett's critique of Ben Gurion's scheme may have been, it was qualified in one important way. "I do not rule out," he wrote, the "transformation of Lebanon into a Christian state" altogether. "I do not rule out the possibility of this coming to pass in the wake of some series of shock waves that will strike the Middle East, cause radical reshuffles and hurl the ensuing patterns into a crucible so that other formations will emerge."¹⁰ The 1967 war clearly constituted such a shock wave. And the 1970 civil war in Jordan and the rise of the PLO brought further upheaval. These events hastened the process of disintegration in Lebanon and created what Sharett had described as a "crucible." But the Maronites were slow in rising to the challenge and Israel was rapidly faced with a dilemma of the first order. Sharett was probably right in stalling on Ben Gurion's scheme. Against the relatively calm background of Israeli-Lebanese relations in the 1950s it would have had an aggravating impact and could have led to the turmoil in Lebanon and to the clash with Syria that Sharett anticipated. But would Sharett have offered the same advice in the aftermath of the 1967 war? Since he died before this event such a question is unanswerable. At the same time, however, it can be stated categorically that while the turmoil in Lebanon in the wake of the 1967 war was not Israel's direct making, it confronted the Jewish state with hard choices which Sharett's advice fifteen years earlier could not and did not help solve. Sharett's successors in the post-1967 years—Levi Eshkol, Golda Meir, Itzhak Rabin, Menachem Begin, Itzhak Shamir, and Shimon Peres—could not fall back on his sage advice. They had to find their own solutions. This, to put it mildly, was not a simple task.

Israel, the PLO, and Lebanon: The Making of the Crisis

The main problem from the Israeli point of view stemmed from two sources. First, by the very nature of its objectives and internal structure, the PLO was inexorably impelled to be

hyperactive both militarily and politically. Second, while the Lebanese for the most part resented the use of their territory by the PLO, their government was structurally ill equipped for the task of curbing the PLO's activities, despite the damage they caused Lebanon.

The structural hyperactivism of the PLO stemmed from a variety of distinct but interlocking factors. The organization was originally launched by Egypt in 1964 as essentially an Egyptian subterfuge in the Arab cold war. President Nasser of Egypt sought to protect his declining status as leader of the Arab world while avoiding a head-on collision with Israel which, he feared, would lead to a catastrophe. He therefore adopted a pervasively ambiguous policy. On the one hand he vigorously championed the cause of Arab unity in general and Arab commitment to the liberation of Palestine in particular; on the other hand he maintained a tight control, in fact a monopoly, over the activities of Palestinian radicals. The result was a seemingly impressive organization with all the trappings of a "progressive" national liberation movement but with no real power to pursue a policy of its own.¹¹

Nasser's gamble backfired, however. His Palestinian organization gained some visibility but lacked from the outset any real legitimacy among the fledgling Palestinian national movement that was beginning to take shape in various centers of the Palestinian diaspora, especially in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and Kuwait. Moreover, Nasser's attempt to pursue an Egyptian interest through the manipulation of the Palestinian issue set an example for other Arab regimes, which soon proceeded to employ the same tactic for the purpose of challenging Egypt. Thus within months of the setting up of the Egyptian-sponsored PLO, a rival organization of a similar type was set up by Syria, called *Fateh* (a reversed Arab acronym standing for Palestinian Liberation Movement and implying "opening").

The PLO and the *Fateh* were not, however, identical. Whereas the former was based on corrupt, verbose, submissive, and ineffective Palestinian notables such as Ahmed Shukeiri, the latter drew on a new type of Palestinians; primarily professionals (doctors such as George Habash, engineers such as Yasser Arafat) who had been influenced by Marxist and third-world ideologies. They realized from the outset that their movement would have to be heavily dependent on the patronage of Arab regimes; but they were constantly in search of opportunities to evolve a significant degree of autonomy.

Such a disposition led to highly tumultuous relations between the *Fateh* and its Syrian sponsors, leading on occasion to friction and at one point in 1966 to the arrest and near execution of the entire *Fateh* leadership by their Syrian patrons.¹² At the same time Syria and the *Fateh* had during these early days (1965-67) a seemingly identical interest. The new Syrian Ba'ath regime that came into power in February 1966 sought to expose the vacuity of Nasser's dualist posture without running the risk of an all-out war with Israel. The *Fateh* leadership sought to build up some credentials as a guerrilla organization as a means of drawing world attention and of building an autonomous Palestinian constituency in the refugee camps of Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan and in the Palestinian communities in the Gulf. Therefore, the *Fateh* was anxious to launch small-scale attacks against Israel, and the Syrian regime was willing to help it carry them out.

The result was a small, but retrospectively significant, wave of Palestinian attacks against Israeli targets. Holding Syria responsible and assuming in fact that this was merely a vicarious form of a Syrian campaign against it, Israel reacted with a deliberately escalatory policy of reprisal. In turn the escalation along the Israeli-Syrian border was accelerated and ultimately led to the 1967 crisis.¹³

Thus in a sense the *Fateh* acted as a fuse to ignite the third Arab-Israeli general war. This was clearly perceived by the organization's leadership and seemed to offer a model for the post-1967 period. Indeed, although from the point of view of the Arab states, especially Egypt and Jordan, the 1967 war was a calamity of the first order, from the perspective of the *Fateh* the war was the single most important turning point. For one thing, the 1967 war made a mockery of Nasser's long-held contention that the only means to fight Israel would be a large-scale conventional war led by the Arab states. Nasser had argued in this vein throughout the pre-1967 period partly with a view to holding Syria and her radical cronies at bay through the argument that the Arabs were not ready for war. The *Fateh*, quoting the experience of the Algerian rebels against France (1954–1962) had challenged this Nasserist thesis and the 1967 defeat of the Arab states seemed at last to have confirmed the *Fateh*'s counterargument, namely, that the only way to deal with Israel was a Vietnam-type guerrilla war of national liberation.

Secondly, Israel's occupation of the West Bank seemed to have provided opportunities for the Palestinian National Movement in the practical sense. Suddenly Israel had under occupation more than a million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, in addition to some 500,000 Palestinians who had become Israeli citizens in the wake of the 1948 war. More than half of the Palestinians were thus for the first time not under Arab control but under the yoke of Zionist occupation. This, the *Fateh* hoped, created a genuinely revolutionary situation which, handled judiciously, could give the organization the same opportunity the Front Liberation Nationale had enjoyed under the French rule of Algeria.

Finally, the post-1967 situation gave the Palestinians a golden opportunity to develop their own autonomous identity. Yasser Arafat and his colleagues were quick to leave Syria where they previously chafed under the tight control of the Ba'ath regime. They moved to the West Bank and to Jordan and, as a result, escaped the embrace of both Egypt and Syria. If their popular liberation struggle were successful, they hoped, they would not only subject Israel to intolerable strains but also conquer a place for themselves in the Arab League, establish themselves as a recognized entity on the world stage, and ultimately ignite yet another all-out Israeli-Arab confrontation from which, they hoped, an independent Palestinian state would at last emerge.

The actual implementation of this design was a gigantic task and although it resulted in some spectacular successes, it led the Palestinians to some equally spectacular setbacks. The greatest success was achieved in consolidating for the Palestinian cause, and for the *Fateh* leadership, a significant place in the minds of their people and in affixing their cause firmly on the international agenda. Even as late as the spring of 1968 Yasser Arafat was still known to only a few Palestinians and to hardly anyone else except the intelligence communities in Israel, Jordan, Syria, and Egypt (where he was known as Abu Amar). Yet by the end of 1970 he was fast approaching the status of a world figure. In addition he succeeded in radically changing his movement from the organizational point of view. Egypt's stooge, Ahmed Shukeiri, was discredited and sacked early in 1968. For less than six months his position as chairman of the PLO was entrusted to Yhia Hammuda, an unknown lawyer from Ramallah. By August 1968, however, Arafat had succeeded in uniting his own *Fateh* organization with Hammuda's PLO and ultimately in taking Hammuda's place as chairman of the PLO (in addition to continuing as chairman of the *Fateh*, by now the main constituent organization of the PLO).

Arafat's rise was accompanied by a tremendous upsurge in the popularity of his cause among Palestinian grass roots. After nearly twenty years in which the Palestinians had been without recognized leadership (following the disgrace, decline, and death of Haj

Amin al Husseini), the dispersed, as well as the nonrefugee Palestinians of the West and East banks at last had a leader, a focal point of hope and pride. Consequently, Arafat's organization succeeded in vastly expanding its recruitment base and rapidly generated the image of a mass movement.¹⁴

But the symbolic rise of Arafat and the revamped PLO was accomplished despite the organization's spectacular failure in the battlefield rather than because of its success in this regard. Arafat's attempts to start an Algerian type of insurrection in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza, not to speak of the Arab-populated parts of Israel proper, never led to any real results. Israel responded to the early signs of this endeavor with skill and determination, and large segments of the West Bank population came to fear Israeli punishments more than PLO inducements. Within a few months the PLO lost whatever ground it initially held in the West Bank and had to rely instead on incursions across the Jordan River.

Israel reacted by blocking the Jordan Valley with fences, mines, and fortified lookouts which sealed access from the East Bank to the West Bank so effectively that 95 percent of the PLO raiders were caught or killed within several hours of crossing the Jordan River. Therefore the PLO had to resort to hit-and-run attacks against IDF positions along the river and to similar attacks against the Jewish population of the Beit Shean Valley. The IDF's responded with a scorched earth policy on the East Bank of the Jordan Valley. Jordanian irrigation projects were destroyed and the bulk of the Jordanian population of the area lost their homes and had to seek shelter in the vicinity of Jordan's main towns.¹⁵

The high price exacted from Jordan for allowing the PLO to use its territory as a sanctuary for operations against Israel and the progressive undermining of Hussein's authority by 10,000 to 15,000 armed PLO troops inside the Hashemite Kingdom soon led to an inexorable slide toward confrontation between the PLO and the Hashemite regime. The immediate cause of this confrontation, which finally took place in September 1970, was another rapidly developing facet of PLO operations—overseas terrorism and air piracy. Drawing its inspiration from a similar ploy by Cubans against civil aviation in the North American continent, the PLO based the idea of air piracy for political purposes on an impregnable, if deadly, logic. It required only a small cadre of dedicated personnel. It introduced significant strains in Israel's relations with Western Europe. It drew colossal world attention to the struggle of the Palestinians. It greatly assisted the PLO in projecting the necessary image to their chief constituency in the refugee camps. And, last but not least, it involved only a marginal risk since in most cases the hijackers would be turned over to one or another of the Arab countries which, anxious to protect their credentials as a champion of the Arab cause, would promptly release them without punishment.

Yasser Arafat and the *Fateh* benefited greatly from this campaign. But they tended to advocate discretion in its implementation and, in particular, a careful attempt to avoid friction with Arab regimes (such as Jordan) on whose tolerance the PLO was still excruciatingly dependent. But Arafat's nominal leadership of the PLO concealed the fact that he could run the organization only by consensus. In effect the PLO was in 1967–70—and has remained to date—a loose, voluntary confederation in which the militants (who are often in the service of one or another Arab government) basically call the shots.¹⁶ This structural weakness of the PLO was underlined in September 1970 when the Marxist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, headed by George Habash, staged a triple hijack operation which ended with the landing of the crowded jumbos on Jordanian territory. King Hussein's authority had thus been irrevocably challenged. The result was

a showdown between the Hashemite monarchy and the PLO leading to the total expulsion of the latter from Jordan.

Before this critical event the PLO had viewed Lebanon as a secondary base. Guerrilla operations against Israel during the period from 1967–1970 were merely 1.9 percent of the total Arab military effort against the common foe.¹⁷ Beirut was an important intellectual, publicity, and recruitment center for the PLO as well as a convenient hinterland from which to plan and carry out overseas and air piracy operations. But the real center had been Jordan. The PLO's expulsion from Jordan dramatically changed this situation. For if the PLO wished to protect its hard-won freedoms from Syrian and Egyptian control, Lebanon would become its last remaining haven in close proximity to Israel.

Having been jettisoned from Jordan, the PLO faced a dilemma that would haunt it throughout the coming years. If Lebanon was the last secure haven the PLO would have to be exceedingly careful not to lose it. This implied that the excesses that led to the debacle in Jordan would have to be avoided. The organization would not become as involved in Lebanon's complex domestic politics as it had in Jordan, and it would try to avoid such challenges to the Lebanese as had prompted Hussein, despite grave hesitations on his part, to clamp down on the Palestinians. Indirectly, this also implied a lower profile vis-à-vis Israel.

But this logic was difficult to follow for two principal reasons. First, the anarchically decentralized structure of the PLO meant that if George Habash, Naif Hawatmeh, Ahmed Jibril, or other leaders of PLO component organizations disagreed with Arafat's call for prudence and restraint, the latter would have a hard time stopping them from indulging in what he often considered to be imprudent excesses. If he tried to discipline them, the PLO could break apart and Arafat's claim to be the sole spokesman for the Palestinian cause would suffer greatly. Second, and perhaps of even greater importance, if the PLO were to become less active vis-à-vis Israel, be it along the border or in the air, it was bound to suffer a political eclipse. The spectacular rise of the PLO during 1967–70 was due primarily to its success in attracting world, Arab, and Palestinian attention to its existence and exploits. This success may have been gratifying to the Palestinians but it had not been sufficient to build for the PLO the kind of international status that would guarantee that no settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict would take place without them. Late in 1970 an Arab-Israeli peace still appeared remote. But Arafat must have watched with alarm events such as the Rogers peace initiatives, early signs that Nasser's successor, Anwar Sadat, was more inclined to accept a political settlement, and many signs of a tacit understanding between Israel and Jordan.

If the PLO were to refrain from any military campaign against Israel it would be likely to break apart as an organization while sinking into oblivion as a claimant for an independent state in Palestine. Therefore a continued campaign against Israel was an essential and rational imperative. Yet, and this was the crux of the PLO's dilemma, to follow this logic would mean an ever-growing danger of a replay of the PLO's disastrous experience in Jordan. Israel could be assumed to resort to massive reprisals. Lebanon would suffer and ultimately turn against its unwelcome Palestinian 'guests.'

No matter how clearly aware of this complexity Arafat may have been in the aftermath of his ouster from Jordan, in the final analysis he was evidently powerless to avoid a high visibility in Lebanon. Consequently his unenthusiastic Lebanese hosts were rapidly faced by a dilemma of their own. Like Jordan, Lebanon could neither sustain endless Israeli reprisals nor risk a breach with the Arab world as a result of a decisive move to curb the activities of the PLO. But Lebanon's problem was even greater than

Hussein's since, whereas the latter could—once he was resolved to do so—quell the PLO, Lebanon could not. Its armed forces, at least in nominal terms, should have been capable of performing what Hussein's had done. But the question of how to deal with the PLO became hopelessly entangled with the struggle inside Lebanon between a fragmented coalition of forces generally supporting the internal status quo and an equally heterogeneous coalition (of which the PLO became a part) of forces seeking to upset this delicate status quo. The deadlock neutralized the Lebanese army as a possible arbiter in the escalating tensions between the two coalitions. The Lebanese government thus became incapable of restraining the PLO.¹⁸ From the Israeli point of view, it was just as "responsible" as any other Arab government for acts of violence against Israelis and Jews emanating from its sovereign territory. In practice the Lebanese government lacked the ability to quell these acts.¹⁹

What was Israel to do under these circumstances? Theoretically the Israeli government could either submit to the PLO or resist it in one form or another. Submission is not a course of action that any government, Jewish or non-Jewish, Zionist or non-Zionist, moderate or immoderate, ever adopts voluntarily. In practice, then, Israel had to choose among various forms of resistance. These were, broadly speaking, three. Israel could have decided that only an all-out war designed to drive the PLO away from southern Lebanon would solve the problem. Alternatively, it could have opted for a purely defensive posture, namely, building such fortifications along the Lebanese border as would at least minimize the effect of the PLO attacks. Thirdly, Israel could opt for some form of action that would involve neither an all-out attack nor an entirely defensive posture.

An attempt to drive the PLO away from the Israeli border was evidently ruled out from the outset. Militarily it was, of course, a rather simple proposition. The PLO did not constitute a serious military force and the Lebanese Army was hardly present on the scene. It would therefore have taken less than one infantry brigade to accomplish such a mission in one day, probably with very few casualties. But, for political reasons, this alternative was not viable. Israel's victory in the 1967 war a year or two earlier was already causing a slow erosion of its credibility. Recalling how easily Israel had won the war, critics asked whether the Jewish state's fear of annihilation by the Arabs expressed on the eve of the war had not been merely a kind of deception. Secondly, as a result of the 1967 war Israel was already occupying the Sinai, the West Bank, and the Golan with their population of more than one million resentful Palestinians. To occupy south Lebanon in addition would simply make things worse. Thirdly, the PLO in Lebanon was an irritant not a real menace. It disrupted the daily life of the population in the Galilee, but in the late 1960s it did not appear really to threaten the basic security of the state. Against such a background Eshkol's government may have felt that if it were to occupy south Lebanon it would face a great deal of domestic criticism.

Nor was a purely defensive posture an acceptable proposition. Technically Israel could—and did—build a fence "system" as had been built in the Jordan Valley. To be sure, the hilly and green woodland along the Lebanese border made the task more difficult, but on the whole even this did not present insurmountable difficulties. The real shortcoming of this method was that it could not stop the PLO from opening fire on the Israeli civilian population near the border. In the Jordan Valley, with the exception of the Beit She'an area in the north, there was no Israeli population. The PLO was therefore forced to struggle with the IDF which was eminently capable of defending itself. But the Israeli-Lebanese border was strewn with villages, towns, and kibbutzim. The latter

consisted of a highly motivated and richly experienced population which could withstand the rigors of daily danger. But the rest of the Jewish population in the area consisted largely of new immigrants from North African countries whose motivation, experience, and social organization had made them exceedingly vulnerable to the pressures of the PLO.

A purely defensive posture vis-à-vis the PLO was, for this reason, almost as unthinkable as the immediate occupation of south Lebanon. Any defensive measures taken had to be supported by a policy that would increase the risk for the PLO, exact a high price from it, preoccupy it as much as possible with its own safety, and, above all, generate pressures against itself inside Lebanon. If the PLO could somehow become saddled with its own security concerns, if its moves were restricted by the Lebanese, if every PLO attempt to launch an attack against Israelis would have to take into account obstacles within its Lebanese sanctuary, then the defensive measures would become far more effective. Such a view, reminiscent of but not identical with the Israeli experience of the 1950s along the borders with Egypt and Jordan, led to the choice of a reprisal policy.

The government of Israel realized from the outset that Lebanon would find it difficult to curb the PLO through authoritative government action. Hence there was no escape from a policy that deliberately hurt segments of the Lebanese population. If life for the Lebanese population in the south became intolerable they would, or so Israel hoped, exert pressures on their government to restrict the PLO. In addition, if retributions were administered to Lebanese villages and towns from whose vicinity PLO operations were carried out, the incentives for this Lebanese population to acquiesce with the PLO and offer it a sanctuary would appreciably diminish. If, finally, Lebanese interests in the north, indeed, life in Beirut itself, were also threatened, those forces in Lebanon that were naturally hostile to the PLO would exert pressure on the Lebanese government to deal with the PLO and simultaneously, perhaps, take measures themselves for restricting the PLO in its military activities against Israel in the south and in its hijacking and overseas operations directed from PLO headquarters in the Lebanese capital.

This logic was brutal and incompatible with Israel's ethos and values but, in the existing circumstances, it was virtually inescapable. Just as the PLO could not afford to stop its operations against Israeli civilians, Israel could not afford to react passively. The pressure on the PLO to employ terrorism was existential in the most immediate sense. The pressure on Israel to inflict misery on the Lebanese was, perhaps, not to the same degree but it was nonetheless immense. In the language of the security dilemma neither side could afford accommodative behavior and both were inexorably, and rationally, impelled to act in a patently assertive manner.²⁰

Escalation, 1968–72

The first significant PLO attack from Lebanese territory occurred on June 14, 1968; ten two-inch shells landed suddenly on Kibbutz Manara west of the town of Kiryat Shemonah. On September 16, 1968, a civilian vehicle was ambushed near the village of Zar'it. In October the PLO stepped up its activity: on the 14th, 20th, 26th, and 28th there were attacks on Kefar Yuval, Kibbutz Malkiya, Kibbutz Dan, and Kibbutz Manara again. Two Israeli soldiers and two Israeli civilians were killed, and one Israeli tractor was destroyed. Following this activity Israel launched its first raid inside Lebanon. On

October 30 an IDF unit crossed the border and raided a *Fateh* encampment. The personnel in the base fled but the physical infrastructure was demolished. Meanwhile the PFLP had begun hijacking operations and attacks on Israeli installations overseas. On July 22, 1968, an El Al plane was hijacked to Algiers. On December 26, an Israeli plane was attacked while parked on the tarmac in Athens. The Israeli government met in a special session that day and authorized a raid on Beirut international airport. The explicit rationale of the raid was explained by Minister of Defense Dayan to the raiding party before its departure:

Our purpose in this action is to make clear to the Arabs of Lebanon that they should avoid the employment of Fateh against our civil aviation services. The plane which brought the Fateh people to Athens came from Lebanon. The terrorists trained in this state. If the Government of Lebanon allows the Fateh to train in its territory they must be punished. It must be clear that there cannot be a failure [in this operation]. The result of the operation must be such that the Lebanese (sic) will think twice before they carry out such operations against our planes.²¹

The implicit rationale of the raid on Beirut airport was more subtle. The raid was designed to destroy on the ground the carriers of all Arab airlines. Altogether thirteen planes, all belonging to the Middle East Airline (MEA) were destroyed. They had been the property of Lebanese, primarily Christians. The operation explicitly avoided any casualties so the message to the Lebanese was therefore clear. The IDF would not allow the Lebanese to avoid disciplinary measures against PLO. If Israeli civilian aviation were disrupted so would be the Lebanese civil aviation. Lebanon, and in particular its Christian population, depended on business, tourism, and banking. If nothing was done at once to stop the PLO these interests would be seriously hurt. The purpose, then, was to affect the political and strategic calculus of the Lebanese government through a direct pressure on business—its most sensitive “underbelly.” In addition, the actual landing right in the heart of Lebanon in the early hours of the evening was designed to expose Lebanon’s vulnerability. This, the Israelis hoped, would in itself generate domestic pressures on Lebanon’s government to act swiftly and decisively.

The attack caused an uproar in the West. Critics charged that Israel had committed an unforgivable violation of international law.²² But the segments of Lebanese population to whose attention the message was directed had no difficulty in reading the writing on the wall: at stake was the very existence of the Lebanese state. If it was incapable of maintaining a monopoly on the use of force within and from its territory, its very fabric as a polity would disintegrate and it would become little more than a battleground for foreign powers. Realizing this the President of Lebanon, Charles Helu, ordered the Commander in Chief of the Lebanese Army, General Emile Boustani, to put his troops into action with a view to containing the PLO. This order was opposed by the Moslem Prime Minister, Abdulla Yafi, and probably aroused resentment within the ranks as well. The Lebanese Army therefore moved halfheartedly to curb the Palestinians in the Beirut area. The result was sporadic fighting in Beirut during the week following the Israeli raid. Negotiations between the Lebanese authorities and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat followed, however, and led to an agreement on January 16, 1969.²³

While Lebanon attempted to come to grips with the issue of PLO operations, the latter continued its activity against Israel in the south. On December 31, 1969 the PLO employed for the first time a Soviet-made Katyusha rocket launcher against the town of Kiryat Shemonah. Two Israeli civilians died and one was seriously injured. Alarmed by the possible effect this would have on the morale of the population, Minister of Defense

Dayan visited Kiryat Shemonah at midnight, the same day. Such sensitivity to the impact on the less-motivated segments of the population can be traced back to the early 1950s: Ben Gurion would visit a village immediately after an attack and hastily order that the village receive greater financial support; Dayan, his disciple, acted in much the same way. In Kiryat Shemonah, immediately after the attack of December 31, 1969, Dayan not only studied firsthand the state of civil defense facilities but also visited the families that had suffered from the attack. He wrote in his diary:

I visited the homes of the Va'aknin and Abu Kasis families whose relatives died in the previous attack. The visit to one of the families was especially difficult. A home crowded with numerous children and problems. The furniture is poor and the misery shows on people's faces. The parents have another son who serves in the armoured corps, and he supports them from his small salary. We shall have to support them.²⁴

The Lebanon-PLO agreement of January 16, 1969, survived until August 1 of that year. Then the PLO attacked Kiryat Shemonah again with Katyusha rockets on two consecutive days. This action appears to have touched off a reappraisal of the policy in the Israeli cabinet and in the IDF general staff. They decided to escalate the retribution and, in particular, to move to the employment of air power. The Israeli Air Force (IAF) was sent into action for the first time on August 11. On September 4–5 another facet of the new policy became apparent when a large force of infantry attacked the village of Zehalta, demolished several houses, killed seven Palestinians, and took a prisoner. A month later a similar force attacked the southern approaches of Itrun and, the following night, also the village of Mazra' al Daharijat.²⁵

The new and far more assertive strategy quickly had an impact on the Lebanese scene. On August 28 fighting broke out between Lebanese and Palestinians in the Nahar al Bared refugee camp near Tripoli, in north Lebanon. By October tensions rose to such an extent that U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Joseph Sisco was prompted to publish a note of concern (on October 12). Less than a week later, on October 18, heavy fighting broke out between the Palestinians and Lebanese Army units throughout the south. Within a few days the hostilities spread to the Beqa'a Valley. On October 23 there were first signs of Syrian intervention in this area as *al Saiqa* units, ostensibly part of the PLO but in fact under the command of the military branch of the Syrian Ba'ath party, attacked Lebanese Army units in the border town of Masna'a. Simultaneously there was an attempt by PLO units to capture new positions in Moslem sections of Beirut and in Tripoli, where local Moslem organizations joined the PLO. With hostilities spreading to these places and with early signs of Syrian involvement, the Lebanese government evidently felt incapable of coping with the crisis and turned to President Nasser of Egypt for mediation. General Emile Boustany, Commander in Chief of the Lebanese Army, met Yasser Arafat in Cairo on October 25. After some discussion they signed an agreement which came to be known as the Cairo Accord.²⁶

Ostensibly the accord amounted to victory for the PLO and defeat for the Lebanese government and, as a result, was a failure from the Israeli point of view. For if the Israeli intention was to force the Lebanese government to clamp down on the PLO and bring an end to the violence along the border and overseas, the Cairo Accord merely legitimized the right of the PLO to maintain centers in Lebanon from which it would operate. No other Arab government had ever agreed to such an arrangement before—Lebanon could thus be said to have capitulated to the Palestinians. Yet, the agreement also included a provision constituting a mildly positive result from the Israeli point of view. According to the Cairo

Accord, the PLO would no longer operate against Israeli targets along the border from any place other than the easternmost corner of south Lebanon. This was not officially published but, nevertheless, it reached the media. Consequently Israel was 'told' by the Lebanese where to concentrate its retaliatory attacks. The unsubtle hint was that although the Lebanese were unable to discipline the PLO, they would not at all mind if Israel did so in that area, which for the next several months came to be known in Israel as "Fatehland."

Given this hidden dimension, the Cairo Accord could not survive for very long. The PLO, for reasons mentioned above, could not afford to cease its operations. Israel, for its part, could not afford to sit back and avoid reprisals. If the PLO, in order to avoid a two-front war (with Israel on the one hand and with Lebanon on the other), were to abide by the Cairo Accord, it would lay itself open to massive Israeli retributions. In fact this is exactly what happened. The PLO directed its activities against Israeli targets in the Galilee "finger," the area due south of Fatehland. The IDF proceeded to pave a road inside Lebanon's territory on Har Dov, a mountain overlooking the PLO positions. As a result it did not take long before the PLO had no choice but to escalate horizontally, resuming operations against Israel along a wide front stretching from the Fatehland to the Mediterranean. By May 1970 the Israeli government had come to the conclusion that the PLO intended "a kind of an all-out attack." The IDF's response was a sustained counterattack. It combined "shooting in drips and drops" with "massive barrages," large-scale infantry raids with serial bombardments, patrols with search-and-destroy missions. In spite of these offensive maneuvers, the ultimate result was far from successful from the Israeli point of view. The PLO, according to Dayan, continued to operate despite the reprisals, and in Israel's northern villages there were signs of "a worrying phenomenon—people were beginning to leave their homes, especially in Kiryat Shemonah."²⁷

Dayan pressed the government to review the entire policy again. The discussion on this issue took place on May 11, 1970 and led to a substantial increase in appropriations for defensive measures such as shelters, peripheral lighting equipment, and fences as well as to a decision to increase official attention on this population and to make a special effort to expand investment in local industries. Simultaneously the government also decided to move one rung up the escalation ladder. The following day, May 12, 1970, the IDF launched yet a larger attack on the Fatehland. An armored column moved into the Lebanese villages of Rashaya al Fukhar, Shuba, and Hammam. It blew up some fifty houses and a great number of PLO depots, captured large quantities of arms, left some thirty dead PLO combatants, and took six prisoners. The Lebanese Army that attempted to assist the PLO lost six armored vehicles. Most important, Syria, which so far had refrained from involvement in the PLO-Israel struggle, decided to intervene. It sent MIG fighters and lost three of them in the dogfights that ensued.

Although it involved a significant move up the escalation ladder, this show of force once again proved insufficient. The PLO continued its attacks, the IDF turned such armored raids into an almost daily routine, and the Israeli population along the border became even more restive. Under these circumstances Israel began to consider the possibility of a permanent occupation of parts of southern Lebanon. On January 14, 1972, Lebanon was warned that if the attacks did not cease forthwith the IDF would move into Lebanese territory. This ultimatum brought the Lebanese government to a new crisis that was only temporarily resolved as a result of a voluntary consent of the PLO to cease operations for two months. In practice the agreement survived for only forty days. On February 23, 1972, the PLO resumed its operations. Israel further escalated its

reprisals by inflicting on both the PLO and the Lebanese simultaneous attacks on land, from sea, and from the air. Forty-seven Palestinians and Lebanese lost their lives. Lebanon's reaction was, again, two-pronged. On the one hand it submitted a complaint against Israel to the UN Security Council. On the other hand it deployed forces in the south as a buffer between the PLO and the Israeli border. This was evidently too little and too late. The fighting continued to escalate.²⁸

The Rise of the PLO and Israel's Security Dilemma

The rapid transformation of Lebanon's south into a battleground caused a massive flight of the Lebanese population. In Israel, meanwhile, there were signs of growing demoralization; but direct government and IDF action prevented the trickle of departures from Kiryat Shemonah and other towns from turning into a stampede. The IDF did far greater damage in Lebanon than the PLO did on the Israeli side of the border. Moreover, the PLO was not particularly popular with the local Christian and Shi'ite Moslem population, on whom it had imposed itself. The Lebanese south reacted to the violence differently than did the Israeli north because the south was neglected by the politicians of Beirut. In essence, the same factors underlying Lebanon's disintegration and its inability to stand up to the PLO also undermined the perseverance of the population of the south. Shaken, intimidated, and unable to continue to till their fields and attend to their small shops they left en masse, joining the burgeoning population in the shantytowns of West Beirut. The Shi'ite population of southern Lebanon lacked political impact on Lebanon's national agenda. In the course of the period under discussion there was an attempt by Irani-educated Imam Musa Sadr to galvanize this politically amorphous mass into a constituency capable of exerting major influence on the national scene. Whether or not Sadr ultimately would have succeeded in this endeavor remains a moot point; he himself was kidnapped in mysterious circumstances and apparently assassinated. But, uprooted from their lands and stranded in the maddening combination of abject poverty and dazzling wealth, devout religious piety and utter secular debauchery, and, above all, unparalleled violence, this same amorphous political mass quickly became an erupting volcano of frustration. They were idle, hungry, and confused. They were therefore vulnerable to radical ideologies, natural partners (during the early 1970's) of the Palestinian refugees and of their frustrated Lebanese Druze allies. The result was a further erosion of the delicate social balance that had previously permitted the Lebanese system to survive intact.

The first implications of this congestion in the Beirut area emerged in the wake of the Israeli attack on PLO headquarters on April 10, 1973. Landing by night on a Beirut beach, an Israeli commando unit met seven Israeli secret agents who had arrived with European passports and rented cars. The party quickly drove to four different Beirut neighborhoods and attacked PLO offices and personnel. Among the casualties were three top officials of the PLO, the organization's spokesman, Kamal Nasser, and two operational officers, Abu Yusuf Najjar and Kamal 'Aadwan.²⁹

Spectacular as the operation may have been, it actually failed in its overall purpose. Israel had been unable either to dissuade the PLO from carrying on its campaign or to force the Lebanese to discipline the PLO. As Dayan put it with characteristic candor, the IDF's most daring operations "shook the Lebanese but failed in bringing them to removing the terrorists from their country. In practice a double form of coexistence

emerged. The coexistence of the terrorist organizations with the Lebanese people, and a coexistence of the State of Israel with the State of Lebanon with both its parts—its original population which lives in peace with Israel, and its terrorists who make war against her.”³⁰

Such a failure was among the main reasons for Israel’s decision to engage in counterterrorism involving personal assassinations and a worldwide war of nerves.³¹ Yet, with this particular operation in Beirut, the Israeli government unwittingly caused an upheaval that hastened Lebanon’s slide toward civil war and, as a result, a respite in Israel’s deadly exchange with the PLO. One day after the April 10, 1973, raid, Lebanon’s Prime Minister, Sa’eb Slam, resigned his post in protest against the Commander in Chief of the Lebanon Army, Christian General Iskander Ghanem, who, the Sunni Moslem premier argued, tacitly collaborated with the Israelis. On the same day the funerals of those killed turned into riots. A state of emergency was declared by the Lebanese authorities but the upheavals, which were largely organized by the anti-status quo Lebanese National Movement (LNM), continued uninterrupted into May. At this stage the army, under the command of General Ghanem, made its last serious attempt to control the situation. On May 3, as fighting spread into the camps around Beirut, the Lebanese Air Force intervened. Its planes attempted to silence artillery and rocket fire from Burj al Barajneh camp near the international airport. In addition the army laid siege to a number of the camps. This act was defended by Christian President Franjiyeh and, evidently, by the bulk of the Christian community. But it met immediate Syrian opposition. As a means of forcing the Lebanese Army to abandon the siege, Syria closed its border with Lebanon and thus cut it off from its economic hinterland. The Lebanese Army yielded.³²

The May 1973 confrontation hastened the consolidation of a coalition of Druzes, Shi’ites, and Palestinians. To the various Christian communities in Lebanon this coalition raised the specter of what one astute observer called “coptification,” that is, their reduction in Lebanon to the status of religiously tolerated but politically insignificant minority (like the Copts in Egypt).³³ Moved by such fears they drew closer together within a loose umbrella they called the Lebanese Front, led by four formidable patriarchs, Pierre Gemayel, Camille Chamoun, Suleiman Franjiyeh, and Father Sharbel Kassis each of whom was the leader of a private militia. Gemayel headed the 15,000-strong Ketaeb (Phalange); Chamoun led the 3,000-strong *al Ahrar* (“Tiger”) militia; Franjiyeh and Kassis each formed a private army of some 1,500 armed men. Perceiving themselves as the ultimate guardians of Lebanon’s traditional order, these forces now intensified their training, recruitment, and logistical preparations for what increasingly seemed like an inevitable showdown. In turn their adversaries, especially the Palestinians and the Druzes, also stepped up their preparations. Polarization increased and with it the likelihood of an all-out encounter.³⁴

The countdown toward civil war in Lebanon confronted the PLO with the difficult decision of whether to take part in the internal Lebanese struggle or to attempt to maintain at least a semblance of neutrality. Mainstream opinion (especially Yasser Arafat’s *Fateh*) recalled the organization’s fate in Jordan, whence it had been expelled in September 1970, and argued for neutrality. The radicals drew an opposite conclusion. If the PLO had joined forces with the anti-status quo social forces it might not have lost in the 1970 civil war. Thus, in Lebanon, the PLO should have joined forces with the anti-status quo elements, the PLO radicals argued, as a means of securing for itself a freedom of action from Lebanese territory. If it failed to do so, these radicals warned, the conservative status quo

coalition, namely, the Lebanese Front, might win the intra-Lebanese struggle and then proceed to restrict the PLO within the territory of Lebanon.

Within the PLO, those supporting neutrality had the upper hand. The implication was that the PLO should be more guarded in its operations against Israel. But the voluntary nature of the PLO meant, in fact, that Yasser Arafat and the *Fateh* could not prevent the radicals from carrying on the struggle against Israel. The upshot was continuation of the tension along Israel's border but also a certain decline during 1973–75 in the frequency (though not the ferocity) of PLO attacks against the Galilee.³⁵

This tendency had also been reinforced by the 1973 war and its aftermath. The war presented the PLO with new opportunities but also new dilemmas. By hijacking a train of Jewish emigrants from the Soviet Union en route to Vienna, two weeks before the Yom Kippur War the PLO unwittingly assisted Egypt and Syria in preparing their surprise attack. During the hostilities the organization sent a small contingent to fight along with the Egyptian forces. It also launched a number of rocket attacks against Israeli villages and towns along the Lebanese border and attempted to organize a general strike in the West Bank and Gaza.³⁶ But, by and large, PLO endeavors in the 1973 war were put entirely in the shadow of the massive Egyptian-Syrian military operation. In fact the entire thesis of the PLO according to which a guerrilla type of armed struggle was the only way to deal with Israel was resoundingly refuted by the Yom Kippur War, with its emphasis on a massive struggle between vast conventional forces.

Moreover, following the 1973 war the PLO faced a critical choice. Sadat seemed determined to lead the Arab world toward some reconciliation with Israel within the framework of the Geneva Conference. This meant that the PLO would have to endorse the conference without being a party to it, or, alternatively, demand to participate in an all-Arab delegation to the conference, or, indeed, confront the Egyptian-led block of Arab nations that supported the idea of gradual détente with Israel. In the final analysis this PLO dilemma was resolved by Israel, Egypt, and the United States. Israel and the United States in particular basically held that the Geneva Conference, in which the Soviets and all Arab states would participate, was bound to lead to renewed diplomatic stalemate. The three governments therefore doubled their efforts to ease tensions between Israel and its neighbors through a bilateral, step-by-step approach. The PLO was thus saved from one dilemma only to confront another. Bilateral Israeli-Egyptian and Israeli-Syrian negotiations with U.S. backing left the PLO out in the cold. If successful, such negotiations could be expanded to include Jordan, too, in which case an overall settlement excluding the PLO might gradually emerge.³⁷ The radical elements in the PLO such as the Marxist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP) and the Popular Front General Command (PFGC), were driven by this prospect to a renewed military activity against Israel along the Lebanese border. Its purpose was to elicit Israeli retaliations which might undermine the peace process. The Palestinian attacks on a school in Kiryat Shemonah on April 11, 1974, and on another school at Ma'alot on May 15, 1974, are particularly dramatic examples of such action. They were followed, predictably, by Israeli counterstrikes.³⁸ Egypt and Syria were nevertheless not dissuaded from continuing the negotiations. Indeed, within a year both countries signed "interim" agreements with Israel which, to the PLO's chagrin, contributed significantly to the stabilization of the situation.

What saved the PLO from a hopeless confrontation with the bulk of the Arab world at this juncture was the Israeli refusal to extend the negotiations with Egypt and Syria to Jordan, too. Despite Kissinger's pressures, Prime Minister Rabin had been committed to

“go to the country” before any settlement involving the future of the West Bank. If he were to respond to Kissinger’s pleas and negotiate a limited “interim” agreement with Jordan, his government would fall and general elections would have to be held. Rabin therefore declined to deal with Jordan, giving the PLO a golden opportunity to cash in on its rising international status, overcome the opposition of Egypt and Jordan, and gain recognition at the Rabat Conference of the Arab League, on October 29, 1974, as the sole legitimate spokesman for the Palestinian cause.³⁹

This important milestone in the history of the PLO gave it the boost it needed to gain the international prominence for which it had been struggling ever since 1967. The weight of the Arab bloc in the wider Islamic Conference, especially at a moment when Arab oil power was at its all-time peak, ensured that this large group of nations would endorse the PLO as well. The Islamic Conference, in turn, was large enough to sway opinion in favor of the PLO in the nonaligned bloc, too. This guaranteed the unequivocal support of both the Soviet and the Chinese, along with their European clients. Faced with such a conglomeration of forces, the Western European nations could no longer refuse to pay official attention to the PLO. And against this background the PLO had no problem in obtaining the recognition of the United Nations, at least in the status of an “observer.”⁴⁰

When Yassar Arafat appeared before the UN General Assembly in November 1974, he was already the seemingly unchallenged leader of the entire Palestinian movement. This success had both advantages and disadvantages. The main drawback was that Arafat would have to assume the statesmanlike mantle of responsibility, namely, to reduce substantially the PLO’s military activities in Lebanon and elsewhere, except for the occupied territories. To achieve that he would have to prevail on his militant critics within the PLO. This new posture suited his inclination to avoid significant involvement in the intra-Lebanese conflict, but it risked a bitter, even violent struggle within the organization. The main advantage of this great international success was that it made him personally, and the *Fateh* more generally, far more powerful within the PLO. This, it seems, was reflected by the fact that when Arafat’s critics in the PLO resigned from the Executive Committee and formed the “Rejection Front,” they refrained from resorting to force against *Fateh* as a means of vetoing Arafat’s moves.⁴¹

By the end of 1974, then, it was no longer as essential as it had been that the PLO resort to attacks against Israeli civilians for the purpose of attracting world attention. From the Israeli point of view this offered a short-term advantage but it also entailed the beginning of a long-term problem of a different magnitude. The shift in PLO emphasis from border attacks and hijackings to diplomacy reduced somewhat the pressure on Israel. The rampant escalation in military operations that had been typical from 1968 to 1973 abated somewhat. The seemingly inevitable grinding toward a point at which Israel might have no option but to seize the south of Lebanon slowed considerably. The policy of limited reprisals had gained, so to speak, a new lease on life. Yet, the meteoric rise of the PLO to international prominence seemed to herald the arrival of a far greater menace.

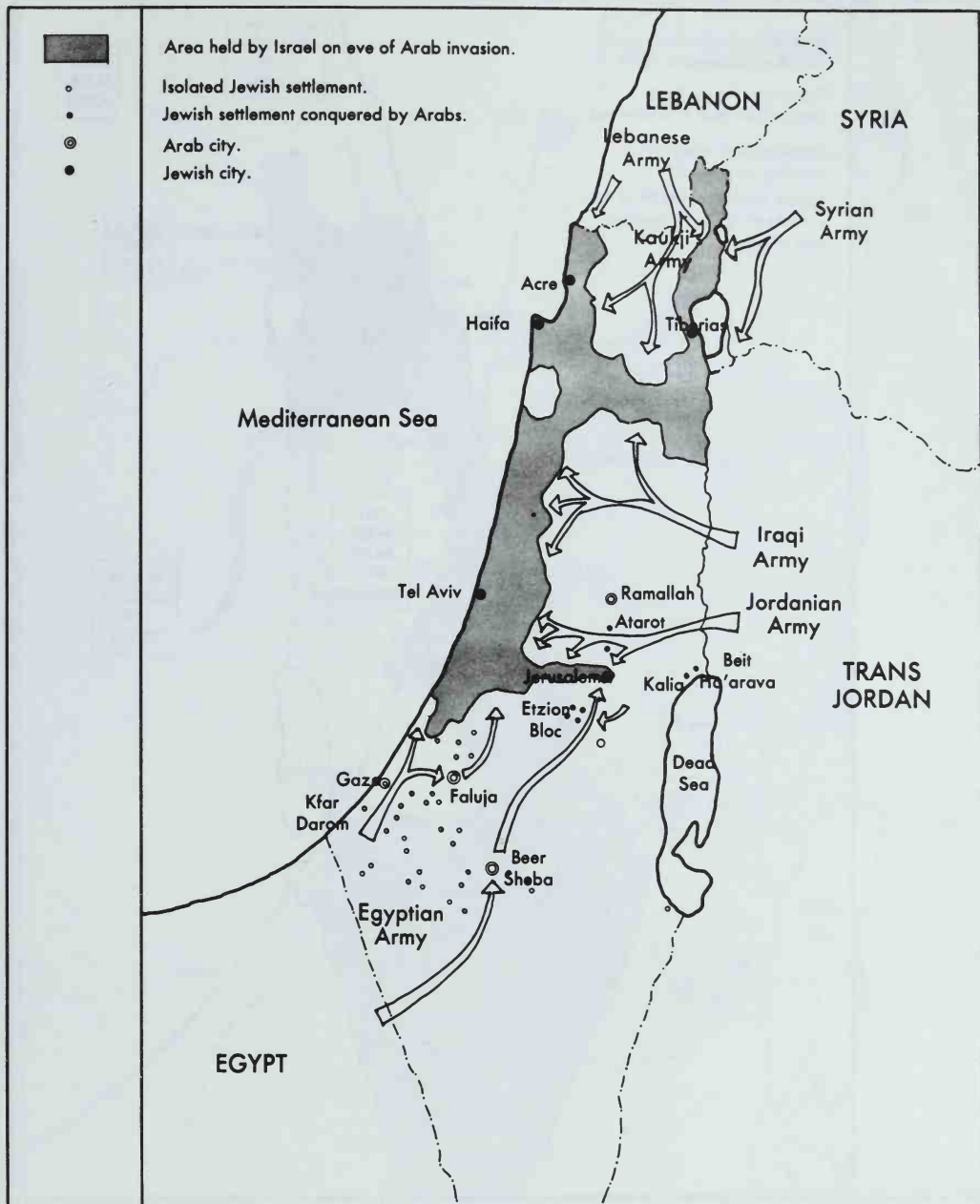
As long as the PLO enjoyed the rather equivocal support of only the Arabs and their Soviet and nonaligned friends it posed no political menace. The main problem was military in the narrow sense of what the Israelis call “current security.”⁴² The increasing support for the PLO in western Europe and even in the United States, however, could have presented Israel with a major political challenge. If Europe and the United States were to adopt the PLO thesis that the Palestinian issue could not be solved without the establishment of a Palestinian state, and that the only legitimate spokesman for the Palestinian cause was the PLO, Israel could have found itself under intolerable pressure

to deal with the PLO; specifically, to accept the principle that the PLO should be allowed to form an independent state on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip.

Ideologically such a proposition would have been totally unacceptable to a growing segment of the Israeli population that espoused, with increasing vehemence, the cause of a "Greater Israel" that included the West Bank, the Golan, Gaza, and parts of the Sinai.⁴³ But neither the Meir nor the Rabin governments were really preoccupied with this type of Zionist Fundamentalism, they were primarily concerned with security. The West Bank and the Gaza Strip were perceived as large strategic salients which a foreign army—like the Arab Legion and the Iraqi Army in 1948 and the Jordanian and Egyptian armies in 1967—could use for the purpose of attempting to cut Israel in two at her fifteen-kilometer wide waistline between the West Bank and the Mediterranean.⁴⁴ An independent Palestinian state would naturally claim the right to possess its own armed forces and/or to allow the armed forces of neighboring states to be stationed on her territory.⁴⁵ Moreover, from such a state Israel could be subject to terrorist attacks such as it had experienced from Jordan in the 1950s and from Lebanon in the 1970s. Last, but not least, a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza could become a nationalist rallying point for the nearly 600,000 Israeli Arab citizens, without, however, solving the festering problem of the million or so Palestinian refugees living in camps in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and other parts of the Arab world. Hence, regardless of the ideological leanings of such a state and even if it were to come under the control of a reformed PLO which accepted coexistence with a sovereign Zionist state, such a state could face Israel with grave risks.

To be sure, a Palestinian state on the West Bank was not bound to become a menace. The risk it represented was a matter of conjecture and probability, not of deterministic certainty. The problem Israel confronted as a result of the political ascendance of the PLO was made, in this sense, of the very stuff of which security dilemmas (in the classical formulation) are normally made. It was probable that an accommodative Israeli response would pacify the PLO and lead to conflict resolution from which Palestinians, Israelis, most other Arabs, Europeans, Americans, and possibly even the Soviets clearly stood to gain. But if Israel acted accommodatively and a similar response was not elicited from the PLO, accepting a PLO-controlled state on the West Bank could in the long run threaten the very existence of Israel. That most Israelis would act on the assumption that the probability of a failure of accommodation with the Palestinians was greater than the probability of success is not surprising. Given such a choice, the security dilemma construct predicts an overwhelming preference for assertion rather than accommodation. And in this regard the Israeli response, namely, attempting to prevent the creation of a Palestinian state, was not a blind ideological fixation but a standard and universal posture predicated on perfectly rational considerations.

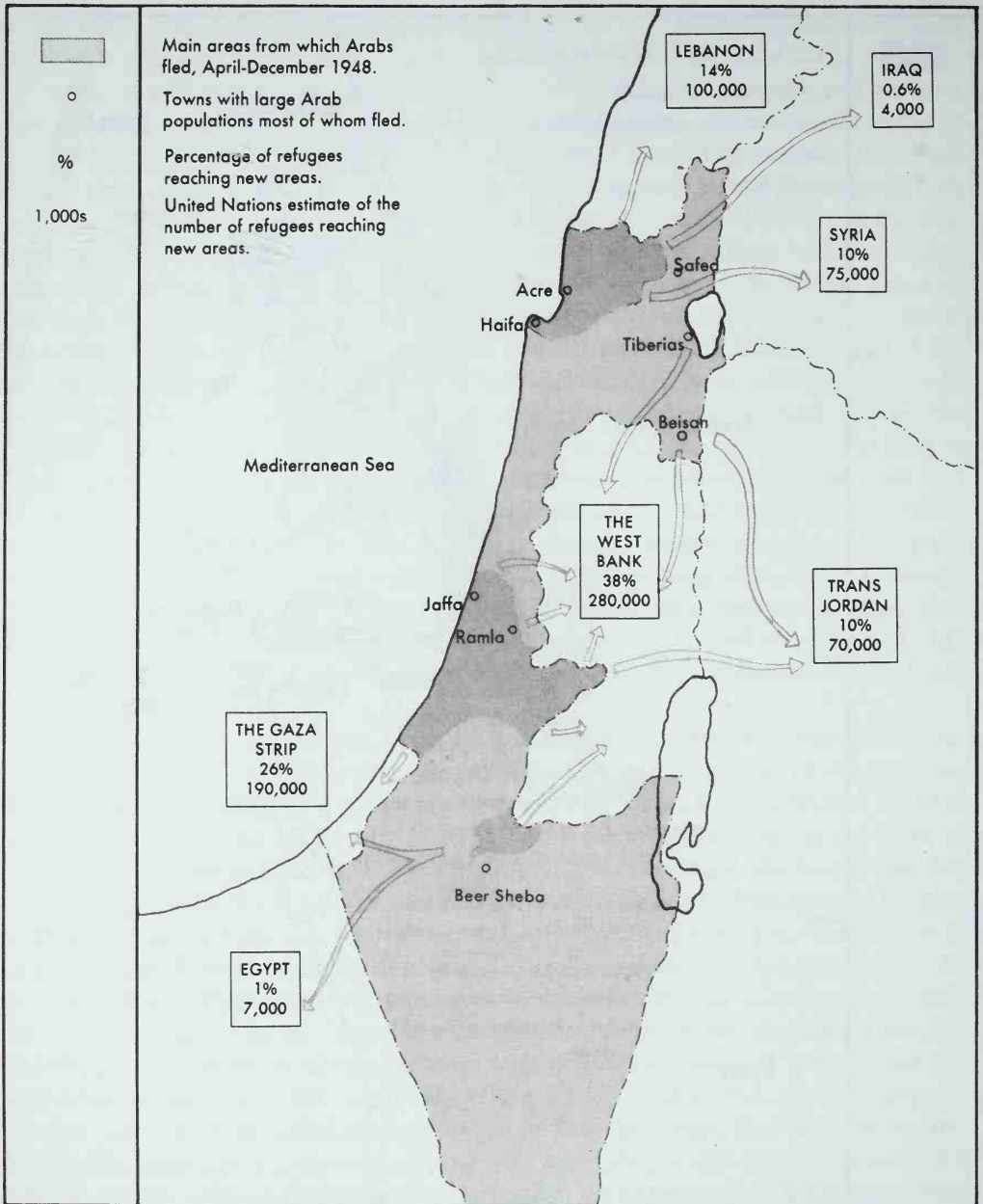
This view, which all Israeli cabinets since 1967 have endorsed without reservation, led to very clear operational implications. Israel could not officially admit the existence of a genuine Palestinian nation or the legitimate nature of the PLO itself. For if Palestinian rights and/or the PLO were officially acknowledged by Israel, a continued refusal to negotiate with the PLO would become untenable. But what could be the subject of such negotiations with the PLO concerning the future of the West Bank and Gaza. As Prime Minister Itzhak Rabin, a typical pragmatist with a noted penchant for cool strategic analysis, pointed out in 1975, if Israel agreed to negotiate "with any Palestinian element" it would provide "a basis for the possibility of creating a third state between Israel and Jordan." But Israel, he emphasized, would never accept such a state. "I repeat firmly,



The Arab Invasion, 1948

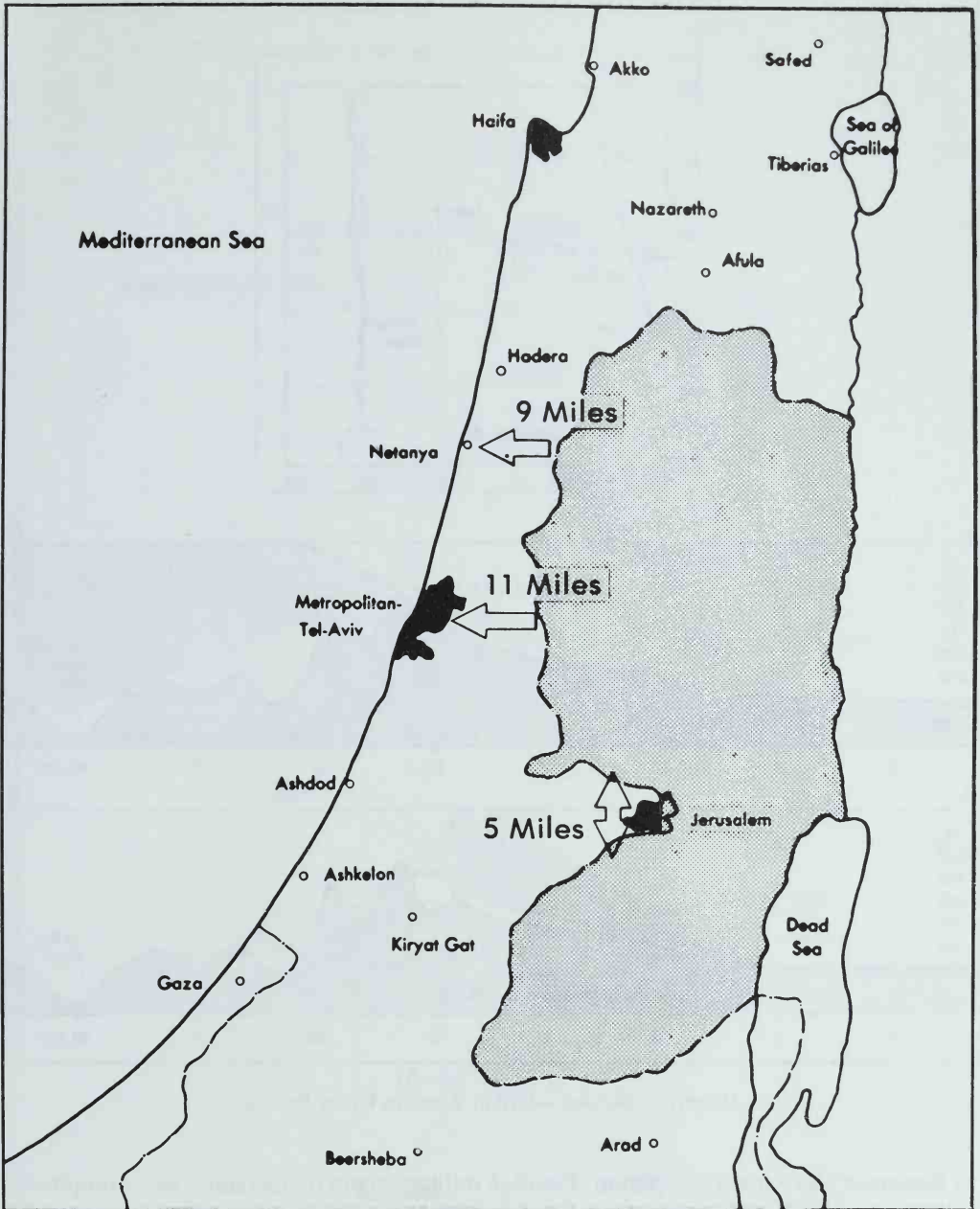
clearly, categorically,” the Israeli prime minister concluded, such a state “will not be created.”⁴⁶

To be sure, there were some highly placed Israelis who disputed the wisdom of this approach. They included not only well-known leaders of the Israeli left, such as Uri Avneri, Yossi Sarid, and General (ret.) Mati Peled, but also dovish members of the Labor mainstream such as Minister of Health Victor Shemtov and Minister of Information General (ret.) Aharon Yariv. Rabin’s government, however, declined to endorse these views and continued to adhere to the utter rejection of a Palestinian state.⁴⁷



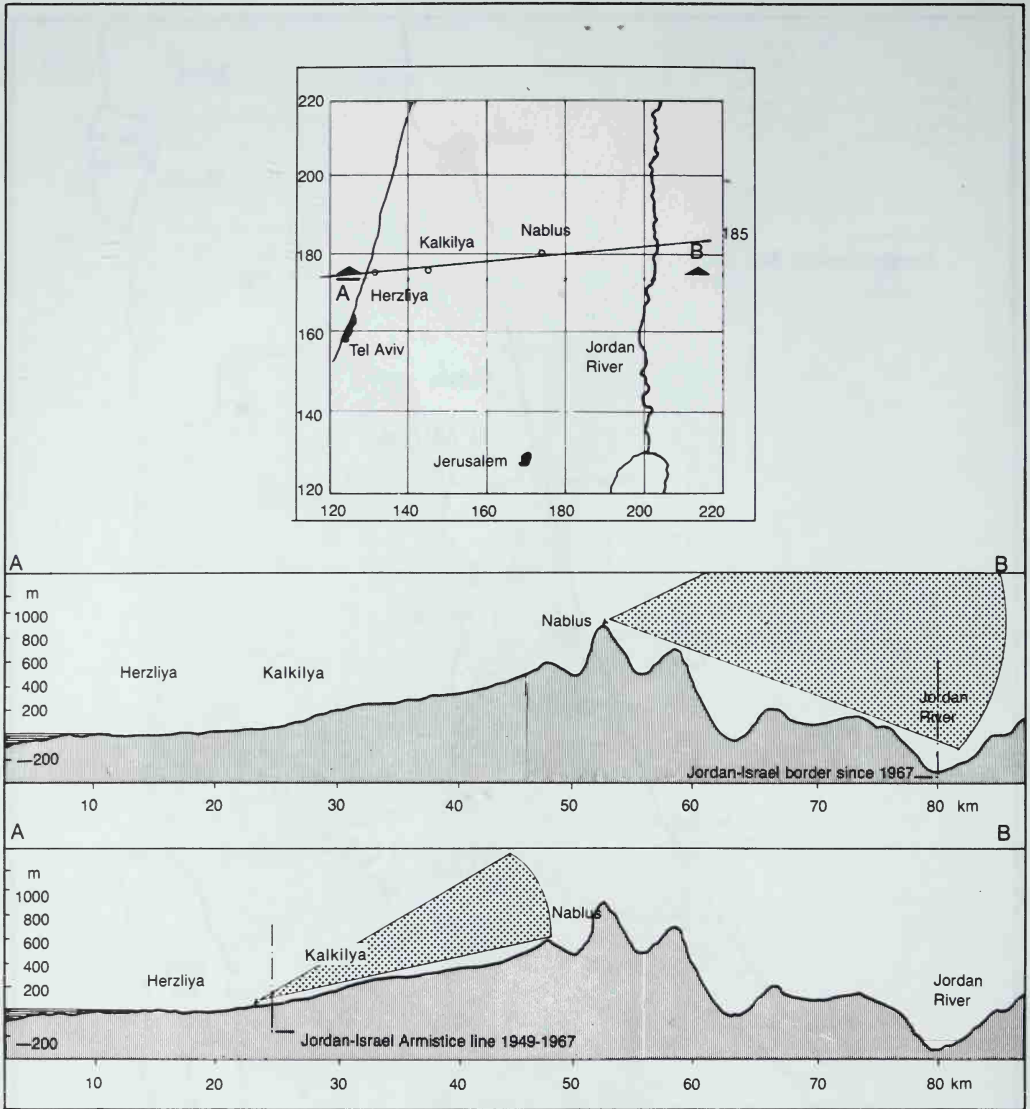
The Arab Refugees, 1948

This fundamentally strategic approach to the question of the PLO also had military and diplomatic implications. Given its rise to international political stardom, a moderate—political rather than terrorist—PLO, which previously would have been preferred, could become far more dangerous than the violent PLO of the previous years. With such a moderate posture the PLO could be far more successful in making significant inroads into European and American public opinion, gradually changing government policy in these traditional strongholds of support for Israel. The joint declaration of the European community on November 6, 1973, which referred to “the legitimate rights of the



The West Bank

Palestinians,” and similar advocacies in the United States during 1974–75, seemed portents of things to come. If this trend were to continue it could lock Israel in a bitter conflict with its most important allies. Hence, military action against the PLO could perhaps be employed not only for military ends but also for the purpose of weakening PLO moderates and strengthening their radical rivals. A deadlock between Yasser Arafat and his militant critics could be quite enough to saddle the PLO with a common platform which, owing to its denial of Israel’s right to exist, would never make the PLO palatable

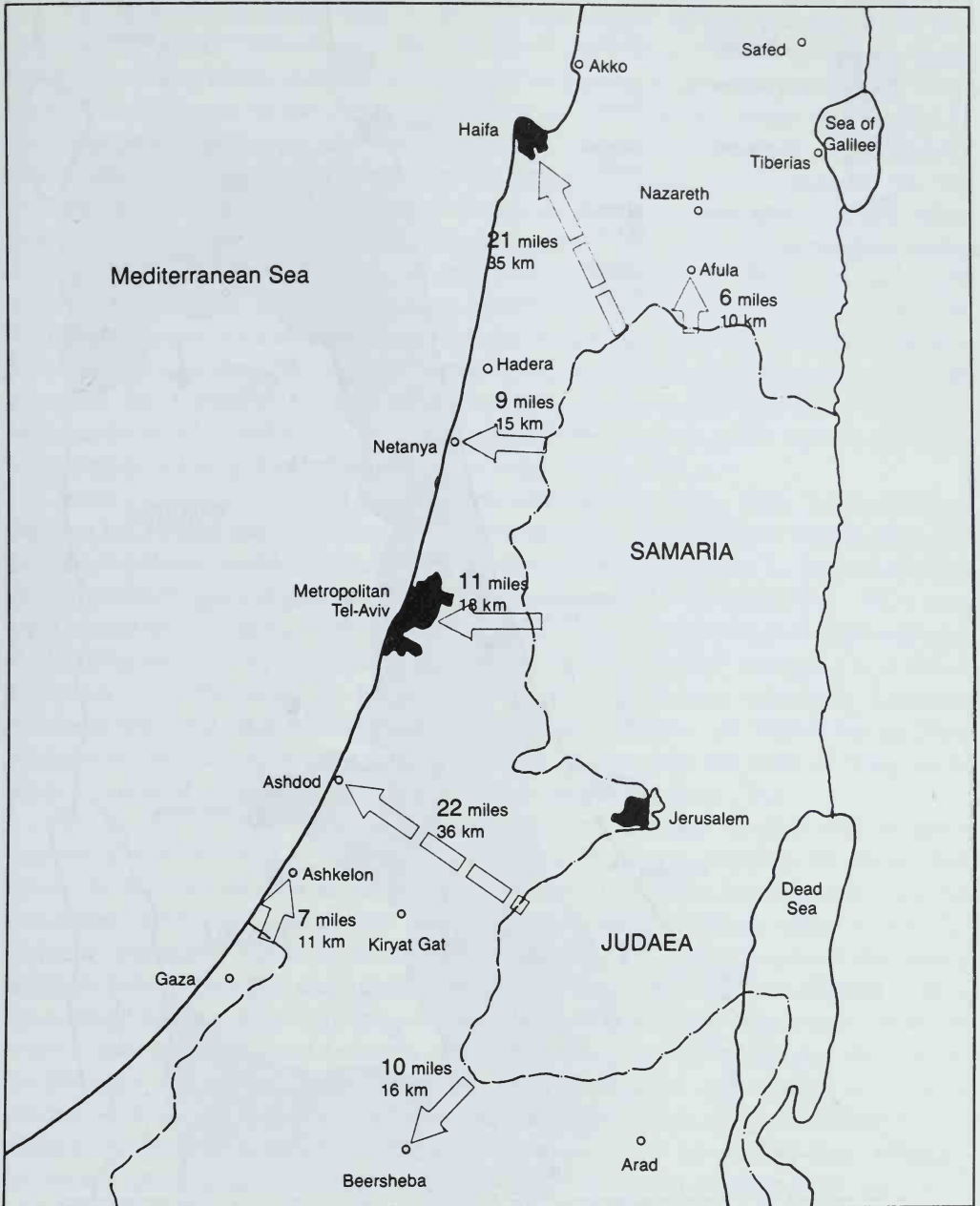


Herzliya—Nablus—Jordan River in Cross Section

to European and American opinion. Punitive military action deliberately out of proportion to damage done by PLO attacks would most likely weaken Arafat, while strengthening Habash, Jibril, Hawatmeh, Khalaf, Mohsein, and their radical supporters. As it turned out such a policy also hastened the process that ultimately led to the civil war in Lebanon. In turn, Israel's security dilemma was further aggravated.

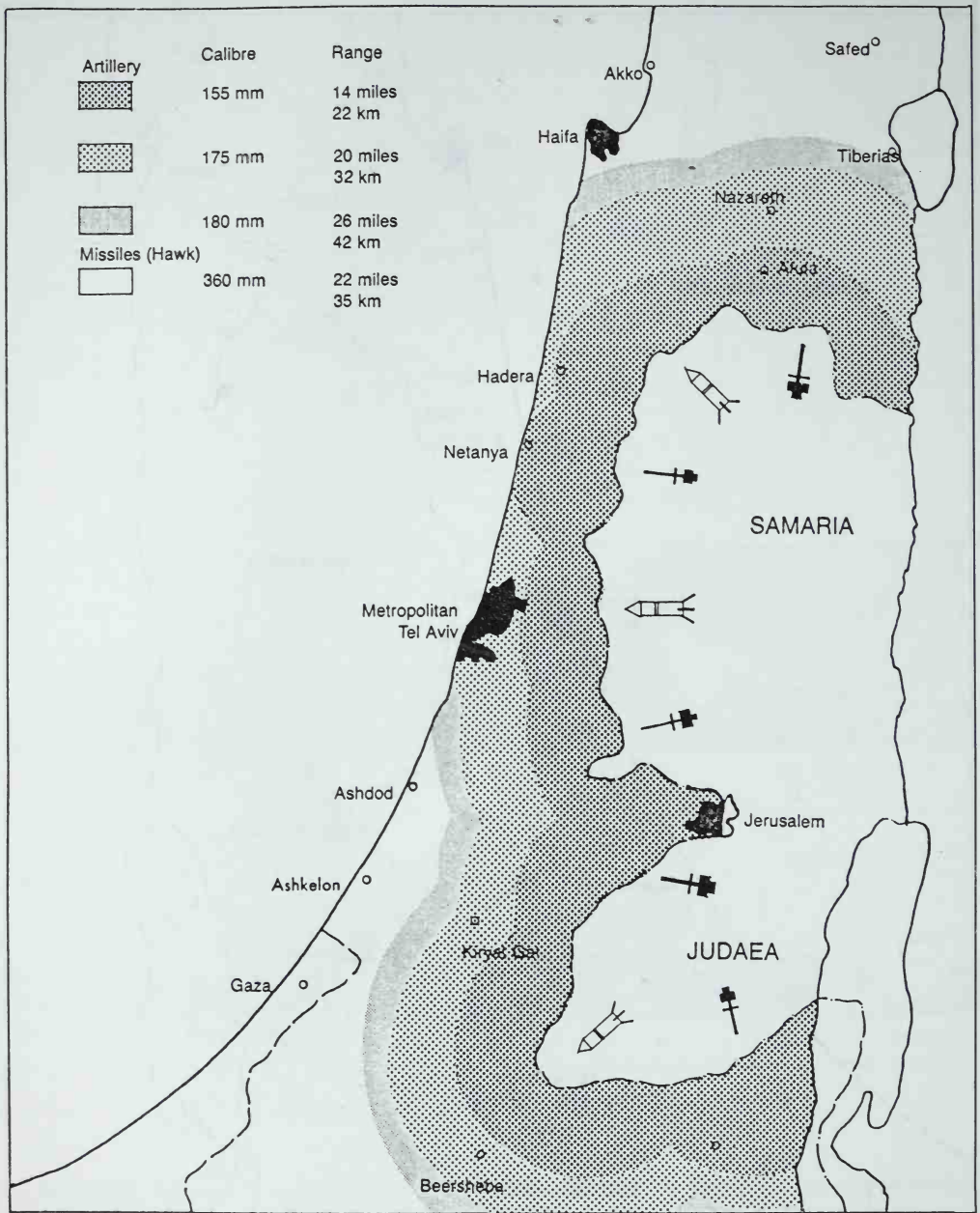
Israeli Policy During the Lebanon Civil War, 1975–77

Looking back at the events of the civil war in Lebanon, Walid Khalidi, a leading (Palestinian) proponent of the anti-Zionist Perspective, drew the conclusion that the war had been political "manna to the Israelis" and that Israel had "actively hoped that . . .



Distances from the West Bank to Israeli Centers

[its] strategy would reinforce the trend towards Maronite separatism (i.e., partition) or create such a state of chaos that several options would be open . . . [to it] from which to choose at leisure."⁴⁸ Drawing its inspiration from the typical assumption of a long-term Israeli master plan, such an interpretation seems to confuse cause and effect. Initially Israel did benefit from the civil war among the Lebanese, but in the long term the upheavals in the neighboring country presented the Israelis with a series of difficult choices they would have gladly avoided. Indeed, rather than viewing the war as a golden



Missile and Artillery Ranges

opportunity, Israeli policy makers reacted to its events uneasily and merely attempted to cut Israel's losses. The overall thrust of their policy reveals an instinctive tendency to view the issue in terms of the security dilemma, namely, as a sequence of hard choices between accommodation and assertion. Specific decisions, however, were made on an ad hoc and pervasively incremental basis. Some of these decisions seemed at the time to have been prudent, as the security dilemma construct predicts, however, the sum total was negative. It amounted to a deep entanglement in the Lebanese quagmire from which Israel gained very little if, indeed, anything at all.

The civil war has been variously divided into phases. Some argue that it fell into three distinct parts.⁴⁹ Others have observed four⁵⁰ and even six⁵¹ different phases. From the point of view of this discussion the details of this tragic story are not central. What matters is the nature of the specific challenges to which Israeli policy makers had to respond. These were essentially two, namely, the Christian call for help and the Syrian intervention. Israel reportedly confronted a Lebanese Christian call for help for the first time shortly after the beginning of the civil war (in September or October 1975⁵²), when Danny Chamoun, son of Lebanon's former president and leader of the Tiger militia, approached the Israeli government through Mossad contacts in Europe with an urgent request for assistance. It was followed six months later by requests for help from parts of the Lebanese population close to Israel's border. A third and far more problematic request for assistance took shape in the early months of 1976, at which time the mainly Christian forces of the Lebanese Front found themselves retreating in the face of a mainly Moslem-Druze-PLO offensive. At this juncture Syria began to intervene directly, thus presenting Israel with the second major challenge of the civil war.

Israel's initial response to the civil war was rather passive. Since intercommunal violence in Lebanon had been frequent in previous years, it could not be foreseen that this time the hostilities would continue for more than a couple of weeks. As the war dragged on and gradually expanded in scope, the Israeli government at first tended to view it with relief: at last the Christians might be heading toward the showdown that could contain the PLO. To be sure, during the initial six months of fighting the PLO attempted to preserve its neutrality. In this sense the Israeli hope that the organization would take a beating remained frustrated. But events in the environment of Beirut and Tripoli caused PLO attention to gravitate away from Israel's border. Consequently the north of Israel could enjoy a period of tranquility such as it had not experienced since 1968.

By the fall of 1975, however, Israeli satisfaction began to give way to some concern. If at first it had seemed that the Lebanese Front was winning, this trend soon forced the PLO to abandon its neutrality. Once the PLO joined the Lebanese National Movement (LNM) anti-status quo coalition, the balance of forces tilted against the Maronite dominated Lebanese Front. By the end of 1975 it seemed as if the latter's ability to hold its own was dwindling. At this point both Israel and Syria seemed to have encountered paradoxically a comparable problem. A defeat for the Lebanese Front would result in the radicalization of Lebanon's overall posture. The radical Sunnis, the Druzes, the Shi'ites, and the Palestinians would probably develop a new pattern of regional alliances with a view to enhancing their independence vis-à-vis Syria, turning to Syria's rivals in the Arab world such as Iraq, Egypt or even Libya. Moreover, their continued supremacy inside Lebanon would remain dependent on an alliance with the PLO. Lebanon would then become an even safer sanctuary for PLO activities than it had been before.

Realizing this, Syria attempted to enforce a satisfactory degree of internal balance among the rival Lebanese camps. If Syria did not move, Israel would in all probability intervene, at least in the south of Lebanon, in order to safeguard its own interests there. The fact that Israel did not hasten to make such a move was due to a still-persisting reluctance to take such an onerous step. There was no constituency in Israel for incorporating south Lebanon into the Jewish state, and adverse Western reactions to such a move could be taken for granted. The issue was perceived in strategic terms, and from that point of view avoiding entry into Lebanon was preferable unless either the PLO or the Syrians were to attempt to establish themselves in the south of the country. Israel, in

short, assumed a minimalist posture of denial and not an ambitious posture of expansion.⁵³

This is not to say that Israel had no interest in the south. Repeated statements by members of Rabin's cabinet made plain that there was a fundamental Israeli interest in restoring the tranquillity that had prevailed in south Lebanon from 1949 to 1967. In effect Israel sought to turn the south of Lebanon into a buffer, a *cordon sanitaire* that would somehow insulate the Jewish state from the turmoil of Lebanon and that, beyond anything else, would prevent the PLO from resuming its operations against the Galilee.⁵⁴ From this point of view the massive return late in 1975 of Shi'ite and Christian southern Lebanese who had earlier fled from the south to the Beirut area seemed to offer a neat solution. They were not hostile to Israel. They had originally left the south in the course of 1968–73 because the tug-of-war between Israel and the PLO in the area made their lives miserable. Now the same thing was happening in the Beirut area where the civil war was raging. The south became tranquil again. It was therefore only natural that they would flee from the north back to their homes in the south.⁵⁵

Conditions in the south soon turned this migration into a prelude to a new chapter in the relations with Israel. The collapse of Lebanon as a state manifested itself in the complete destruction of all services. Schools ceased to function. Food began to be in short supply. Employment became scarce. Medical services, to the extent that they had existed before in the relatively backward south, collapsed. Under these circumstances southern Lebanese began to turn for help to their Israeli neighbors across the border. Minister of Defense Shimon Peres immediately responded with a new idea. The border fences should be opened. Assistance to these people should be offered. This would create a modicum of cooperation which could rapidly transform the atmosphere in the whole area. In time such an enterprise could endow Israel with a sphere of influence in south Lebanon covering the area the PLO had previously exploited for its operations against the Galilee. A visionary of sorts by natural inclination, Peres developed an ambitious plan in which such a zone of cooperation in Lebanon's south could gradually be stretched northward, thereby establishing an ever-expanding zone of peace far beyond the security belt Israel sought to create along its border.⁵⁶

The enterprise of the Good Fence—as it came to be known—was little more than an incremental reaction to a fluid situation. It was not even a policy in the full sense of the term. Peres believed in it and received a general mandate from his colleagues in the cabinet to pursue it according to his best judgment. Rather than reflecting the implementation of a detailed ideological blueprint, it was presumably nurtured by an emerging concept of a settlement regime between Israel and its neighbors which would be based, as in the Sinai following the Sinai II Accords, on surrounding Israel with a belt of demilitarized zones. Israel would then have a strategic depth outside its sovereign territory and, simultaneously, would be able to ensure its population against the nightmare of frequent terrorist attacks. The demilitarized zones would decrease the danger of a surprise attack without entangling Israel in additional occupied territories.

In practice, the Good Fence policy fell far short of Peres's hopes. When the initial excitement faded, the fence on the border with Lebanon became "good" in only three small and noncontiguous areas. Other parts remained hostile and would be soon reoccupied by the PLO. Meanwhile Israel faced a far greater problem as a result of the course of events in Lebanon's north. The tilting of the balance in the civil war in favor of the anti-status quo coalition as soon as the PLO decided to join the latter forced the Syrians to rethink their policy, too. The common wisdom is that Syria had always waited

for an opportunity to seize Lebanon. This theme, greatly favored by supporters of the Lebanese Front, bases itself on Syria's historic objection to the very creation of Lebanon by France. It also drew inspiration from a tendency of Assad's *Ba'ath* regime to articulate its statements concerning Syrian interest in Lebanon in the language of Syria's historic claim for Lebanon, which emphasizes, in President Assad's words, the "historical indivisibility" of the two countries and the argument that "the Lebanese people can never be separated from their Arab body . . . [namely] the nearest and principal part of this body—Syria."⁵⁷

Yet those observers who choose to emphasize this aspect overlook an emphatic denial by the Syrian ruler of any immediate claim for direct control over Lebanon. To emphasize the fact that Syria and Lebanon do not conduct their relations through diplomatic legations, President Assad pointed out in a 1984 interview with *Le Monde*, is "to belittle [Syria's] relations with Lebanon by identifying them with a specific office and a small number of officials. Lebanon is an independent sovereign state. But this does not mean that . . . [Lebanon and Syria do not constitute] one people."⁵⁸

If such words can seem to be devious and self-serving doubletalk, the pattern of Syria's invasion of Lebanon in the course of the civil war endows them with a great deal of credibility. Syria at first attempted to mediate between the warring parties. Failing, it deployed (in September 1975) and subsequently employed its own client Palestinian forces such as Zoheir Mohsein's *al Saiqa* and units of the Palestinian Liberation Army (PLA). Both forces were ostensibly part of the PLO but in fact were arms of the Syrian *Ba'ath* and the Syrian army, respectively. They were unleashed against the forces of the anti-status quo LNM and PLO coalition when the latter, riding the wave of what seemed an imminent victory, proved unwilling to cooperate with Syria's mediation efforts. When this measure appeared insufficient, Syria deployed (on January 19, 1976) the Yarmouk Brigade of the PLA. Two months later it moved into Lebanon regular Syrian commandos masquerading as PLO units.⁵⁹

Syrian caution was inspired by at least three factors: reluctance to become too involved in the intricacies of Lebanon, which the Syrians were well placed to fully appreciate; sensitivity to criticism in the Arab world; and uncertainty about Israel's reaction. Which of these three considerations weighed most heavily is impossible to say, but it can be assumed that Syria did not take lightly Israel's repeated warnings, dating back to the 1950s and reiterated in 1975–76, not to feel free to enter Lebanon.⁶⁰ Israel had traditionally presented this principle as something amounting to a *casus belli*.⁶¹ Five years earlier when Assad's predecessor, Salah Jdid, sent an armored column of the Syrian Army into Jordan to help the PLO during the civil war there, Israel and the United States made threatening noises which caused the Syrians to retreat. Assad took advantage of this defeat by removing Jdid from office. He could not have forgotten the incident.⁶²

This time, however, both the United States and Israel adopted a different approach. It took more than six months of civil war in Lebanon before the United States began to take a stance. Moreover, it seems that from the outset the United States was favorably disposed to the idea of a Syrian effort to stabilize the Lebanese scene. This idea was signaled to the Syrians and clearly conveyed to the Israelis.⁶³ Israel, despite its stern warnings to Syria, did not move any faster or more resolutely. From the Israeli point of view the proposition that Syria should enter Lebanon was instinctively unacceptable for fear that such a move would subsequently turn Lebanon into another confrontation theater between the Jewish state and Syria. The conclusion of the Sinai II Accord with Egypt in September of the previous year signaled to Arabs and Israelis that Egypt was heading

toward a separate peace with Israel. The Israeli government naturally hoped this would materialize since it would change the entire balance of Arab-Israeli relations. Prime Minister Rabin even permitted this hope to be stated in public.⁶⁴ But this possibility was as threatening and unwelcome from the Syrian point of view as it was gratifying from the standpoint of Israel. In an attempt to stop the Egyptians, or at least to cut their own losses, the Syrians moved to form what came to be known in Israel as the "banana front," a crescent shaped war coalition on Israel's eastern and northern flanks consisting of Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and of course Syria itself as the pivot of the alliance.⁶⁵ From the Israeli point of view, then, if Syria succeeded in establishing itself firmly in Lebanon, the danger from the banana front would be significantly increased.

But the alternative to a Syrian entry into Lebanon appeared even worse. Either Israel itself would have to send large contingents of the IDF deep into Lebanon—which no Israeli leader was yet prepared to countenance—or the Lebanese Front would have to succumb to Syrian pressures. If the latter scenario materialized, Lebanon could rapidly become a radical confrontation state in which the PLO would figure as the main pillar of the regime. Preventing this from happening loomed very large in the considerations of the Israeli cabinet. As Prime Minister Rabin put it, "Israel is concerned that Lebanon should continue to be what it has been, with the present political formula and internal regime."⁶⁶ Seen in this way the idea of Syrian entry into Lebanon began to appear increasingly acceptable. For one thing, Rabin and his colleagues rationalized that if Syrian forces were bogged down in the Lebanese quagmire Syria's ability to engage Israel in a war would be reduced because the Syrian forces of the Golan would be weakened. Secondly, the Rabin cabinet expected that a Syrian involvement in Lebanon would cost so much that Assad would have to seek aid from Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf countries. Consequently, Syria would become more dependent on these pro-American moderate states which might help in reducing its own militancy and ultimately, perhaps, draw her out of the Soviet orbit. Finally, the Rabin cabinet anticipated that a protracted presence in Lebanon would have a corrupting and weakening effect on the Syrian army.⁶⁷

Against such a background the willingness of the United States to offer its good offices as an intermediary between Syria and Israel was appreciated by both governments. Syria, which had led the "rejectionist" opposition to President Sadat's peace policy, would not deal with Israel directly. Israel would have liked to deal with Syria directly but, owing to Syria's refusal, had to accept an indirect approach. The U.S. government sent a special envoy, Ambassador L. Dean Brown, to set up indirect negotiations in March and April 1976, and ultimately an understanding was reached to Syria's and Israel's mutual satisfaction.⁶⁸

An official Israeli definition of the terms of this secret understanding was never published, but a number of statements of Israeli policy makers revealed its scope and emphases. According to Yigal Allon, the foreign minister, the 'red line' which Syria should not cross encompassed a combination of several factors, such as the depth of the Syrian advance and the size of the Arab force to be sent to Lebanon. The 'red line' further included factors such as the length of stay of foreign troops in Lebanon and the new reorganization of the PLO after a ceasefire had been achieved.⁶⁹

Shimon Peres, Minister of Defense at the time of the agreement, added to this definition also that first "the Syrians must not cross an imaginary line on the map . . . [and] second that they must not act against us from the air; and third that they must not use missiles against our planes."⁷⁰ Differently stated, under the 'red line' agreement Syria was permitted to send large forces into Lebanon in order to force a cessation of hostilities

on the warring Lebanese factions. But Syria agreed to avoid stationing SAM missiles on Lebanese territory, to allow Israel open skies above Lebanon's territory, to respect the rights of the Lebanese Front (arrayed beyond the "imaginary line on the map"), and to refrain from deploying troops south of a line stretching from the Zaharani estuary on the Mediterranean to the village of Mashki in the Beqa'a Valley. Israel, on the other hand, was apparently allowed a "free hand" in Lebanon's south below the Zaharani-Kafr Mashki red line.⁷¹

Shortly after the agreement was reached, two events of far-reaching importance took place. Syria prepared to send her armed forces into Lebanon, and Israel moved to establish contacts with the Lebanese Front. The Syrian move took place six weeks after the agreement with Israel. A force of some 30,000 Syrian troops entered Lebanon and proceeded to discipline the PLO and their Lebanese allies in the Beqa'a Valley, in the Zogharta region around Tripoli, in the southern part of the Shouf mountains around Jezin, and in the cities of Beirut, Sidon, and Tyre. To everyone's surprise it took this formidable Syrian force far longer to stabilize Lebanon than could have been expected, given the vast disparity in power between Syria and the PLO-LNM coalition. But by the end of 1976, Syria had succeeded in restoring order throughout Lebanon.⁷²

From the Israeli point of view the fact that Syria was vigorously fighting PLO forces and was having difficulties in Lebanon were, to say the least, gratifying. Still reeling from the impact of the 1973 war, concerned about a breathing space in which to rebuild the IDF, suffering a major economic crisis, and, above all, wanting to maintain the momentum of the negotiations with Egypt, Israel could not but relish the sight. In addition Israel was relieved to see the PLO suffer defeat at the hands of its (supposedly) greatest champions, the Syrians. PLO forces regrouped in the north of Lebanon, leaving the south in tranquility. Israel had time to organize its own Lebanese militia, under renegade Major Saad Haddad, which would be able to prevent, or at least make more difficult, a PLO return to Israel's northern border. Finally, the blow to the PLO in Lebanon could, the Israelis hoped, check the march of the organization toward international respectability. In particular it would undermine the PLO's claim to represent not only the aspirations of the Palestinians but also the wishes of the entire Arab world. In the Rabat Conference two years earlier, Egypt and Jordan had been isolated in their opposition to the investiture of the PLO as a legitimate spokesman for the Palestinians. Now Syria was in fact joining the anti-PLO front within the Arab world and, needless to say, with devastating consequences for Yasser Arafat and his Beirut establishment.

While gratified by all this, however, the Rabin government was not carried away. The red line between Kafr Mashki and the Zaharani estuary created in south Lebanon a dangerous no-man's-land which the PLO could easily exploit. As Rabin was quick to note, Israel's enemies could find "shelter under the Israeli umbrella" which deters the Syrians

because the Syrians were prevented from moving south of the Red Line, southern Lebanon became a haven for the terrorists. We had foreseen such an eventuality and preferred it to Syrian military control of the area bordering our territory. . . . Israel could not tolerate having Syrian troops stationed along two of her borders [the Golan and the Galilee]. PLO terrorists, Israel's sworn foes, found asylum under the Israeli "deterrent umbrella" intended against the Syrians.⁷³

Beyond this unpleasant choice of Syrian presence on Israel's northern border or a PLO sanctuary there, the Rabin government was fully aware of the longer term results of

the Syrian entry into Lebanon. Within the narrow context of the civil war in Lebanon, Syria was, for its own reasons, very helpful from the Israeli point of view. But in the long run it remained Israel's most determined and most dangerous foe. Sooner or later it would stabilize the situation in Lebanon and then turn to its own longer-term interests. The Syrian alliance with the Lebanese Front was, like other alliances in the Arab world that Israel had watched come and go,⁷⁴ rather tenuous. While tacitly cooperating with Syria, the Israelis needed to build into the Lebanese equation additional checks against Syria which would buttress the fragile agreement between the latter and the Jewish state. Moreover, the Rabin government's position at home was relatively weak and its policy vis-à-vis Syria exposed them to considerable—though at the time invisible—pressures. Thus, not long after the Syrian invasion of Lebanon, a Likud deputation headed by Menachem Begin, then leader of the opposition, called on Prime Minister Rabin. Begin and his Likud colleagues urged Rabin to go to war with Syria in order to expel Syrian forces from Lebanon. Having failed to convince Rabin, the Likud raised the issue again in a much more formal manner during a meeting of the Knesset Foreign Relations and Security Committee.

Faced by such formidable pressure but not at all convinced of their arguments, Rabin resorted to a Begin type of response in order to counter Begin: "I do not want to have to meet," he said with an atypical (and hence presumably tactical) emotional pitch, "one mother whose son fell in Lebanon in a war that is not our concern."⁷⁵ But whatever he said to Begin, Rabin was undoubtedly concerned about the long-term implications of the Syrian entry into Lebanon with Israel's (that is Rabin's own) permission. And it was with such a perception in mind that Rabin's government set out, as soon as the Dean Brown mission was successfully concluded, to establish a firmer liaison with the Lebanese Front.

The idea that the Lebanese Front should turn to Israel for help had been discussed for the first time as soon as the civil war broke out. Particularly keen to do so were the Chamounites. The old man, Camille Chamoun, had been president of Lebanon during the crisis of 1958 and had then received small quantities of arms from Israel. His son Danny apparently advocated or even attempted an approach to the Israelis in the fall of 1975. The fact that nothing of consequence came out of this move was due more to Israel's reluctance than to the unwillingness of Chamoun's people. But there was serious opposition to the scheme also among the Christian Lebanese themselves. Particularly opposed to the idea was Pierre Gemayel, the godfather of the Phalange. Gemayel may have been latently anti-semitic but beyond this he feared in 1976, as he had in 1948–52, that a Christian-Israeli link would burn the bridges between the Lebanese and the Arab world. What finally caused him to change his mind was, clearly, the shadow of Syria. As long as Syria had not sent its forces into Lebanon, its less direct involvement in Lebanon's internal affairs was still considered tolerable. But the growing Syrian military involvement inside Lebanon and the fact that Israel too seemed to have agreed to the entry of Syrian forces created a new situation altogether. If the Lebanese Front could not find a powerful patron, capable and willing to act as a countervailing force against Syria, it would sooner or later lose its autonomous existence. Once Syria entered, Gemayel believed, it would never depart of its own free will. Hence, a secret liaison with Israel appeared increasingly palatable.⁷⁶

This change in Gemayel's definition of the situation was paralleled by a similar process in the Israeli government. Like Ben Gurion in the 1950s, Yigal Allon and Defense Minister Shimon Peres had for many years advocated the pursuit of regional alliances with non-Arab states such as Turkey, Iran, and Ethiopia, and with non-Arab or non-Moslem

Middle Eastern minorities such as the Kurds, the Druzes, and the Christians. Peres's Good Fence scheme was partly perceived by him in these terms. Yigal Allon had felt since the 1950s that Israel should attempt to unite the Druzes in Jebel Druz in Syria, in the Golan, and in the Shouf Mountains in Lebanon, to help them form a state of their own, and to enter into an alliance with them. This, he hoped, would lead to the disintegration of a large and militantly anti-Israeli Syria, or, at the very least, create a Druze buffer between Syria and Israel.⁷⁷ During the civil war in Lebanon, Allon and reportedly others returned to the idea with specific reference to Lebanon. Israel, it was argued, should seize the opportunity to form contacts with Lebanon's various minority groups. At one stage Allon urged Itzhak Hofi, head of the Mossad, to send Major General (ret.) Dan Laner as a permanent military adviser to the LF, and even proposed to go into Lebanon in person (he spoke Arabic very well with a local, colloquial accent) in order to lay the ground for the expansion of relations with them.⁷⁸

Prime Minister Rabin also occasionally invoked Israel's vocation as the guardian of Middle East minorities. He even did so with specific references to Lebanon in the course of discussions held during his visit to the United States on January 26, 1976, with President Ford and Secretary of State Kissinger as well as with senators, congressmen, reporters, and Jewish leaders. "I emphasized," he later recalled, "that Israel should not overlook the lesson of the [civil] war in Lebanon; the Moslems do not tolerate minorities in their midst, even if they are part of their own nation but belong to a different religious denomination. I called attention to the horrendous cruelties which the Moslems perpetrate against Christian children and old people."⁷⁹

Nevertheless, Rabin was initially far less keen to support the Christians in the north of Lebanon than was Allon. Cautious by nature, careful not to overtax Israel's resources, mesmerized by his negotiations with the United States, and, above all, preoccupied with the peace process with Egypt, he seems to have been skeptical about his colleagues' ideas. His opinion changed, however, as a result of his own agreement with the Syrians during March–April 1976. Like Pierre Gemayel he realized that stability in Lebanon could not be restored without Syrian intervention. Yet, also like Gemayel, he was concerned about the long-term implications of such an intervention. The upshot was a gradual convergence between the Israeli government and the leadership of the Phalange and, of course, the Chamounites. Both sides in fact sought the same thing: the formation of a force capable of at least containing Syria inside Lebanon and ultimately perhaps even of easing its presence out of Lebanon altogether.

From March through July 1976, both sides confined themselves to careful initial appraisal. The Phalange sent an emissary to Israel and the Israeli government reciprocated by sending its own two emissaries. In August, six weeks after the entry into Lebanon of a Syrian armored brigade, Prime Minister Rabin met Camille Chamoun. The latter inquired whether Israel would intervene in the civil war. Rabin reportedly evaded the question by inquiring whether the Lebanese Front would request an Israeli intervention. Following this meeting Rabin and other prominent Israelis met, for the first time, the real force in the Lebanese Front, namely, Pierre Gemayel and his sons, Amin and Bashir.

According to available accounts the Israelis were, on the whole, quite unimpressed by what they saw. Their Lebanese hosts were slick, divided, disorganized, wasteful, boastful, and somewhat untrustworthy. They did not strike most of the Israelis as capable of forming a serious and responsible military force which could really hold the Syrians at bay. Therefore the thrust of Israel's policy at this stage remained limited. Israel would supply the Lebanese Front with foodstuffs, fuel, ammunition, and weapons for which the

Lebanese offered to pay in full. The IDF would undertake to help the Lebanese help themselves by training Lebanese personnel who would be transported for that purpose into Israeli territory (to avoid a direct Israeli involvement in the actual fighting on Lebanese soil). But the Lebanese wanted more than that. They tried, according to one report, "to persuade the Israelis that they would benefit from sending the IDF across the border and, in coordination with . . . [them] impose a 'new order' in the turbulent Land of the Cedars." But Rabin's government would not commit itself, not even through ambiguous hints, to actual participation in the fighting anywhere but in the south close to the Israeli border.⁸⁰

Although Rabin and his colleagues did not realize it at the time, and though they were convinced that limited help to the Lebanese Front did not constitute a more far reaching step than had the aid Israel offered, for example, to the Kurds in northern Iraq, they nevertheless made a momentous decision. The significance of this step lay precisely in the fact that assistance was being offered to an ally whom no Israeli leader really liked or trusted. If Israel believed the Lebanese Front was not more than a bunch of scheming *Mukhtars* (village chieftains), why offer them help? Israel should have abandoned them to their fate and washed its hands of the entire affair without any qualms. Yet the fact that Rabin, Peres, Allon, and their lieutenants decided to overcome their reservations and to offer some support to the Lebanese suggests that they perceived a wider strategic significance in the emerging link.

What could that be? The answer seems almost self-evident. Having permitted Syria to enter Lebanon, Israel exposed herself to grave risks in the future. Sooner or later the Syrians would mend their fences with the PLO, and then Israel would have to go back to the deadly exchanges with the PLO, or to accept the PLO and deal with it with a view to establishing a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, or, more likely, to enter Lebanon itself. If the first or the second of these alternative scenarios were to materialize, the limited assistance to the Lebanese Front would be of no consequence. But, if the last scenario—a major operation against the PLO in Lebanon—were to take shape, it would be eminently useful to have an ally in the heart of Lebanon. It could cause both the Syrians and the PLO to commit forces to their rear. And, if it ever came to an all-out war, it could offer Israel a kind of beachhead on the road to Damascus. Such considerations had nothing to do with Zionist ideology, domestic politics, or personal whims. They represented standard strategic-political thinking. Rabin, owing to his distrust for the Phalange, resisted this logic for a time, but ultimately he too conceded that the exigencies of the Lebanese situation following the civil war had turned a tacit alliance with the Christians into a compelling strategic imperative.⁸¹

Escalation, 1977–78

By October 1976 the civil war in Lebanon was grinding to a halt. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, at Syria's behest, called all the Arab parties in the conflict to a conference in Riyadh, which resulted in an all-Arab legitimization of Syria's role as peacemaker in Lebanon. The Syrian forces in Lebanon were reinforced by token contingents of other Arab forces and then renamed the Arab Deterrent Force (ADF). A seemingly stable status quo was established in Lebanon's north, and the PLO became free again to attend to its position in the south, in the area along Israel's border into which the Syrians could not move because of Israel's deterrent threats. The result, inevitably, was a further

intensification of hostilities which continued uninterruptedly for eighteen months and ultimately led to the Israeli "mini-invasion" of March 12, 1978.

To be sure, the escalation leading to Operation Litani in March 1978 cannot be accounted for only by reference to Israel's drive to protect Haddad's domain and to the PLO's simultaneous struggle to secure its bases of operation astride Israel's northern border. In the background, a number of major political changes were taking place and these undoubtedly fueled the conflict. Specifically there can be no doubt that Israel's approach during this period was significantly conditioned by the advent of the Carter administration in the United States and by the victory of the Likud in the Israeli general elections of July 1977. At the same time, both the Israeli and the PLO positions must have been affected by Sadat's peace initiative. Together, these significant background changes threatened the vital interests of both parties, prompted them to act precipitantly, and thus contributed to further escalation.

The Carter administration came to power in January 1977, heralding the consolidation of a significant reorientation in American policy in the Middle East which had been in the making for at least seven years. The focal point of the new orientation was the Palestinian issue in general and the status of the PLO in particular. The Rogers peace plan of 1969 included a statement that there could "not be a lasting peace without a settlement of the problem of those Palestinians whom the wars of 1948 and 1967 . . . [had] made homeless. . . . A just settlement must take into account the desires and aspirations of the refugees." A short while later it was stressed by Assistant Under-Secretary of State Joseph Sisco that the United States had "to distinguish between the minority which has turned to mindless, futile terrorism and the masses of Palestinian Arabs, whose legitimate concerns must be taken into account in any settlement." After the 1973 war, the United States increasingly invoked the question of Palestinian representation in the peace process that ensued. This was manifested, for example, in a message from Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to the Israeli government in which he indicated that in the first stage of the Geneva Conference "the issue of extending invitations to the Palestinians and the Lebanese would be discussed," and in a statement by Joseph Sisco describing the Palestinian National Council which was meeting in Cairo at that time as a "Palestinian Congress" in which "the Palestinians are trying to determine their own direction at the present time."

Since Israel rejected the proposal to deal with Palestinian representation in Geneva while the PLO persisted in its rejection of UN Resolution 242 of 22 November 1967, in which Israel's right for "secure and recognized boundaries" is stressed but the Palestinians are mentioned only as refugees, this American trial balloon led nowhere. Nevertheless, the Ford administration continued to uphold the view that (in the words of Alfred Atherton, Assistant Secretary of State) "some way must be found to involve the Palestinians in the [negotiation] process," and that (in the words of the Nixon-Brezhnev communiqué of July 31, 1972) a lasting peace in the Middle East would have to take into account "the legitimate interests of all peoples in the Middle East, including the Palestinians."

Within a year, this line was carried significantly further toward its logical conclusion when Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Middle Eastern Affairs, Harold Saunders, testified to the Special Sub-Committee of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee on November 13, 1975, that the Palestinian issue was the very heart of the Arab-Israel conflict. The United States, Saunders argued, must move toward recognition of some sort of Palestinian national representation. It seems inconceivable that Saunders would have

made this statement without authority. His words appeared to be yet another trial balloon, a signal to both Israelis and Palestinians. Whatever the policy rationale of Saunder's testimony, he was expressing the opinion of a growing portion of the American political elite, in both the Republican administration and the Democratic Party.⁸² This is supported by a Brookings Institution paper which emphasized the same thesis and which was published at about the same time. Referring to the Palestinian issue, the Brookings paper argued that the "Palestinians for the most part believe that they have a right to self-determination. For a peace settlement to be viable, indeed, for it to even be negotiated and concluded, this right will have to be recognized in principle and, as a part of the settlement, given satisfaction in practice." The Brookings paper added that "the Palestinians must recognize Israel's right to sovereignty and territorial integrity within recognized borders," and that, in exchange, the possibility of setting up an independent Palestinian state in the areas of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip or, alternatively, "the inclusion of those areas as autonomous units in a confederative framework with the Kingdom of Jordan, should be considered."⁸³

Such public manifestations of a gradual drift toward acceptance of the PLO in the United States were accompanied by backstage moves pointing in the same direction, which could not have been overlooked by the Israeli government. According to one press report, direct contacts between the United States and the PLO were first established under the Nixon Administration.⁸⁴ Other sources reveal that these backstage contacts went beyond intelligence activities. In February 1971 the administration requested Professor Roger Fisher, a Harvard specialist on conflict and terrorism, to go to Beirut. His mission was to prevail upon the PLO leadership which, following the PLO's eviction from Jordan the previous September, was considering resuming worldwide terrorism, to turn instead to diplomacy. More specifically Fisher was to attempt to convince the PLO that if it were to change direction and emphasize a search for a political solution based on PLO participation in the ultimate approach to peace, the U.S. government would give it significant backing.

Fisher's negotiations in Beirut brought upon him the wrath of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP) radicals, the main supporters within the PLO of a resort to terrorism—therefore, he could not stay in Lebanon for long. But his mission was resumed some time later when the Quaker movement established in East Jerusalem a Center for Information and Legal Assistance under Ann Lesch, a Quaker scholar and a close collaborator of William Quandt, the chief author of the Brookings paper. Tacitly backed by the state department (mainly through the U.S. consulate in East Jerusalem), Lesch proceeded to encourage the expansion of the Palestinian College at Bir Zeit, in the outskirts of Ramallah, and the setting up of what later became the Committee for National Guidance, a PLO-oriented council of West Bank mayors. These activities soon brought Lesch into conflict with the Israeli authorities on the West Bank, who finally demanded her departure. The state department resisted this demand strenuously but ultimately yielded, and Ann Lesch, whose visa was not extended, had to depart.⁸⁵

Such subtle but persistent manifestations of U.S. support for the notion of an independent Palestinian state aroused great apprehension in Israel. If this was anathema to the Israeli right from the ideological standpoint, it was totally unacceptable to all political shades of opinion, with the exception of a small fringe on the left, for the strategic reasons mentioned above. Reflecting this attitude, the Rabin government extracted from Kissinger in the course of the Sinai II negotiations an Executive

Commitment that no American government would “recognize or negotiate with the Palestine Liberation Organization so long as the Palestine Liberation Organization does not recognize Israel’s right to exist and does not accept Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.”⁸⁶

Kissinger may have agreed to such a generous commitment because he knew it was worthless. Indeed, he could have taken it for granted that if necessary his successors could some time in the future find a way to bypass the commitment. Even if this was not Kissinger’s view, the Carter administration clearly felt uncomfortably constrained by their predecessors’ commitment on this issue. National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski had been among the authors of the Brookings paper, and in 1975 he had published an article in a widely read journal in which he forcefully advocated the establishment of a PLO state in the West Bank and Gaza.⁸⁷ President Carter and Secretary of State Vance fully accepted Brzezinski’s view on this matter. All three felt that U.S. policy in the Middle East (as elsewhere) should be significantly modified. They rejected Kissinger’s step-by-step diplomacy. They rejected the Nixon-Kissinger thesis that the Soviets should be “expelled” from Middle East diplomacy. Above all they were convinced that the frustration of the Palestinians could be lessened only if somebody representing them were to be coopted into the search for peace. In their view the mainstream of the PLO was basically moderate. If the United States were sufficiently flexible, they argued, the PLO could be brought to change its fundamental positions and accept Israel as a legitimate negotiating partner.⁸⁸

Chagrined and alarmed, Israel watched Carter and his aides expound their thesis to Itzhak Rabin during the latter’s last official visit to the United States as Israel’s Prime Minister, maintaining and expanding various “back channels” to the PLO and finally advocating publicly, in a speech at Clinton, Massachusetts, in March 1977, a “homeland” for the Palestinians. But what alarmed the Israeli government more than anything was the fact that there were ample signs that *the PLO was reciprocating these American moves*. To be sure, Yasser Arafat was still unable to prevail entirely over the objections of the Rejection Front within the PLO, but, persistently and skillfully, he seemed to be inching his complex and divided organization toward an indirect acceptance of UN Resolution 242. By 1977 Arafat had succeeded in creating for the PLO a truly remarkable international status. This fact, along with the skill with which he navigated his cause through the Jordanian and the Lebanese civil wars, gradually made him the single most important Palestinian leader. Taking full advantage of this status and consciously responding to Carter’s signals, he pushed the PLO toward acceptance, in a March 1977 meeting of the Palestine National Council (PNC) of the notion of a Palestinian state “in the territories from which Israel withdraws.”⁸⁹ Another year or two of maneuvering, many Israeli policy makers feared, and Arafat would come close enough to an acceptance of UN Resolution 242 to convince the Carter administration that the time had come to deal with the PLO directly. If it ever came to that, Israel would have to either yield—which would mean the eventual establishment of a Palestinian state on the West Bank—or face a major breach with the United States. The former alternative was perceived as an unacceptable gamble from a security point of view, not to mention the great ideological resistance it would be bound to generate inside the Jewish state. The latter alternative could place Israel in its most difficult and isolated international position since the early 1950s.

As a hidden agenda more than an explicit policy, such considerations added impetus to Israel’s drive against the PLO in south Lebanon. If previously the sole focus had been on local security considerations, by 1977 the emphasis was shifting implicitly to the macro-political ramifications of the battle of south Lebanon. Exposing the PLO to the

fiercest military pressures would not only limit its danger in the Galilee but also undermine the position of the moderates within its ranks. This would make it impossible for Yasser Arafat to overcome the objections of his militant critics to the acceptance of UN Resolution 242. In turn President Carter's maneuver to coopt the PLO into the search for peace in the Middle East would be foiled, too.

Israeli governments could not advocate this policy openly since it would raise grave questions about their devotion to the cause of peace. It was based on a strategy that is not entirely comprehensible to the average citizen, and hence if it were to be debated in public it could lead to acrimonious domestic debates. Thus it had always remained a pervasive but unspoken element of Israel's policy.

Paradoxically the Likud governments, which were formed after the 1977 general elections, could deal with this problem with an easier conscience than could the majority of the Labor party. To all but the extreme doves in the Labor party (who opposed this policy as a matter of principle), the rationale of this policy was practical and strategic. Indeed, it was not even new: during the 1948 war Ben Gurion, the first prime minister and the guide and mentor of the Labor leaders of the 1970s, acted on similar premises. Without ever making all his considerations explicit he maneuvered Israel toward an understanding with King Abdullah of Jordan. The latter would be allowed a free hand in the areas west of the river Jordan, which the UN partition plan had allotted for a Palestinian state. This was the basic underlying rationale of the talks Golda Meir held with Abdullah on the eve of the 1948 Arab invasion. Since following Egypt's decision to go to war against the Jewish state, Abdullah could not afford to defect from the Arab coalition—he, too, had to enter the war. The Jordan Legion and the IDF did battle in only one area on which no understanding had been previously reached, namely, Jerusalem and its approaches. Elsewhere both armies were not allowed by their respective political chiefs to make a move. Ben Gurion resisted the pressures of Yigal Allon and the activist *Ahdut HaAvoda* to conquer the West Bank, and Abdullah resisted the pressure of officers such as Abdullah al Tal to expand the war effort into other areas of the Jewish state.

To both Abdullah and Ben Gurion, the main unspoken purpose was to prevent the creation of a Palestinian state which was perceived by both as a long-term menace. Ben Gurion's (and Abdullah's) successors, Meir, Dayan, Rabin, Peres (and King Hussein), consciously pursued a similar objective. Yet, inspired by expediency, such a position was fundamentally incompatible with Labor's instinctive sense of historic justice, a legacy of the party's fiercely socialist origins. It therefore inevitably led to a pervasive ambiguity, if not to something amounting to a guilt complex. By contrast, the Likud's ideology of integral nationalism within a greater Israel married expediency to its own perception of high principle. It was therefore easier for the Likud to advocate an outright military drive for the purpose of preventing PLO moderation than it was for the tacitly guilt-ridden Labor.

To be sure, the ambiguity on this issue in the policy of the Rabin government was for a while carried over into the policy of the first Likud government. For Begin himself, the ideological commitment to Greater Israel was at least as important as the strategic argument for preventing the establishment of a Palestinian state west of the Jordan River. But in his coalition the most important ministers, Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Yadin, Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan, and Defense Minister Ezer Weizman, were far more preoccupied with the strategic dimension of the problem. For them Begin's ideological rigidity was not more than an irritant, because it did not run contrary to their own view that no foreign army could ever be allowed to cross the Jordan River. They disputed

Begin's settlement policy in the densely populated centers of the West Bank because none of the three were convinced of the security rationale for such a policy which some supporters of extensive settlement were advancing. They did not see any reason why Israel should impose itself on the Arab inhabitants of the West Bank through an intensive involvement in their daily lives. They prided themselves on their knowledge of Arabic and shared a romantic affection toward the people who spoke it. But they were united in their opinion that, come what may, Israel should never allow any foreign government to wield ultimate authority over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.⁹⁰

Begin was in basic agreement with the broad outline of Rabin's Lebanon policy, but he had frequently chided the Labor government for not being sufficiently vigorous in its campaign against the PLO.⁹¹ In 1970, when Dayan was Minister of Defense in Meir's cabinet, he suspended the reprisals, initiated a policy based on a sustained drive against the PLO in southern Lebanon, and even considered the seizure of parts of south Lebanon. Ezer Weizman, too, was critical of the entire concept of an "exchange rate" for violence whereby Israeli retaliation would be indexed to the level of PLO provocation.⁹² When all of them came into power, the limited tit-for-tat policy of the past had already begun yielding diminishing returns. Hence, more than at any time before, the basic choice between a coherently accommodative posture and an assertive strategy (to use the language of the security dilemma) was called for. And since the accommodative posture, namely, responding positively to Carter's approach to the Palestinian issue and simultaneously lowering the military profile in southern Lebanon, was totally unacceptable to all three, at least as much as it had been to their Labor predecessors, a vigorously assertive strategy was a natural outcome.

This was reflected in Israeli actions within weeks of the formation of Begin's government. Begin and Weizman immediately stepped up assistance to Haddad's militia. They also abandoned their predecessors' discretion about Israel's role in arming and training these militia forces. Above all, they stepped up military operations in the south of Lebanon. On September 2, 1977, an armored IDF column crossed into Lebanon. The U.S. government demanded the immediate evacuation of this force and suggested the stationing of a UN force or some 700 Lebanese soldiers in the areas that Israel was to evacuate. Israel refused. Its experience with UN forces had always been negative. Such forces were militarily weak and politically hamstrung and therefore incapable of stopping the PLO. At the same time they could conceivably constitute an obstacle for Israeli and/or Haddad hot pursuits. The Lebanese army would be even less acceptable since its military efficiency was in doubt and its political loyalties suspect. For these reasons Israel would only agree to an increased presence of Haddad's force. Arguing this case with the United States took three weeks. Ultimately the U.S. government gave up on the idea of a UN force, whereupon Israel agreed to withdraw the IDF contingent.⁹³

Faced by the intense pressure of the IDF, the PLO responded in kind. Further escalation thus became inevitable. The Israeli Air Force and Navy were used for bombing operations against PLO bases in Tyre, Sidon, Beirut, and Tripoli. The Israeli government was fully aware of the fact that these raids harmed Palestinian and Lebanese civilians,⁹⁴ but, like its Labor predecessors, it hoped the raids would generate pressures on the PLO to lower its profile. More important still may have been the sense of urgency and alarm owing to the evident narrowing of the gap between the United States and the PLO's positions. Moreover, the Israelis reasoned, the PLO had deliberately established bases in densely populated urban areas and confronted Israel with a difficult choice. If it became reluctant to continue attacks out of concern for civilian casualties and Western

opinion, the PLO would obviously gain. If, on the other hand, Israel decided to continue its attacks, its image would be blemished and the PLO would also gain. Given the need to safeguard the Galilee population and a growing concern in the face of the PLO "peace offensive," a strategy of sustained attacks against its bases was perfectly rational from the Israeli point of view.

At the same time, Israel paid an increasingly high price for this strategy. Every additional attack by the IAF led to gruesome pictures in the Western press and to highly critical editorials. And yet, in the final analysis, this harsh policy did achieve some of its objectives. When the Executive Committee of the Palestine National Council (PNC) met in Damascus on September 20, 1977, Yasser Arafat failed to obtain support for a move to come up with a "grand gesture," presumably a qualified acceptance of UN Resolution 242. The main reason, reportedly, was that the participants wondered whether the United States, which "could not pressure Israel to agree to the stationing of 700 Lebanese peacekeepers in south Lebanon," would be able to "bring about an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza."⁹⁵ As a result Carter's policy began to lose momentum.⁹⁶

This impaled Sadat on the horns of his own dilemma. If he continued to wait until Carter reconvened the Geneva Conference—indeed, even if Carter succeeded in leading all the parties to this conference—it could mean an endless process, a deadlock, and possibly another war. If, on the other hand, he were to make his own separate approach he might be able to retrieve the Sinai peninsula and obtain U.S. economic and military aid, even if it meant some criticism in the Arab world. Sadat was, evidently, "a man in a hurry."⁹⁷ Hence, impressed by Begin's apparent integrity and resolve, he opted for the second alternative. The upshot was his solitary pilgrimage to Jerusalem and a bilateral Israeli-Egyptian peace process in which the Palestinian issue was addressed but from which the PLO was utterly excluded.

Sadat announced his separate peace initiative on November 9, 1977, that is, at about the same time when a large IDF contingent operated in south Lebanon and six weeks after the rejection of the "grand gesture" by the PNC Executive Committee. Having explored the ground through secret diplomacy, he made his dramatic announcement of the trip to Jerusalem in the presence of Yasser Arafat, who was literally summoned for the occasion from Libya. The latter left the hall of the Egyptian National Assembly in bewilderment and thus initiated a painful reappraisal of his organization.⁹⁸ From the PLO's point of view (as, for a while, from President Carter's) Sadat's move was a serious setback. In one fell swoop it pulled the rug from under Arafat's stratagem of the previous four years. Indeed, the Egyptian volte-face in 1977 was as momentous as the Egyptian decision in 1948 to join an Arab coalition in a military campaign against Israel. Then the Egyptian move led, in effect, to an all-out Arab-Israel war. Now the Egyptian decision to move in the reverse direction could have an equally important impact on the calculations of other Arab states. It did not immediately change the course of Syrian policy, nor that of Iraq, Libya, the oil countries or, of course, more peripheral Arab powers. But even if the rest of the Arab world were to maintain its initial adherence to the principle of rejection and thus seemingly embrace the PLO's standpoint, in the longer term the Egyptian defection was bound to have a critical effect. Israel would be freed of the need to attend to an Egyptian front. Syria would become the mainstay of any future Arab campaign. Syria could not be expected to rally the same broad coalition that Egypt had so far led. The PLO itself would lose much of its hard-won freedom of action and become as uncomfortably dependent on Syria's good will as it had been in the 1960s. Israel would be free to sustain military operations against the PLO in Lebanon as well as settlement activity on the West Bank. Of course, the Egyptian

president's move was presented to the Arab world as a method of resolving the Palestinian issue too. Sadat himself probably believed this and may have well been right. But the possibility that the Egyptian initiative might be detrimental to the PLO's interest clearly appeared to the majority within the organization as a more likely outcome.

Thus impaled by Sadat's action on the horns of its own dilemma, the PLO could theoretically opt for accommodation, join Sadat, and attempt to gain as much as possible in exchange for such a grand gesture. In practice, however, the PLO was no more likely to prefer accommodation over assertion than any other international actor. Sadat's policy may have been perceived by the PLO leadership as an ingenious trap which could emasculate the PLO, robbing it of all its achievements of the previous decade. Hence the PLO leadership had only one reasonably safe policy option: to seek disruption of the Israeli-Egyptian peace process. How could that be done? Quite naturally through a violent provocation—this would lead the Israelis to retaliate disproportionately and Egypt in turn might be so upset that it could react by suspending the negotiations. And if Egypt did not react so harshly the very least to be expected was the strengthening of Arafat's position vis-à-vis his critics within the PLO and a greater pressure on Egypt and the United States to force Israel to make concessions on the issue of the Palestinians in general and the PLO in particular.⁹⁹

Such a rationale was the very epitome of political and strategic sense. It aimed to cause escalation as a means of preventing a process that could easily lead to a demise of the Palestinian struggle. And based as it was on an instinctive understanding of Israel's pattern of response, it was also successful in correctly predicting how Israel would react. Moreover, Arafat and his colleagues also exhibited a shrewd sense of timing. Provoking Israel when the peace process was gaining momentum would have been ineffective. Rather than abandoning the peace process, Sadat would most probably have defied the PLO with all the means at his disposal. Conversely, if Israel had been severely provoked when the peace process was deadlocked, the likelihood of a bitter Egyptian reaction to an Israeli overreaction to a Palestinian provocation would be greater.

Whether the PLO leadership was moved by such considerations is impossible to tell, but the fact remains that it provoked Israel in March 1978—two months after the suspension of Egyptian-Israeli talks as a result of a deadlock. On March 11, a small party of eleven PLO combatants landed on the beach near Kibbutz Ma'agan Michael, some fifty miles north of Tel Aviv. They walked eastward toward the Haifa-Tel Aviv highway, killing Gail Rubin, a young American tourist, on their way. On the highway they stopped two buses and one cab, forcing all the passengers into one bus which they commandeered toward Tel Aviv. They were chased by Israeli police, by passersby, and by the security forces. The bus was brought to a halt near a country club some five miles from Tel Aviv. A lengthy shootout followed in which thirty-seven passengers (and all but two of the terrorists) lost their lives, and seventy-eight were wounded.

The audacity of this operation sent shock waves throughout Israel. In the absence of Defense Minister Ezer Weizman (who was abroad), the Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Mota Gur, summoned the general staff which in turn initiated preparations for a large-scale military operation. This operational plan was then submitted to the cabinet's security subcommittee which approved it promptly. If this move was influenced more by an emotional reaction than by cool reasoning, the operation itself, code named "Stone of Wisdom" but known later as Operation Litani, basically set out to implement what must have been a contingency plan since the early 1970s when Dayan issued the first public warning that Israel might invade.¹⁰⁰ The attacking PLO party came from Damour and not

from south Lebanon. But it is doubtful that the Israelis really cared where it came from—indeed by this stage in the protracted encounter the precise origin of the attacking party was of no consequence. From the Israeli point of view the policy of limited operations had all but exhausted its effectiveness. Keeping the PLO from attacking Israel's north from positions within the no-man's-land between the Israeli border and the Syrian lines had become impossible. Haddad's militia proved incapable of policing this area. For all the help it received from Israel it failed to mature into the spirited, large, disciplined army that Shimon Peres and Itzhak Rabin may have hoped for when they decided not to meet the Syrians on the banks of the Litani. Nor had increasing Israeli raids in this area succeeded in compensating for the shortcomings of Haddad's army. Israel could resign itself to this fact and spend ever larger sums on building defenses along the border with Lebanon, but this would not remove the menace from the Galilee. The most it could achieve would be to lessen the casualties but at the price of turning life in this area into a virtual nightmare. The only other alternative was to attempt to occupy the whole area to the Syrian lines and then either stay there or, in order not to be blamed for seizing Lebanese territory, seek to reestablish Haddad's militia on a more solid basis. The question was when to carry out such an operation. The PLO attack provided a pretext that no American president or domestic critic would be able to challenge.¹⁰¹

To be successful such an operation had to meet several criteria. First, it would have to be brief. Second, it would have to cost only a small number of Israeli casualties. Third, it would have to result in an extensive measure of Israeli control of the entire area for years to come. Fourth, it would have to involve a large number of PLO casualties but only a negligible number of Lebanese casualties. Fifth, it would have to avoid friction with Syria. Sixth, it would have to be (at least retrospectively) endorsed by the United States. Seventh, while testing Egypt's resolve to carry on the peace process the operation should not lead to a breakdown of Egyptian-Israeli negotiations.¹⁰²

The first criterion was more or less met since the operation took five days. The second criterion was also met since the total number of Israeli casualties was sixteen. The third criterion, and possibly the most important, was not met. Under severe U.S. pressure Israel had to agree to a complete withdrawal. A special UN force was set up and ordered to take control of the bulk of the area, starting from the Litani River and moving down south to about five kilometers from the Israeli border. Only after a great deal of haggling did Israel succeed in extracting a grudging American consent to the stationing of Haddad's militia in the five-kilometer belt along Israel's border.¹⁰³

Nor did Israel succeed in attaining the fourth criterion. With the IDF force of some 7,000 troops moving clumsily in a wide front from south to north, the PLO had plenty of time to retreat and seek shelter behind Syrian lines. By the time this became clear, Israel had already caused extensive damage to the Lebanese population. Concerned about avoiding Israeli casualties the IDF relied on heavy artillery and air support for the purpose of preparing the entry of infantry into towns and villages. Since the PLO had retreated, the bulk of the fire hit the Lebanese population. The result was a large number of civilian casualties, extensive damage to property, and a substantial problem of refugees.¹⁰⁴

The fifth criterion, avoiding friction with Syria, was fully met. But it entailed a heavy price for it was largely owing to this principle that the PLO personnel could safely escape and also that the IDF chose to move cautiously from south to north rather than relying on a more audacious maneuver. Finally, while not endangering the peace process,¹⁰⁵ Operation Litani merely exacerbated Israeli-American relations. President

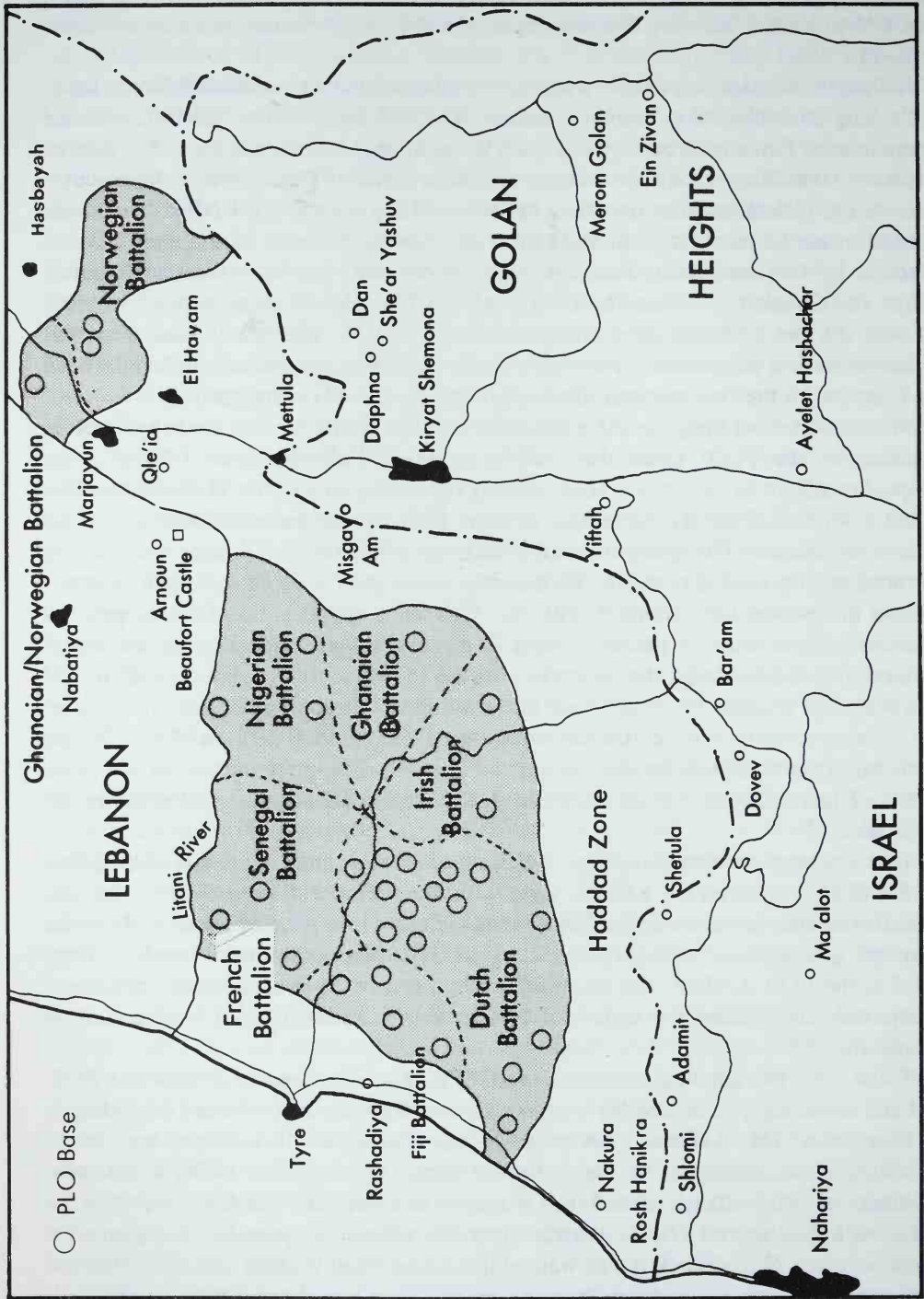
Carter had hastened to express his "shock and dismay" at the PLO raid. But he was just as quick to express his objections to Israel's invasion and to instruct the U.S. delegation to the UN to back a Security Council resolution (No. 425) calling Israel to withdraw "forthwith."¹⁰⁶

If Operation Litani was almost a net failure it led to another serious liability as far as Israel's long-term objectives were concerned. The UN force (called UNIFIL—United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon) was quickly organized, but when it moved to take its positions it soon discovered that it could not do so without PLO consent. Ingeniously Yasser Arafat maintained that since UN Resolution 425, from which UNIFIL's mandate emanated, made no mention of the PLO (in order to be palatable to Israel), the PLO was not bound by this resolution. Faced with this procedural problem, General Emanuel Erskine, the Ghanaian Commanding Officer of UNIFIL, signed an agreement with the PLO whereby the latter accepted the ceasefire with Israel. The Jewish state was thus unwittingly made a party to an agreement with the PLO, whose legitimacy it had declined to endorse for all the strategic and ideological reasons already mentioned.¹⁰⁷

Moreover, before long it became clear that UNIFIL would have to abide by the rules prescribed by the PLO. Upon their arrival in south Lebanon some UNIFIL units attempted to adhere to their initial brief, namely defending Israel from PLO attacks. This entailed a number of bloody skirmishes with the PLO, whose numerical strength on the spot was far superior. The governments that had sent troops to the UN force were at once confronted with a serious problem. Would they assert their authority in south Lebanon and face the prospect of violence with the PLO and, worse still, of wider political consequences as a result of pressures from Arab governments, including the oil states? Or would they acknowledge the supremacy of the PLO, tacitly collaborate with it, and thus violate the mission for which they had contributed these troops in the first place? After a major skirmish between French paratroopers and the PLO early in May 1978, the French government opted for the second alternative. The governments of the Irish Republic, Nigeria, Senegal, Norway, Finland, and the Fiji Islands hastened to follow the French lead.¹⁰⁸

This seemingly isolated incident had, indeed, far-reaching repercussions. Before long the PLO infiltrated the UNIFIL zone with the strength of some 700 fighters and established an autonomous string of bases in the vicinity of the town of Jouaiya which, for its strength and degree of consolidation, came to be known as the Iron Triangle. Having yielded to the PLO, UNIFIL had no choice but to accept a PLO demand that UN forces not approach closer than 500 meters of PLO positions within UNIFIL's own zone of responsibility.¹⁰⁹

To be sure, this apparent weakness of UNIFIL was not observed only by the PLO. Israel and its protégé, Saad Haddad were not slow in drawing their lessons. According to UN Resolution 425, Lebanese sovereignty over the south of Lebanon was to be represented by a contingent of the Lebanese army. On July 31, 1978, a Lebanese detachment of 500 soldiers, headed by Lieutenant Colonel Adib Saad, set out from the Beqa'a Valley to enter UNIFIL domain, near the village of Qauqaba. As soon as it approached the UN roadblock it was warned that Major Saad Haddad and his militia had set up one of their units nearby with the expressed intention of preventing Adib Saad's troops from moving into the area. Haddad's reasons were simple enough. The Lebanese army unit was dispatched in order to underline the illegitimate nature of his own regime in the south. If the government in Beirut needed a symbol of sovereignty in the south it could endorse him. Their refusal to do so was a clear affront. It also signaled to Israel that



The PLO Bases within UNIFIL Areas

it should support Haddad in order to maintain its sphere of influence in the area. In the face of this, Adib Saad turned back and never returned.¹¹⁰

But the weakness of UNIFIL would spell trouble for Israel in the years to come. If UNIFIL would not engage the PLO, the latter could attempt to cross UNIFIL lines into Israel without running any real risk. At most, UN troops would merely apprehend the PLO party, disarm it, and send it back up north. On the other hand, whenever a PLO unit succeeded in crossing UNIFIL lines into "Haddadland," not to speak of Israel, Israelis would find themselves in serious friction with the UN and with the governments whose troops were stationed there. If the crossing ended with a skirmish within Israel or within Haddad's zone, there would be no serious repercussions other than complaints about the inefficiency of the UN force. But if a skirmish led to hot pursuit by Israelis or by Haddad's militiamen, the UN force would attempt to stop them. Neither the IDF nor Haddad's militia would obey these orders. For both, making the price of PLO operations high for the PLO was an article of faith. Without it there would be no disincentives for PLO personnel to step up their operations. But the outcome was constant friction between Israel and the governments in question. Israel had previously had cordial relations with most of these governments, but as a result of UNIFIL's creation these relations were unnecessarily strained. UNIFIL solidiers sent letters criticizing Israel to their home newspapers, resulting in a great deal of public criticism of Israel's conduct while UNIFIL was doing very little to relieve Israel's fundamental problem with the PLO.¹¹¹ Operation Litani, in short, was close to a fiasco. It did not solve the problem it was meant to address, and in many ways it sowed the seeds of further escalation in the years to come.

Rampant Escalation, 1979–81

The friction across UNIFIL lines cannot alone explain the rapid pace of escalation during 1979–1981. In itself it was little more than an irritant. But the fact that it took place against the background of other complex problems turned it into a major catalyst of an ever-widening conflict. In retrospect it seems that all the parties—Israel, the PLO, the Lebanese Front, Syria, and, in the background, the United States, Egypt, and the Arab World—increasingly faced an agonizing problem. Each one of them acted more or less rationally, but the ultimate result was an almost deterministic slide toward anarchy.

The first cause of greater anarchy was, paradoxically, the heightening anxiety of both Israel and the PLO as a result of the march toward peace between Israel and Egypt. Following the initial moment of enthusiasm in November 1977, the peace process faced great difficulties. A tête-à-tête between Begin and Sadat in Ismailiyah, on December 25, 1977, ended in a bitter deadlock. A meeting of foreign ministers in Jerusalem on January 17–18, 1978, also led to naught. Sadat recalled the Egyptian delegates from the Jerusalem Conference, and Egypt reacted with a variety of gestures that recreated a sense of bitterness and disillusionment in Israel. The latter responded with accusations and with a spate of new settlement construction in northern Sinai. But the basic interest that had originally led to the peace initiative was far too deep to fade away in the face of these troubles. In Israel fear that the peace process would collapse led to the establishment of Peace Now, a spontaneous movement calling on the government not to obstruct the peace process. The United States, which initially had been taken by complete surprise by Sadat's Jerusalem trip, now set out to encourage the process. A meeting of foreign ministers in Leeds Castle, near London, on July 9, 1978, melted some of the ice.

President Carter then took a tremendous risk and invited Sadat and Begin for a "marathon" conference at Camp David. The conference went through some very difficult moments but then led to an accord. In less than a year a peace treaty was drafted and then signed on March 26, 1979. By May, Israel had begun to evacuate the Sinai. Meanwhile Egypt moved toward normalization of relations with Israel, including the cessation of all forms of hostility, the establishment of a diplomatic legation in Tel Aviv, and the opening of its borders to Israeli tourists. By April 26, 1982, with the final withdrawal of Israeli troops from Sinai, all the signs pointed to a completion of the peace process.¹¹²

While obtaining for Israel a peace agreement with the single most important Arab state, the Egyptian-Israeli peace process also heightened the Begin government's apprehensions concerning Carter's ideas about Palestine. Sadat needed a solution in principle to the Palestine issue in order to avoid Arab charges of a separate peace with the Jewish state. He therefore pressed President Carter to exert pressure on the Israelis to agree to a Palestinian state or at least to an autonomous region on the West Bank. Carter, as has been pointed out, was of the opinion that this would be an imperative in any case. He therefore toned down Sadat's demand in this regard but proceeded, nevertheless, to apply pressure on Israel to accept these ideas. Begin's initial reaction was flatly negative, but Foreign Minister Dayan, Defense Minister Weizman, Attorney General Barak, and Military Advisor Tamir shared an intense fear that without Israeli concessions on this issue the peace process would collapse. Therefore they gradually and carefully, sometimes almost imperceptively, pressed the prime minister to accept the notion of Palestinian autonomy. Their ideas on the issue were not, however, very different from Begin's own, although they were inspired by the strategic argument against Palestinian autonomy and not by Begin's ideological objections. Accordingly, what they pleaded with Begin to accept was the principle of autonomy. Later, they argued, the concept could be interpreted so narrowly that it would not constitute a menace to Israel. As one astute and well-informed observer put it, Foreign Minister Dayan reached the conclusion that

the Palestinian problem was not solved and would not be solved through the settlement of refugees. He recognized that the Palestinian refugees did not assimilate into the Arab states but became a political movement. In a characteristic spate of anxiety he hastened to create facts which would affect the ultimate shape of the West Bank and which, in particular, would prevent the development of the Palestinian national movement into an independent state. Among the components which he believed could be agreed upon with Jordan and implemented in the course of the [five years] autonomy period were the following: the deployment of IDF units, protection for the Jewish settlements, a ban on the deployment of foreign troops and an understanding between Israel and Jordan that a Palestinian state would not be established.¹¹³

Israel's anxieties were matched by the apprehensions that these developments aroused in the PLO. In November 1978, it seemed as if the whole of the Arab world would succeed in closing ranks for the purpose of ostracizing Sadat and thus nipping his peace initiative in the bud. Iraq called a summit meeting. Every member state of the Arab League except Egypt participated. Resolutions condemning Egypt and urging it to rescind the peace process were passed amid much ceremony, and a special Arab fund for combating the peace process was established.¹¹⁴

None of these attempts succeeded in halting Egypt from carrying on negotiations with Israel. Indeed, tacitly a number of more conservative Arab regimes moved to reestablish amicable relations with Egypt. Meanwhile Egypt endorsed the autonomy plan

for the West Bank, a formula that the PLO leadership feared, with good reason, would totally undermine the claims of the PLO to be the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. It would in fact seal the fate of the PLO altogether since, implicitly, the autonomy scheme entailed a final settlement of the most important outstanding issues between Israel and the Palestinians.

Under such circumstances Yasser Arafat could not prevent a hardening of the position of the PNC. Indeed, the Israeli-Egyptian negotiations established a trend within the PLO away from the positions that had previously enabled Arafat to nudge his stubborn colleagues toward an understanding with the United States. Moreover, in these circumstances the PLO could ill afford not to maintain a high level of military activity against Israel. In the same way that moving toward an understanding with the United States in 1976–77 had encouraged the PLO to deemphasize the military dimensions of its campaign, so did the move in the opposite direction in 1978–81 encourage the organization to step up its military activity. Four months after Operation Litani, Arafat asked rhetorically:

What have we done after the 1967 war? . . . We engaged the Zionist enemy militarily and psychologically until the Arab armies were built. We are now playing the same role. We must keep the area ablaze until the Egyptian absence (from Arab ranks) is compensated for, either through returning Egypt to the arena of the war . . . or until balance is restored through the building of the eastern front.¹¹⁵

But the PLO was not as free as Arafat's words suggest to determine whether the region would be set ablaze. Indeed, in many ways it was merely reacting to forces entirely outside its control. For one thing, although the organization was not ruined by Operation Litani it had suffered a setback. After all the years during which it had attempted to secure for itself a zone of operations along Israel's northern border, it was now confined to an autonomous region right in the middle of Lebanon but without a contiguous "window" of Israeli border through which to penetrate. UNIFIL could not stop the PLO from crossing its lines, but the combination of UNIFIL and Haddad's buffer presented the PLO with new headaches. The area was more accessible than, say, Syrian lines on the Golan, where the PLO could not make any move without permission. But penetration into Israel had become substantially more difficult than at any time in the past.

To be sure, there were ways and means of bypassing this new obstacle. The PLO could, and did, use the sea as a route of access to Israel's long, exposed, and heavily populated coast. The PLO also purchased long-range artillery which could inflict sudden salvos on Israel's northern towns from Nahariya on the coast, to Safed on the Galilee mountains, to Kiryat Shemonah in the northern part of Israel's finger-shaped Huleh Valley. Such artillery, indeed, did not have to be very accurate. The purpose was to harass the civilian population, and that could be achieved by launching inaccurate salvos of Katyusha rockets. In addition the PLO could employ airborne means of transportation—not airplanes (they would be easily detected and shot down by Israel's Air Force and, in any case, required an infrastructure which the PLO did not have) but, ingeniously, gliders and balloons which fly low and do not make any detectable noise. Their range was of course limited, but it was sufficient for the purpose of crossing over the UNIFIL and Haddad zones and even for penetrating twenty miles into Israel.¹¹⁶

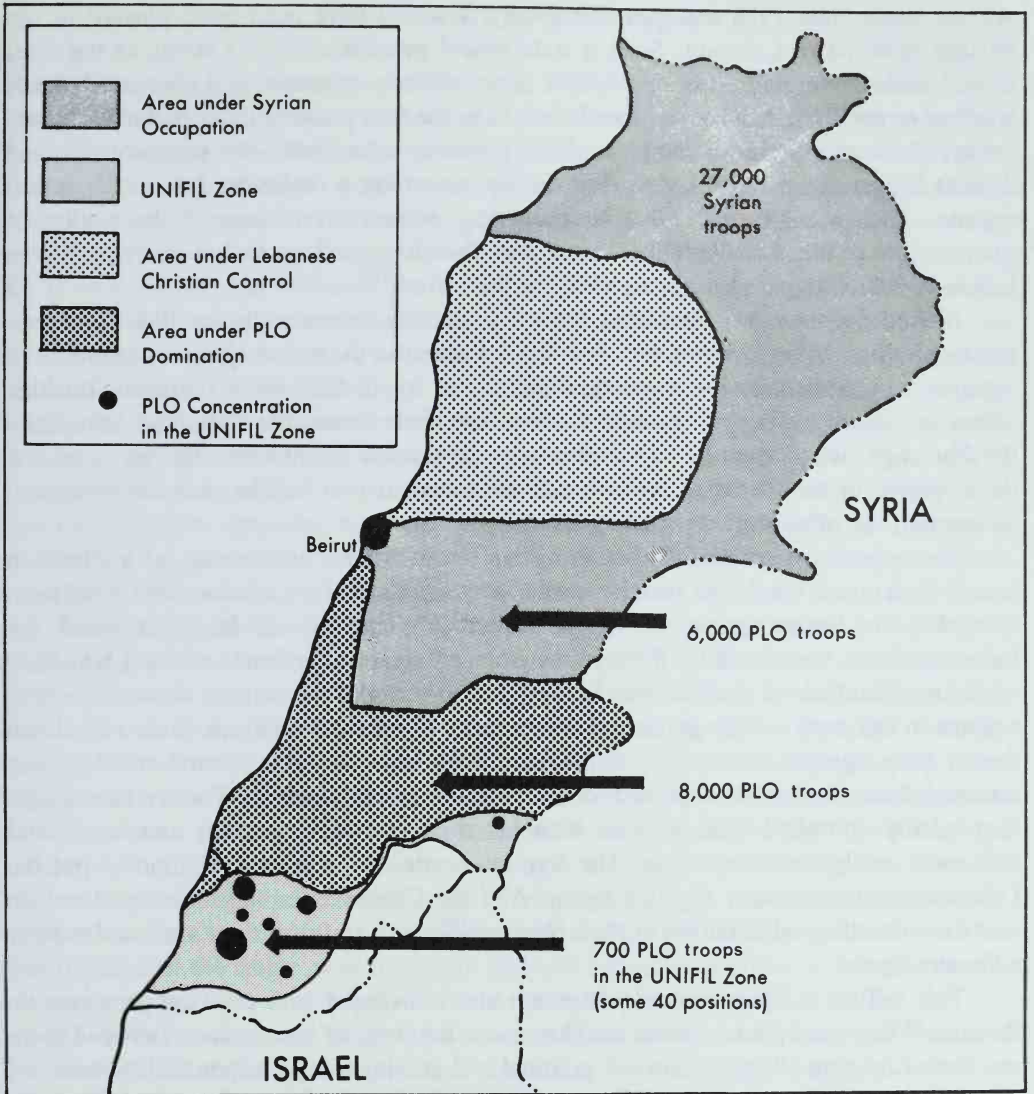
All these means of coping with the new situation after Operation Litani had some very serious drawbacks. The Israeli navy is small but, consisting primarily of fast missile boats with state-of-the-art radar systems, it could almost seal Israel's coastline to PLO

vessels. Indeed, realizing that the PLO was attempting to develop a small naval capacity, Israel concentrated on preventive operations, including intensive reconnaissance along Lebanon's entire coastline as well as preemptive attacks on port facilities.¹¹⁷

Other methods available to the PLO brought disadvantages also. Conventional long-range artillery could be a deadly weapon, but in order to use it effectively PLO teams had to spend lengthy periods of training in the Soviet Union at a time when their skills were required rather urgently at home. Moreover, such artillery required an ever-lengthening logistical "tail," which made the PLO increasingly less flexible. The strength of the PLO in previous years had been their guerrilla capacity, their ability to hit and run. This had caused Israel great difficulties. But the incremental arming of the organization with heavier weapons capable of overcoming the UNIFIL-Haddad barrier meant that it was slowly conventionalizing itself as a military force. The more this became the case, the greater the vulnerability of the PLO to Israeli counterattacks and, indeed, preventive attacks. It did not take long before the IDF discovered this trend in the complexion of PLO armed forces in the south Lebanon. The reaction was, from the PLO's point of view, devastating. The IDF launched a series of day and night operations including ambushes, mining operations, hit-and-run attacks, sudden salvos of artillery—in short, a deadly combination which increasingly engaged the PLO more in a quest for its own security than in a sustained campaign against Israel.¹¹⁸

Superficially these developments could be attributed merely to the fact that Israel's Chief of Staff during these years was Rafael Eitan, a tough and highly experienced paratrooper whose military philosophy tended to emphasize surprise, night operations, initiative, and daring. Although this was an important factor, it seems that a larger process was taking shape. The PLO was becoming increasingly conscious of the possibility of a grand showdown. Sensing that Operation Litani was not Israel's final word, the PLO leadership was seized by a (justified) anticipation of another attack. They were therefore engaged in a frantic effort to build up their own Masada. Israel detected this and in turn stepped up its own efforts to bring down the PLO. Israel's operations could not but elicit a strenuous PLO attempt to fight back using increasingly more devastating weapons. A steady increase in violence brought intense escalation in which both sides were acting more or less rationally.¹¹⁹

Like all protracted wars of attrition this one too had a built-in tendency to escalate not only vertically (that is, in the type of weapons used) but also horizontally (in geographic scope). The intensification of the exchange with the PLO from 1978 to 1981 led Israel step by step to an expansion of the battle zone from the south toward Beirut. The purpose was to force the PLO to cease military operations altogether and sink into political oblivion. With such a purpose in mind the logic of hitting PLO installations and bases of support everywhere, of denying the PLO any kind of sanctuary anywhere, had a momentum of its own. Beirut, not the south, was the nerve center of the PLO. Hence, in order to force the PLO to cease operations, its headquarters and depots in Beirut had to be hit massively. After the "Rent-a-Car" operation in April 1973, the PLO command had become exceedingly careful. Gone were the days when Yasser Arafat, George Habash, Naif Hawatmeh, Farouq Qaddoumi, Ahmed Jibril and their many lieutenants could hold numerous and lavish receptions in front of television cameras. Now they were engaged in a massive war effort in which the Israelis could hit them every day. Moreover, the fact that Christians in Beirut were engaged in the construction of an alliance with Israel meant that Israel had valuable sources of information about the location and activities of PLO personnel, depots, training centers, and other important



The PLO in Lebanon, 1976-1982

elements of the organization's infrastructure. Such sources made the temptation for Israel to expand the war to Beirut greater. The upshot was another stage of escalation.

The new phase in the process of escalation took the form of a rapprochement between the PLO and Syria, an expansion of Israel's links with the Lebanese Front, and, as an inevitable result, a slow shifting of the main arena of conflict from the battered south to the Beirut-Beqa'a areas in central Lebanon. The Syrian switch of alliances from the Lebanese Front to the left and the PLO had, at first, little to do with Israel. Syria's main concern was to restore order in Lebanon and that meant supporting the forces of the status quo and opposing the forces seeking to upset it. Therefore Syria at first supported the Lebanese Front, a mainly Christian conglomerate of forces which, in addition, were of quite a different ideological complexion than Ba'athist Syria. By the same token once the PLO and the LNM were brought into line, Syria had no reason to batter them any further.

At this stage—late 1976 and early 1977—Syria would have been quite pleased to see balance restored in Lebanon. Such a state would guarantee Syria's status as the final arbiter without forcing it to maintain a large military presence in Lebanon. Indeed, whether or not Syria had moved into Lebanon in the first place in order to fulfill the old dream of Greater Syria—a rather doubtful proposition in itself—the presence of some 30,000 Syrian troops in Lebanon was rapidly becoming a major burden on the Assad regime. This was primarily due to mounting domestic criticism of the policy of intervention of the Assad regime. Syria was therefore anxious to lower its profile in Lebanon, which required restoring stability there first.¹²⁰

Moved by such considerations Syria mended its fences with the PLO and their Lebanese allies during the summer of 1977.¹²¹ Thereafter the main objective of the *Ba'ath* republic was to see the new status quo maintained by all factions in Lebanon. But this objective was increasingly threatened by some elements among the Christians, especially the Phalange, who progressively drifted to a pro-Israeli orientation. The roots of this development in the Christian outlook can be traced to two factors, one objective and situational, the other subjective and personal.

The objective source of Christian-Syrian tensions and, as a result, of a Christian search for a closer bond with Israel, was the very situation of occupation which had been created by the Syrian appearance on the scene. Originally, it will be remembered, the Lebanese Front was saved by the Syrians from a defeat at the hands of the LNM-PLO coalition. Nevertheless, the fact that Syrian forces seemed to be settling down for a long sojourn in Lebanon rapidly generated resentment. The Lebanese Front wished to obtain Syrian help against their (then) common enemy and, as soon as the mission was accomplished, to see the departure of the Syrians from Lebanon. The Syrians would have gladly complied with such a wish for their own reasons, but carrying it out was more easily said than done. The Syrians needed a great deal of time to put the Lebanese humpty-dumpty together again. And the Christians rapidly developed a deep suspicion that the real intention of their Syrian allies was to fulfill their ancient dream of a Greater Syria.

This diffuse but intensely felt suspicion also converged with practical problems on the site. When the Syrians moved into Lebanon, the lines of demarcation between them and their Christian allies in terms of political and administrative responsibility were not clearly drawn. Consequently, it did not take long before friction developed concerning matters such as pillage and rape, arbitrary arrests, confiscation of property, and roadblocks by Syrian personnel on Lebanese soil. Such a state of affairs led to a serious clash on February 8, 1978 between Christian units in the recently restored Lebanese army and Syrian soldiers. According to one source this was "the most serious security incident—apart from Kamal Jumblatt's assassination—since the cessation of general hostilities. Whether the clash was the spontaneous explosion of frayed nerves on both sides or specifically timed by some agent provocateur to mar President Assad's reelection the same day, is uncertain." What mattered, however was that "the fighting threatened to spill over into Maronite neighborhoods."¹²²

This incident could not but add to the buildup of further tensions between the Syrians and the Lebanese Front. As a result, the familiar pattern of retrenchment and preparation for an inevitable showdown could soon be discerned. In this situation the rise of Bashir Gemayel to the leadership of the Lebanese forces clearly had a dramatic effect. The objective source of Syrian-Christian tension was in fact reinforced by the subjective one.

The Rise of Bashir Gemayel

Bashir Gemayel's rise to power coincided with and was spurred on by the Lebanese civil war and its aftermath. Bashir was nominated Commander of the Lebanese Forces in July 1976 after the death of the founder of the LF, William Hawi, during the battle of Tal Al Zaatar. Undistinguished in appearance and previous achievements, Gemayel quickly made his way up the ladder of Lebanon's national leadership. His guiding ideology, never explicitly stated, was more national than sectarian. He believed in meritocracy, in uniting the private militias, in reducing the rigidities of the traditional class structure of the Christian community, and, of course, in relieving Lebanon of Syrian occupation. His choice of means was, however, far from enlightened. On June 13, 1978, he ordered his loyalists to eliminate Tony Franjijeh and his household. The pretext was the killing by Franjijeh's Marada militiamen of Joud Bayeh, a Beirut banker associated with the Phalange. But the real reason was the Franjijeh clan's defiance of Bashir's attempt to extend the authority of the LF over the former's stronghold near Zogharta. Franjijeh, in addition, had been supported by Syria, whose influence in Lebanon Bashir had set out to eliminate. His assassination was therefore critical for Bashir's rise to power as the recognized leader of the emerging Christian mini-state.

Franjijeh's assassination at his home in Ehde was widely criticized. In the final analysis it proved to be the most important step in Bashir's rise to power. After this event Bashir proceeded to weaken the position of his own elder brother, Amin, and even of his father, Sheikh Pierre Gemayel, the septuagenarian patriarch of the Phalange. Simultaneously he undermined the status of the Lebanese state by increasingly levying taxes, engaging in a variety of profitable enterprises which earned his organization an estimated \$100,000,000 a year, challenging the position of the Lebanese army which President Sarkis—with Syrian backing—was attempting to reconstruct, and exerting substantial influence over Lebanon's state television. Having achieved all this he moved on July 7, 1980, to destroy Chamoun's *al Ahrar* (Tiger) militia. This led to a bloody battle which left Bashir Gemayel the single most important political and military figure in Maronistan, the LF state within a state in the Junieh–Beirut–Metn Mountain area.¹²³

This piecemeal coup d'état naturally captured the attention of both the Syrians and the Israelis. From the Syrian point of view the rise of Bashir Gemayel posed an increasing threat. Syria had been trying to reconstruct a stable Lebanese balance by building up the stature of President Elias Sarkis, who had been appointed to the presidency largely as a result of Syrian influence. The rise of Bashir and his abrasive—and highly successful—challenge to Sarkis's authority visibly threatened to undo this delicate Syrian endeavor. Moreover, Damascus must have received word about Bashir's flirtations with Israel. From the Syrian perspective this combination of successful leadership of the LF, a challenge to Sarkis's authority, and Israeli support, must have been alarming.

By June 1978, Syrian forces and Bashir Gemayel's Lebanese Forces had engaged in an open conflict. When the latter attacked the Franjijeh stronghold in Ehde, Syrian forces helped the Marada militia fight back. In addition the Syrians rushed commandos to Beirut by helicopter. Bashir Gemayel and Camille Chamoun responded by instigating strikes and demonstrations which quickly escalated into gunfire against Syrian soldiers and then Syrian retaliation by shelling Beirut's Christian suburbs. When even this did not suffice to restrain the LF, Syrian President Assad issued an ultimatum: If the LF did not cease the fire forthwith, he threatened, Syria would occupy its strongholds. The LF did cease the

fire but renewed it two weeks later. Syria's reaction was devastating. Massive shelling of East Beirut followed as well as an attack on LF strongholds in the mountains. The result was a great number of casualties, a large-scale devastation of property, and a considerable exodus of Christians to Europe, North America, and South Africa.¹²⁴

Israel's Response

Israel's policy toward the LF up to the summer of 1978 had been equivocal. The bonds that had been created under the Rabin government were maintained. There was a steady, though modest, flow of arms. Phalangists were being trained by the IDF. Menachem Begin, Israel's Prime Minister since the elections of May 1977, reiterated (somewhat more explicitly) Rabin's commitment to prevent a "genocide" of the Lebanese Christians. Yet, on the whole, this was done with little enthusiasm and, indeed, with a great deal of skepticism. The Israelis were troubled by the evidence of disunity among the various constituent components of the LF. The Christians' atrocities against their own as well as against others were looked upon with dismay and disgust. Their military performance was frowned upon, and their loyalty, especially after their failure to help Israel by reinforcing Saad Haddad in the wake of Operation Litani, was held in doubt.¹²⁵

Nevertheless, as of the summer of 1978 this general attitude began to change. During the fighting early in June two IAF fighter planes were flown over the Beirut area as a threat to the Syrians that should they not stop the shelling of East Beirut, Israel might intervene. Thereafter, particularly following the defeat of the Christians described earlier, Israel at last agreed to Bashir Gemayel's request to step up the aid program. The LF was asked to pay for the equipment. But at the same time the entire Israeli involvement assumed a different scale. The number of Israeli advisers was greatly enlarged. This new team started from a methodical review of the potential and the real needs of the LF and then proceeded to reconstruct these hitherto disorganized bands into a fully structured army with standardized uniforms, an orderly chain of command, a detailed training program, and much of the weaponry of a modern, mechanized infantry force.¹²⁶

This new policy could be, and has been, explained exclusively in terms of Begin's simplistic world view. Begin, it is argued, was "genuinely moved by Chamoun's and Bashir's unabashed patriotism and declarations of appreciation of Israel as the only party that cared about the Lebanese Christian minority." He regarded himself "as bearing the responsibility for the fate of the Maronites and believed his involvement with their plight to be a moral duty no less than a matter of national self-interest." Above all, "he savored the idea of being able to influence events in a neighboring state."¹²⁷ To the extent that can be judged, all this, and probably more, is true enough. Begin's view of the world was very simplistic. He was perpetually reliving his experiences as a young Jew in Poland, on the eve of World War II¹²⁸ and, indeed, during the war. He was often unable to avoid interpreting the predicament of the Christians in Lebanon by an analogy with the plight of the Jews, or the Czechs, in the face of persecution by the Nazis and indifference by the rest of the world.¹²⁹ But was this all there was to Israel's increased involvement with Bashir Gemayel's enterprise? Most probably not.

As has been argued, Rabin—whose world view was shaped in Palestine and not in Europe—resisted the advice of his colleagues to expand the aid to the Phalangists only up to a point. By the early summer of 1976 he too became convinced that Israel's national interest dictated the cultivation of a tacit alliance with the Christians. This reflected no

affection for the Phalange; if anything he moved in this direction despite his natural distaste, even contempt, for the Christians. Rabin's attitude was shared by Begin's three Palestine-born ministers, Dayan, Weizman, and Yadin. The three of them together exerted a great deal of pragmatic influence over Begin's policies. Their absence in his second government was to have a critical impact on its policies. But all three were still members of Begin's government when the decision to step up assistance to the LF was made in June–July 1978. Indeed, the actual implementation of this policy was entrusted to Ezer Weizman, the Minister of Defense.¹³⁰ Differently stated, without discounting altogether the importance of Begin's world view as a factor in the decision to increase the involvement with the Lebanese, the most important reasons for this decision have to be sought elsewhere.

One important reason for expanding the ties with the LF could have been the evidence that Bashir's leadership was gradually effecting a seemingly revolutionary change in the very nature of the Christian posture vis-à-vis the PLO and the Syrians. Had the Christians not appeared like a bunch of murderous Mukhtars, a kind of Middle Eastern *cosa nostra*, lacking in genuine national will and incapable of pulling their resources together for the purpose of resisting their enemies, Rabin might have had fewer qualms about collaborating with them. Israel, after all, was engaged in a protracted conflict with Syria and the PLO. It succeeded in exploiting a unique conjunction of circumstances for the purpose of striking a limited deal with the Syrians at a time when the latter were fighting the PLO and supporting the Christians. But this deal could not provide the basis for a long-term accommodation with Syria. There was therefore a powerful reason, which some senior officials in the Mossad emphasized repeatedly, for attempting to buttress a counterveiling force such as the Christians.¹³¹ And if this was not done with great enthusiasm the reason lay in the evidence of the Christians' intrinsic lack of purpose and unity.

Conversely, the rise of Bashir Gemayel suggested to Israeli governments, irrespective of their personal makeup or ideological leanings, that the anti-Syrian and anti-PLO counterveiling force that Israel needed was rapidly emerging.¹³² Bashir's ascendance to hegemony of Maronistan was, of course, neither irreversible nor, indeed, achieved through means that any Israeli policy maker would condone. These factors continued to loom very large in Israeli policy formulation. The chiefs of both the Military Intelligence (AMAN) and the Mossad persistently cautioned, precisely for these reasons, against becoming too closely associated with the Christians and with Bashir in particular. But they were hard put to dispute the validity of the objective logic of forging a strategic alliance with the LF. Moreover, some of their own lieutenants who had gradually become Israel's field representatives in the continuous dialogue with the Christians tended to discount the weaknesses and emphasize the strengths of Bashir's leadership. They included old intelligence hands such as David Kimche from the Mossad and "Fuad," that is, Brigadier General Binyamin Ben-Eliezer from the army, whose integrity was not in doubt and whose judgment on previous experiences elsewhere appeared to have been superb. Both Kimche and Ben-Eliezer advocated fostering the links primarily for practical strategic reasons. But Kimche was also impressed by what he perceived to be a moral imperative. "Bashir once said to me," he recalled later, "Look, if I want to bring up my children learning physics in French and not in Arabic, it's my business, and I don't want others to dictate to me in what language they'll study physics. And if I want to go to church on Sunday morning and pray and keep my own holidays, it's my own business, and I don't want somebody to dictate to me about that." Kimche was of course aware of

Bashir's brutality, but he had no problem reconciling this with the moral principle of assistance to the supposedly persecuted Maronites. Asked about this by an American journalist, he offered the following reply,

You are examining Bashir's brutal conduct in accordance with Western values, and we're talking about a country in which factional strife has been the dominant characteristic for the last 2,000 years. And this is something we've got to understand. You've had massacres throughout their history. The attitude has been one of massacres, of countermassacres, of bloodletting, of blood feuds. It's something you don't like, and we don't like, but this happens to be the reality of Lebanon. It's a violent country.¹³³

What undoubtedly added weight to the advocacy of a strategic alliance with the LF was the rapid escalation of the exchange with the PLO as described above. Vertical escalation (in weapon systems) could not but be accompanied by horizontal escalation (in terms of the arena of fighting). If in the course of this process Israel were suddenly to reduce pressure on the PLO, the latter would gain a valuable breathing space in which to improve its logistics, purchase and introduce new weapon systems, and, in short, enhance its ability to resist Israel in the inevitable next round. Of course, the next round would not be as inevitable if only Israel were to agree to deal with the PLO directly with a view to creating a Palestinian state in the West Bank. But with this possibility ruled out for security reasons by all (and for ideological reasons by some), Israel could logically do only one thing: escalate (as it had done in the war of attrition along the Suez Canal nearly a decade earlier) for the purpose of ultimately achieving a deescalation. Consequently, sooner or later there would be no way of maintaining pressure on the PLO without hitting its logistic and command centers in Beirut. Such an expansion of the arena of fighting would ultimately make friction with Syria impossible to prevent. In turn an ally, a secure beachhead, right on the flank of both the PLO and the Syrians would be invaluable. And since Bashir Gemayel's leadership suggested that such an alliance had become feasible, it made sense to help him along. Indeed, precisely because his hegemony in Maronistan had not yet been fully consolidated, Israeli help could prove to be critical. Offered at the right moment and with sufficient largess it could tilt the precarious balance inside the Christian community in his favor. He would gain the tools for further strides; he would be able to prove to those who had doubted the wisdom of his abrasive challenge to the Syrians that his was the right approach; and, as a result, he would soon turn his potential for leadership into a real force. His gains in this respect would be Israel's gains too. Therefore, many Israeli officials argued, Israel should move ahead and support him.¹³⁴

While this was a rational argument it also entailed a gamble. Making Bashir Gemayel more powerful vis-à-vis his rivals within the Christian community and vis-à-vis the PLO and the Syrians would also increase his ability to preempt his Israeli mentors. Bashir made no secret of his ambition. He would not be satisfied with a policy of containment. What he wanted was nothing less than the retreat of the Syrians from Lebanon, the expulsion, or at least emasculation, of the PLO, and the subsequent recovery of Lebanese independence. His Israeli allies would also have liked to see these things happen. But by building up Bashir's power they provided him with the tools to initiate actions against the Syrians and the PLO at the time and place of his own choosing. He was never provided with enough power to seriously take on the Syrians, but he was provided with sufficient means to provoke the Syrians and then to proceed to call Israel to his rescue. Israel was

thus gaining a mixed blessing, an ally whose dependence on Israel patronage could be turned to his advantage and to Israel's disadvantage.

Israeli policy makers, with their own wealth of experience in the role both of dependent yet rather independent ally (*vis-à-vis* the United States) and of patron (*vis-à-vis* Mullah Moustapha al Barazani Kurdish rebels in Iraq), were probably aware of this complexity with its attendant risks. But they could rationalize that their freedom of action was not being seriously impaired. Moreover, given the stakes, namely, the political and military menace posed by the PLO and above all the formidable military menace posed by Syria, the loss of some control over Gemayel could be and in fact was presented as a reasonable price to pay for gaining a power base behind the lines of the Syrians and the PLO. It seems that some Israeli policy makers in the summer of 1978 already acted on the assumption that a major confrontation in Lebanon was a foregone conclusion. "How will the U.S. react if Israel decides to act in Lebanon?" Foreign Minister Dayan asked an American diplomat shortly before the Camp David negotiations.

It is not for us to ask you what would you do if Lebanon becomes part of Greater Syria, with Soviet experts and Soviet missiles and we shall face a long Syrian front. And how has it happened? Is it another Czechoslovakia? There was a war in Lebanon and so-called Arab peacekeeping forces were introduced, and the next step will be the conquest of Lebanon by Syria. It all happens either inadvertently or perhaps deliberately on the eve of [the] Camp David [meeting]. The Christians in Lebanon charge that because of the negotiations with the Egyptians we are throwing them to the dogs, and the Syrians exploit it. I doubt whether we could tell them that we are going to sit back and do nothing while the Syrians are taking over Lebanon, and that only because we do not wish to jeopardize [the] Camp David [talks] we shall keep quiet.¹³⁵

The fact that Dayan said these things to an American diplomat less than six months after Operation Litani is highly suggestive. Whatever his views in the 1950s, by 1978 he had lost all appetite for adventures in Lebanon. Indeed, he was essentially in favor of an understanding with Syria. But it seems that he realized that Operation Litani had not solved the problem and that Israel would have no alternative to a major strike in Lebanon. Had he not become convinced of that, he would not have spoken about it with an American envoy. And if he and his colleagues were inclined to view the problem in such drastic terms, their fear of losing control over Gemayel and the Phalange must have become secondary.

The Missile Crisis

Though Israeli-Phalange relations came under the title "alliance," implying cooperative rather than adversarial relations, they too, with their built-in tensions, ambiguities, and complexities, reflected more than just a question of personal compatibility or lack of it. All alliances are formed in response to the security dilemma but contain, in their internal relations, a controlled form of a different response to the same predicament. Actors enter into alliance in recognition of the inadequacy of self-reliance and not as a cherished end in itself. Alliances are thus born of tension. Their business is conducted in tension (euphemistically described as "discord" rather than as straightforward rivalry). And they collapse as soon as one of the parties senses that the benefits of staying in are smaller than the payoffs of coming back out into the harsh and cold world of self-reliance. But before

this disintegration actually happens the allies are structurally locked in a controlled competition the logic of which is the same as in Rousseau's stag hunt. Every individual member strives to maximize its gains and minimize its costs. A gain for one ally is always a loss for one, or all, of the others. Therefore all are pushed, logically, into a game of preemption against not only their adversaries but also their allies. This was true of alliances in the Peloponnesian Peninsula during the fifth century B.C. and still holds true of NATO, the single most successful alliance in world history. In this sense it was inevitable that the tacit, tenuous, asymmetrical alliance between Israel and the Phalange would be plagued intrinsically by a similar malaise, as it would have been no matter who the leading personalities in the game had been.

The first occasion on which this "iron law" manifested itself in the emerging Israeli-Maronite alliance was the missile crisis of April 1981. In December 1980 Begin gave Bashir Gemayel assurances that if Maronistan were attacked by Syria's air power, Israel would provide an IAF umbrella over the former's territory.¹³⁶ Begin was later to be castigated for being irresponsibly led up the garden path by his deceptively endearing young interlocuter. But it seems that the die had been cast by the sheer magnitude of Israel's support for the LF during the preceding two years. With or without Begin's assurances, the very fact that Israel had so extensively helped the LF had created for Israel a basic problem of credibility. If the LF were to be attacked by, or, for that matter, if they were to launch an attack on, the Syrians, Israel would have to bail it out if it were unable to hold its own. If Israel were to desist from doing so the Syrians, the LF, the PLO—the entire Middle East—would be left wondering about Israel's resolve. A failure to back up the Christians in such a scenario would almost certainly herald challenges in the future that Israel would be hard put to evade. Therefore Begin's verbal assurances were little more than icing on a cake that had already been baked.

Bashir Gemayel was, by all available accounts, as rash as he was ruthless. But this alone does not account for his moves in March–April 1981. From his point of view provoking the Syrians was the only method whereby he could engage Israel in a war that might result in the expulsion of Syria from Lebanon. Otherwise, he feared, the Syrian involvement in Lebanon would become permanent. This logic led him, toward the end of March 1981, to send a party of eighty soldiers to the town of Zahle. The city itself basically supported the LF, but it was surrounded by Syrian forces and it lay within a short distance of the Syrian headquarters. The raiding party immediately opened fire on the Syrian headquarters at Shtoura and on Syrian sentries guarding the Barouni River bridge on the nearby Beirut–Damascus road.

Syria reacted instantly. A siege was laid on Zahle, and a Syrian detachment attacked the LF position at a strategic point known as the "French Chamber" on top of nearby Mount Senin. Worried about Israel's reaction Assad reportedly sent a signal. His forces began to dig placements for four Soviet-made surface to air (SAM-6) missile batteries. Israel should have observed this and backed down from any involvement. If Israel were to react the Syrians would move ahead and install the missiles, thus challenging the stipulations of the April 1976 understanding. Advised of this by the intelligence chiefs, the Israeli government was, reportedly, inclined to avoid any action in support of Gemayel's besieged contingents in Zahle and the French Chamber. But Chief of Staff Eitan was nevertheless told to prepare the IAF for small-scale action. Eitan, however, understood his brief differently; he ordered the IAF to move immediately, and two Syrian transport helicopters were shot down. Syria responded by advancing SA-6, SA2-E, and SA3 surface-to-air missiles into the emplacements inside Lebanon. Israel now faced a

painful choice: should the missiles be knocked out and the escalation accelerated, or should Israel allow Assad to emerge from the duel as the winner?

Begin was inclined to unleash the IAF against the Syrian missiles and, in fact, authorized such an action on April 30. The IAF, however, was apparently opposed. Destroying the four SAM batteries was feasible. But the mechanics of doing so could only be used once with surprise. Therefore to waste the method of destroying the SAMs (the development of which took nearly a decade of strenuous work) on the elimination of some ten sites in the heat of an isolated incident was simply irrational—such an action should be spared for the event of a general war. Whether or not Begin was prepared to listen to such arguments and bear their political cost, namely, humiliation at home on the eve of elections and a serious loss of face abroad, is difficult to establish. One thing, however, remains clear. The day after April 30 he announced that the attack would be deferred owing to unfavorable weather conditions. Meanwhile, as a means of saving face, Begin eagerly accepted an American offer that Ambassador Philip Habib, an old diplomatic hand of Lebanese origin, should attempt to mediate in the dispute.

Syrian President Assad was inclined to interpret such a demonstration of Israeli acquiescence as a sign of weakness. He would not agree to remove the missiles, and his troops completed the conquest of the LF position on the crest of Mount Senin, from which the bulk of Maronistan could easily be seen. The Habib mission was therefore a total failure. If Begin had not already decided that a major war was inevitable, he must have moved closer to such a conclusion after this brief but dramatic incident. The incident revealed how complicated the situation in Lebanon had become with Syria in a commanding position, the LF's ability to drag Israel into complicated incidents enhanced, but Israel's freedom of action increasingly constrained. Sooner or later the LF would succeed in setting in motion a chain of events that would lead Israel into war. Severing ties with the LF in order to avoid such a trap was not considered for the reasons mentioned above. But if that was the case, if a war increasingly became inevitable, it would have been better from the Israeli point of view to retain freedom of choice about when, where, and how a war should begin.¹³⁷

If cutting this Gordian knot was one reason to move toward a decision of war it was reinforced by other factors too. Most important among them was the political menace as a result of the international ascendance of the PLO. The Reagan administration had come into power committed not to deal with the PLO unless it accepted UN Resolution 242 and the existence of Israel and renounced terrorism. By April 1981, however, the question of terrorism had quietly been dropped and "back-channel" contacts between the United States and the PLO had been resumed. Against the background of a pro-PLO upsurge of unrest in the West Bank and a visible American interest in the issue, and despite the knowledge that Secretary of State Haig, unlike some of his professional advisers, was not averse to a blow to the PLO, the swiftness with which the United States under Reagan returned to the orientation of the Carter administration was alarming to Israel. Increasingly it appeared as if the United States was looking for ways of advancing Israeli-Egyptian autonomy talks through a combination of indirect pressure on Israel to slow down the settlement policy in the West Bank and a discrete wooing of the PLO and its supporters on the West Bank, with the goal of breathing new life into the stalemated autonomy negotiations. Against such a background, it became even more imperative for Israel to continue the military pressure on the PLO in Lebanon as a means of ensuring its inflexibility (and thus disqualifying it for any meaningful contact with the United States). Indeed, if even the Reagan administration with its hard-line Cold War and pro-Israeli

outlook could be so easily drawn into a tacit acceptance of some of the less palatable (from the Israeli point of view) premises of Carter's policy, the time might have come for a far bolder move. The possibility of an all-out war which had been deferred for so long was increasingly becoming the only viable option (except, of course, its complete opposite—negotiations with the PLO).¹³⁸

Immediately after the missile crisis Israel, or at least Prime Minister Begin, was not yet ready for war. Begin for one was determined to avoid any action that might jeopardize the peace process with Egypt.¹³⁹ The general elections lay ahead. Bashir Gemayel and the Lebanese Forces might have needed more time for preparation. Above all, Begin had no minister of defense. Since Ezer Weizman's resignation over the issue of the defense budget in May 1980, Begin had acted as his own minister of defense with Mordechai Zippori as his deputy. In this state of affairs Chief of Staff Rafael Eitan was, in fact, elevated to the role of Begin's principal adviser on defense questions. Eitan was an excellent field officer, but in Begin's assessment he was not the type of military leader who could lead the IDF in a full-scale war. Zippori, on the other hand, had increasingly annoyed Begin with his criticism of the entire policy. Zippori had no consistent alternative to offer. He was merely insisting on caution and greater prudence. In such views he was often supported by Mossad Chief, Major General (ret.) Itzhak Hofi and by the Head of Military Intelligence General Yehoshua Saguy. As a result Begin often faced a core of opposition to his views within his own administration which was reminiscent of Ben Gurion's problem with Moshe Sharett on the eve of the 1956 Sinai Campaign. The solution to this problem evidently lay in the reconstitution of the leadership on defense matters following the elections of July 1981. Meanwhile holding the PLO at bay both militarily and politically had to be sought through a policy of sustained pressure against the PLO (in south Lebanon), coupled by continued support for the LF (in north Lebanon), and accompanied by a massive settlement policy on the West Bank and by harsh measures against the West Bank Arabs.

On May 28, 1981, Israel launched a massive air attack on the PLO in Lebanon. The attack, which resembled the last stages of the Canal War more than a decade earlier, lasted until June 3, causing a great deal of material damage as well as approximately 100 casualties. Concerned with denying Israel a pretext for a large-scale operation, the PLO reacted gingerly but Arafat's ability to hold back his troops in the face of such an attack was limited. During the PNC meeting earlier in May the congress had produced a draft resolution calling for Israel's liquidation. According to one well-informed source, it "was not a serious resolution. But it was a warning shot to Arafat from some *Fateh* leaders, the leftists in particular, expressing their frustration with politics and compromise, which were getting them nowhere." Significantly, the leader of this challenge to Arafat's policies and position was the chairman's right-hand man, Abu Iyad (Salah Khalaf) who advocated a return to a "mix of terror with politics."¹⁴⁰

Given this weakening of Arafat's position, in itself the result of Israel's constant military pressure, further escalation over the next two months became almost inevitable. When Israel renewed the attack on July 10, the PLO returned fire in a wide front covering Israel's entire north from Nahariya to Kiryat Shemonah. The upshot was a war of attrition of an unprecedented scale in this area. As thirty-three Israeli villages and towns were hit by PLO fire, a massive flight of the population began. Within days Kiryat Shemonah became virtually a ghost town. Many people fled other towns and villages in the area. This was not what Begin had anticipated. His military advisers insisted that if only they could keep the pressure on the PLO for another few days, the organization would need a

long time to recover. But Begin was so shocked by the flight of the population—a nightmare that all his predecessors had feared but none had ever to face—that he hastened to embrace a U.S. offer that Ambassador Philip Habib negotiate the terms of a ceasefire with “Lebanon” (in fact with the PLO).¹⁴¹

The guns on Israel’s northern border fell silent on July 24, 1981. Israel had suffered yet another reversal in the intermittent battle with the PLO. Militarily the latter was beaten very seriously, too, but it had succeeded in obtaining indirect recognition by both the United States and Israel. Yet behind this facade it is clear that from Begin’s point of view this was not an accommodative move. Indeed it seems that Begin had at last resolved to lead up to a big war. Its purpose would be to destroy the PLO’s base in Lebanon altogether and, at the same time, to undermine its political position. The long and painful process in which Israel attempted to resolve both its military and its wider political problem with the PLO through limited means ultimately led to a point where a basic choice had to be made. Israel would either have to pursue a settlement with the PLO or to use all its power to deal the PLO a massive blow.

The first of these alternatives was coherent and feasible. If only Israel agreed to deal with the Palestinians on an equal basis a settlement could be worked out, or, alternatively, the PLO would be broken apart and unambiguously exposed as an intransigent entity with which no serious negotiations could be conducted. The United States would support such an accommodative Israeli move. Egypt would support it too. Jordan would not be able to prevent it. The Arab oil powers would go along with it and so would Western Europe and the Third World. But this was an alternative that few Israelis would countenance. The Labor party was just as opposed to it as was the Likud. The latter articulated its view on the matter in terms that laid a greater emphasis on an ideological rationale than on security considerations. The former put the main emphasis on the strategic aspect. But both parties, as well as most other political forces in Israel, started from a common basis: A Palestinian state on the West Bank, with or without the PLO, would mean that another power would be given freedom to deploy armed forces astride Israel’s heavily populated “waistline.”

It is impossible to say with any certainty that a Palestinian state is bound to pose an unacceptable menace to Israel. Theoretically the Palestinians, with or without the PLO, could turn out to be very cooperative neighbors. But if Israel acts in accordance with the logic of the security dilemma, it is just as likely as most nations in history to assume the worst, namely, that giving the Palestinians such credit would entail an unacceptable risk. This, in turn, rendered an Israeli decision to go to war in Lebanon some time in the 1980s virtually inevitable. Unattracted by this prospect and, owing to their unusually rich experience, fully alive to all the difficulties this alternative could entail, successive Israeli governments, including Begin’s, chose to put it off until alternative courses of action had been tried. In a process closely resembling Israel’s experience from 1953 to 1956 and its encounter with Egypt and Jordan from 1968 to 1970, the period from 1978 to 1981 demonstrated the incoherence of the middle ground between “accommodation” and “assertion.” The last straw was the mini-attribution of July 1981. If the population of Kiryat Shemonah could no longer hold on, the implication was that the entire Jewish population of the Galilee had become hostage to the PLO. To achieve that, the PLO did not have to be omnipotent. As Begin and his colleagues knew full well, in conventional military terms the PLO remained what it had always been: a ragtag militia of mediocre fighting ability and a verbal courage that was not matched by a veritable esprit de corps. But all this weakness did not affect its ability to hold Israel to ransom. From then on, every time an attack was launched by the PLO or any of its numerous and quite unruly constituent

organizations on Israelis at home, in the occupied territories, or for that matter, abroad, Israel would be denied the ability to exact a price for this through punitive action. Conversely, if the PLO were to "go political" and gradually renounce military action and terrorism, it would increase the political menace (from the Israeli point of view) of a Palestinian state. To escape this trap without running the risk that a political settlement with the PLO would entail, Israel could do only one thing—go to war. In principle such a decision could under certain circumstances rally a broadly based national consensus, but the when, the how, and the what directly resulting from it would prove more divisive than any previous Israeli decision of a comparable magnitude.¹⁴²

3

War

Every unsuccessful war is bound to be associated in the public mind with the names of a small number of villains, just as every successful war creates, almost as a matter of a law of nature, its outstanding heroes. Moshe Dayan went down in history as the hero of the 1956 and 1967 wars and as the main culprit for the great surprise of 1973. Arik Sharon, through a similar mechanism of oversimplification, was turned into the hero of the 1973 crossing of the Suez Canal and the outstanding culprit for the unsuccessful Lebanon War in 1982.

The fertile ground in which such folksy interpretations of complex historical events grow is people's yearning for heroes and their equally burning desire to blame a calamity on the head of one individual. Affection and pride require a personified object with which people can identify. Humiliation, frustration, and pain require a personified object of hate and recrimination. People cannot identify with faceless abstractions with the same intensity with which they can identify with one familiar, easily recognized figure of flesh and blood. Similarly people cannot really hate ideas except when they become associated in their minds with a familiar face.

Such an inclination for what the French aptly call *personification de pouvoir* is, of course, grounded in the reality of politics. Decisions are made by people operating within hierarchical systems. There is thus always an identifiable leader at the apex of any organization. And since the span of attention of the general public is limited, it tends to willingly embrace single person interpretations. Moreover, the main vehicles of interpretation of events as they occur are journalists who are either incapable of deeper understanding, or professionally predisposed to save their readers the full complexity of a picture and feed them colorful, personified, and therefore punchy shorthand interpretations instead. This is the mechanism by which historical myths are born, and it is the reappraisal of such myths that turns the study of history and politics into a fascinating pursuit.

To state that in the story of Israel's invasion of Lebanon, Arik Sharon and Menachem Begin are the main villains has become trite. Such a view is a somewhat oversimplified interpretation. If Sharon could lead his chief, Begin, his subordinates in the IDF, his colleagues in the cabinet, his entire nation up the garden path it reflects more poorly on them than on Sharon. There are few examples in history in which nations became so spellbound by the magic of one person that they followed his orders blindly. Sharon had

no spell over the Israelis and certainly not over his cabinet colleagues, the Labor opposition, or the IDF. He was not particularly popular—when he ran for election on his own, he received barely 40,000 votes. To move the enormous military machine that he ordered into Lebanon he needed the acquiescence, if not the enthusiastic support, of a far larger circle. The truth of the matter appears to be that he had this support, at least up to a point. He had clearly transgressed the limits of his formal authority in an audacious and brazen way for which he was made to pay later on. But there is more than a grain of truth in his insistence that he was not acting alone. This, in a nutshell, is the main argument of this chapter.

Begin's War Cabinet

To contend that the problem Israel faced in Lebanon was becoming increasingly more acute is not the same as to argue that ambitions, whims, ideological predispositions, and the dynamics of policy making and domestic politics had no impact over the course of events in the year leading up to the war of 1982. Israel's dilemma was an objective outcome of the conflict with the Arab world, the disintegration of Lebanon, the rise of the PLO, and of course U.S. policy. Israeli response, however, was critically affected by subjective factors such as ideological leanings, personal ambitions, and the response of critical decision makers to the exigencies of domestic politics. As the concept of security dilemma would predict, in the final analysis precipitative action and assertion is more likely to be preferred than cooperation and accommodation. But when, where, and in what form this action would occur cannot but be affected by a variety of subjective variables.

The pertinence of this general rule to the Israeli encounter with the problem of Lebanon became increasingly conspicuous during the year prior to the invasion of 1982. The Likud virtual victory in the general elections of June 1981 enabled Menachem Begin to form something amounting to a war coalition. Gone were Weizman, Yadin, and Dayan, the experienced pragmatists who had nudged Begin toward peace with Egypt on the basis of a West Bank autonomy and a complete withdrawal from the Sinai. Their place in the inner circle of government was taken by tough-minded hawks (including opponents of the peace with Egypt) such as Itzhak Shamir, Moshe Arens, Yoram Aridor, and, of course, Ariel Sharon. In fact Begin had replaced the hard core of cautious pragmatists by a group of tougher, less experienced ministers. If it came to a decision to launch a war he would be able to count, in addition to the three individuals just mentioned, on Chief of Staff Rafael Eitan. He would still need to overcome the doubts of experienced ministers such as National Religious Party (NRP) leader Joseph Burg, as well as those of Mordechai Zippori, Chaim Berman, and Simha Ehrlich. On top of that, Arens had just been appointed Ambassador to the United States and would therefore be absent from the scene of deliberation. But with the exception of Zippori, a retired Brigadier General with vast military experience, all the other "doves" were incapable of holding their own against Begin's formidable personal authority. Moreover, Begin could also count on notorious compromisers such as Moshe Nissim and Gideon Pat as well as on other "hawks" such as Itzhak Moda'i, all from the Liberal party component of his Likud alignment.

Having more or less decided to lead the country to war, Begin overcame his initial reservations about Sharon and proceeded to appoint him Minister of Defense. Previously he had reportedly said that if Sharon were given this post he would surround the Knesset

with tanks and stage a coup d'état.¹ Whether Begin had actually said this is a moot point; what seems clear is that under routine circumstances he would entertain grave misgivings about allowing Sharon access to the ministry of defense. Conversely, the fact that he resolved to appoint Sharon to this position, reinforces the impression that Begin was consciously headed for war.

Not having had any military experience, Begin was a complete dilettante when it came to matters martial. In the words of Defense Minister Ezer Weizman, Begin "showed little interest in what was happening in the security establishment and when his interest was aroused it was almost always in connection to trivia." On one occasion he reacted with great excitement when the chief of staff ordered soldiers to wear their berets on their heads rather than on their shoulders. "My talk with him on this issue," Weizman recalled sadly, "was longer than our talk concerning the acquisition for the IAF of F-16 jets."² He venerated the display of power in an old-fashioned romantic and grandiloquent way, mistakenly emphasizing matters of appearance and utterly lacking any realistic understanding of strategy. "He lacks," said the former head of the Mossad, "the ability, the background or the experience to grasp the significance of military matters and since there [was] . . . not a person on his staff who . . . [was] capable of receiving processed military data,"³ Sharon must have appeared to him as the greatest master of generalship. He evidently never studied in detail any of Sharon's more notorious blunders. Above all, although he must have been aware of Sharon's track record of grand disobedience and lack of collegiality, Begin probably believed he would be able to ride this tiger on the road to decisive victory.⁴

The risk which Begin was taking in appointing Sharon can only be fully appreciated by reviewing Sharon's career at some length. Born Ariel Scheinerman in 1928, he graduated from the Geulah High School in Tel Aviv in 1945 and at once joined the Hagana underground. During the next three years he completed the Hagana squad commanders' course and trained others for a while, then served in the British-sponsored Jewish Settlement Police, and subsequently, with the outbreak of the 1948 war, joined the "Hish" (acronym for Field Corps) as squad commander. Rising within a short while to the rank of a platoon commander he was severely wounded in the critical battle of Latroun, a controversial campaign in which Israeli losses were heavy and their mission was not accomplished. According to one informed source, Sharon subsequently developed many of his own ideas about the conduct of war in the light of this trauma.⁵

After recovering from his injuries, he was appointed company commander and then battallion intelligence officer during the battles of the Faluja "pocket" in which, again, the IDF repeatedly failed to subdue a small contingent of besieged Egyptians (including Gamal Abdul Nasser). From 1949 to 1951 Sharon commanded a reconnaissance company of an infantry brigade and then passed a course for battallion commanders. In 1952 he became chief of intelligence in the IDF Central Command and was then moved to the IDF Northern Command, where he served under Moshe Dayan in a similar capacity. Dayan was unusually impressed with Sharon for the first time when he asked him to cross the border and abduct a number of enemy soldiers for the purpose of exchanging them subsequently for Israelis held by the other side. Asked whether he could do it, Sharon replied promptly in the affirmative and carried out the order within a matter of hours.⁶

Toward the end of 1952 Sharon was sent by the IDF to study for a Bachelor's degree in history and Middle Eastern studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Before long, however, he was requested by Colonel Mishal Shaham, commanding officer of the Jerusalem district, to carry out a special operation; a small-scale reprisal against an Arab

village northwest of Jerusalem on the (then) Jordanian side of the border. Sharon had a free hand to pick his men from among his friends and acquaintances on an ad hoc basis. He organized the task force within a day or two and then carried out the operation. It was a failure.

Nevertheless, the determination, style, and resourcefulness Sharon showed in organizing the raid impressed his superiors sufficiently to ask him to establish a special secret unit for reprisal raids. The new unit, which came to be known as Detachment 101, was relieved of the usual requirements of uniform and organization, and its very existence was a closely guarded secret for several months. Although organized in a hurry, Detachment 101 was ready for action within weeks. It then set out to perform, often several times a week, deep penetration night raids against Jordan Legion soldiers and Palestinian civilians in the Jordanian-held West Bank. The purpose of these raids was to create the greatest degree of confusion and terror in that area in order to persuade the Jordanian authorities and the Palestinian population that it was not in their interest to participate in, or offer support for, raids on the Israeli communities across the border.⁷

Initially Sharon performed the task superbly. Indeed, to the great satisfaction of his superiors, Detachment 101 quickly became a standard setter for the IDF as a whole in terms of its professional performance. Yet by October 1953 Sharon had overplayed his hand for the first (but not the last) time and thereby defeated the main purpose he had been called upon to advance. On October 12, 1953, a party of Palestinian fedayeen (commandos) attacked the Israeli village of Yahud, ten miles east of Tel Aviv. A woman and two of her children were killed. The IDF was ordered to carry out a reprisal raid. Sharon, who was soon to merge Detachment 101 with the IDF's regular paratroop battalion and to become the new unit's commanding officer, was told by Chief of Staff Dayan to attack the Palestinian village of Qibyah, on the West Bank. The operation was to be carried out by Detachment 101, with some support from the paratroopers.

Sharon and his soldiers returned in the early morning of October 15, having taken the lives of more than fifty men, women, and children. Israel was condemned by world opinion. The United Nations accused it of perpetrating another Deir Yassin (a notorious massacre during the 1948 war). Acting Prime Minister Sharett was outraged. Ben Gurion and Dayan criticized the "excess" but did not officially blame the IDF or reprimand Sharon.⁸ At the same time the minister of defense and the chief of staff had become resolved to hasten the dismantling of Detachment 101. From then on the emphasis in reprisal operations would be on military targets only.

Dayan's main lesson from the incident was that it would have a salutary impact on the performance of the IDF. "Instead of units returning, as in the past, and offering excuses why they had not done what was expected of them," he noted, "the paratroopers had to explain after every operation why they have done more than was expected of them."⁹ Soon afterward, however, even Dayan would shudder at yet another typical Sharon excess. On the night of December 10, 1955, Sharon was ordered to launch an attack on Syrian forces on the northeast coast of the Sea of Galilee. The Syrians had in the previous months opened fire on Israeli boats on the lake, and Ben Gurion, in his capacity as acting prime minister, acting foreign minister, and defense minister (Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sharett was in the United States), decided to inflict upon them a deterrent punishment. Shortly before the operation Sharon had requested permission to attack two additional Syrian positions in the same area. Since he did not request more men or weapons, Ben Gurion, who was informed of the request by Dayan, thought that the requested additional task could not be carried out in any case. Hence he authorized it. Sharon's units launched the attack

successfully. But instead of killing a small though unspecified number of Syrians—as was his expressed intention—they killed close to fifty.

This time even Ben Gurion was angry and reprimanded the chief of staff for being “too successful.” Dayan commented wryly that if he had been asked how many would be killed he would not have answered. “I know,” he added, “that Arik’s quota in operations such as this is measured in scores. He has never finished with less than scores.”¹⁰

Often, however, the “scores” of casualties in Sharon’s operations included a frightful number of his own soldiers. The most celebrated such case was Sharon’s blunder at the Mitlah pass during the 1956 Sinai campaign. By this time Sharon had risen to the rank of paratroop brigade commander. One battalion from his brigade under (then) Lieutenant Colonel Rafael Eitan was ordered to jump west of the strategic Mitlah pass. Shortly before the landing, however, an Egyptian encampment of tents was spotted close to the jumping site. Hence Eitan’s battalion was ordered to jump east of the pass instead. The rest of the brigade under Sharon’s own command was ordered to make its way from the Israel border to the pass. The task of the entire force was to prevent the Egyptians from sending reinforcements or from fleeing. To carry out this assignment Sharon had no need to send his own troops through the narrow pass, but nevertheless he requested permission to send in a reconnaissance patrol.

Chief of Staff Dayan had a keen appreciation of a commander’s need to make on-the-spot decisions and to take the initiative, so he granted Sharon the requested permission. But instead of sending a patrol Sharon sent a large task force consisting of two paratrooper companies mounted on Armored Personnel Carriers (APCs), one tank platoon, the entire brigade reconnaissance company on trucks, as well as a battery of heavy mortars. The force did not know that five Egyptian companies were hiding in the caves overlooking the pass. Therefore in something amounting to suicidal carelessness, it entered the pass in single file, one vehicle after the other. The result was a pitched battle in which Sharon’s paras killed 150 Egyptians, but lost 38 and wounded 120 of their own for no good reason and contrary to explicit orders.

Dayan later marveled at the fighting spirit of the paras. But he was outraged at the fact that he “failed,” as he put it, “to establish relations of confidence and trust” with this unit.¹¹ This understated critique of Sharon was made more explicit by Ben Gurion, who reportedly noted in his diary that “if only Sharon could abandon his habit of not telling the truth and if only he could avoid gossip he would have been an exemplary military leader.”¹² But if Dayan and Ben Gurion were still prepared to overlook Sharon’s aberrations, the latter’s immediate subordinates in the paratroop corps thought otherwise. After the disaster in the Mitlah, three of them, Eitan (later to serve as chief of staff under Sharon), Hofi (head of the Mossad during the war in Lebanon), and Gur (chief of staff from 1974 to 1978), refused to serve under Sharon’s command. When this quiet rebellion grew as the kibbutz movement, many of whose boys had been killed in the Mitlah, demanded that Sharon be relieved of his command, the IDF General Staff yielded. Sharon was sent to study in Britain and was subsequently relegated to relatively marginal positions under two consecutive chiefs of staff (Laskov and Tzur, 1957–63).¹³

This prolonged punishment must have greatly increased Sharon’s pent-up bitterness toward his colleagues and evident determination to demonstrate his genius and indispensability. If that was the case—and it is difficult to establish—the opportunity to do so was offered to him by Itzhak Rabin. Rabin was appointed chief of staff of the IDF in January 1964. Shortly before taking office he had a talk with Ben Gurion, who was due to retire

within days of the talk. One of the things Ben Gurion told him related to Sharon. "You know," he said, "that I have a special attitude to Sharon. I view him as one of the best soldiers and as one of the most ferocious fighters we have. If only he could speak the truth it would help his prospects for promotion. I beg you not to treat him as he has been treated in the past." Ben Gurion "did not speak in detail," Rabin recalled, "but this is the way I understood his words: Dayan, Laskov and Tzur had not promoted . . . [Sharon] since Operation Kadesh [the 1956 war], therefore I assumed that Ben Gurion requested that I should consider the possibility of promoting [him]."¹⁴

Rabin proceeded to unfreeze Sharon's promotion, appointing him chief of staff of Northern Command. In this capacity, Sharon commanded many of the fiercest clashes between Israel and Syria during 1964–65. He was then promoted to the rank of Major General and became, simultaneously, chief of the general staff training wing and commanding officer of an armored division.¹⁵

By all accounts his performance in the 1967 war was brilliant. His division was in charge of the central sector in the Sinai theater with two divisions on his flanks. He planned and carried out a complex, highly successful combined operation of armor, airborne infantry, artillery, and infantry and succeeded in three days in breaking through heavily defended Egyptian positions and carrying out a large-scale tank battle in which the Egyptians lost heavily. Riding the wave of this well-earned esteem, he then aspired to the position of chief of staff of the IDF. But this was not to be. It took two years before he was given charge of the IDF Southern Command, and during these years his relations with most of his colleagues were strained and complicated. The overt reason was Sharon's critique of the very notion of the static Bar Lev line along the Suez Canal. Although retrospectively Sharon's critique proved to have been correct (he advocated either allowing Egypt to reopen the Suez Canal or an IDF reliance on a mobile concept of defense), it seems that much of the strained relationships with his associates was of a personal nature. Sharon, in Weizman's words, was an "outsider" since, not having served in the Palmach elite before 1948, he could not easily fit in the company of "Chaim Bar Lev, Itzhak Rabin, David Elazar, Shaike Gavish and other Palmach veterans." He was therefore rejected by the *Havura* (the Hebrew word for "intimate group") and often berated it and its military acumen.¹⁶

As OC Southern Command Sharon attempted to implement unilaterally his own ideas for deployment along the Suez Canal. Simultaneously he also proposed a method for dealing with Palestinian terrorism in the Gaza Strip. Having at last extracted permission to act, he moved with characteristic gusto, ruthlessness, and determination. Massive arrests took place. Bulldozers were brought to the scene and ordered to open wide avenues right in the heart of the Palestinian refugee camps. There were casualties. There was a great deal of public criticism. But the plan worked and, since then (1970), the Gaza Strip has been the most peaceful part of the occupied territories.¹⁷

The next controversy surrounding Arik Sharon involved a devious and unsavory crossing of the lines between military and political domains. Early in 1969 Sharon approached Menachem Begin (then a minister without portfolio in Meir's National Unity Government) and the leaders of the Liberal faction in Begin's GAHAL parliamentary bloc and sounded them out on the possibility of giving him a ministerial position if he were to retire from the I.D.F.. Begin, for many years a pariah in Israeli politics, showed interest not only because of Sharon's fame (and putative electoral appeal) but also because the very idea that a retired general would join GAHAL (an acronym for Herut-Liberal bloc) and not (as had been the case until then) the Labor party was enticing for the GAHAL leadership.

Sharon, however, did not mean business. He reportedly made sure that the Labor leadership would learn about his contacts with the GAHAL, figuring that this would force them to hasten his promotion inside the army. The result was as he had hoped. He received the position of OC Southern Command, and, in a note to Pinhas Sapir, Minister of Finance and the real king maker in the Labor party, he indicated that a meeting with Begin a few days earlier had convinced him that “under no circumstances” should he go into politics “in the status of a dependent” on Begin.¹⁸

Famous last words. When he realized that he would never be appointed chief of staff, Sharon accepted the inevitability of retirement from the IDF and renewed his contacts with Begin’s liberal allies. This was on the eve of the 1973 general elections, at a moment when he could still guarantee a safe seat for himself in the seventh Knesset. But Sharon had no intention of becoming a new backbencher. In fact he sought nothing less than the creation of a new parliamentary bloc capable of forming a government. He turned to the liberals because he could more easily use them as a basis for an improved bargaining position vis-à-vis Begin. Remarkable as this scheme was, he did succeed in turning the loose Herut-Liberal block (GAHAL) into a new party, the Likud, which in the December 1973 elections won thirty-nine seats (compared with the declining Labor’s fifty-seven) and after the May 1977 elections succeeded in forming—for the first time in Israel’s history—a cabinet with no Labor representation. This was indeed a spectacular feat for which Sharon fully deserves the credit.¹⁹

The 1973 war caught Sharon and his associates in the emerging Likud in the middle of this entire maneuver, just as it caught Israel in the midst of a stormy election campaign. The results, in terms of the conduct of the war and in terms of Sharon’s fortunes, were very significant. Having quit the IDF shortly before the war, Sharon had missed a golden opportunity to be OC Southern Command at one of that command’s most critical moments. Instead he was merely a reserve division commander under a former subordinate, General Shmuel Gonen, who was both his junior and a far less capable officer.

This gave rise to a most unhealthy situation. The war began with a complete surprise as the scant Israeli force along the Suez Canal failed to abort an Egyptian crossing. Gonen appeared to be confused and not entirely in control. Sharon’s neighbor on his northern flank was General Adan, a typical member of the *Havura* which Sharon detested and held in low esteem. In addition Adan had been a supporter of the defense concept which was adumbrated by Bar Lev and had been vehemently challenged by Sharon. Above all, Sharon was no longer a regular officer with aspirations for promotion and consequently had a minimum of respect for his colleagues and superiors. He was already a politician of national stature and had merely reentered the army as a reserve officer.

Against such a background a near-collapse of the chain of command, a communication jam, and serious repercussions for the conduct of battle were virtually foregone conclusions. Sharon disregarded his immediate superior, Gonen, and even the orders of the chief of staff and the cabinet. He would approach Dayan, the Minister of Defense, whenever he disagreed with his immediate superiors. He conducted the war in the presence of a large entourage of favorable journalists and constantly issued statements to the press. He conducted his own war with a minimum of coordination with others, thus contributing to the catastrophic failure of the counterattack on October 8, 1973. In Dayan’s words, “relations between Arik on the one hand and the Southern Command and the Chief of Staff on the other hand were utterly lacking in mutual trust and reached an intolerable nadir.”²⁰ Nevertheless, in terms of the public image, the responsibility for this state of

affairs was blamed on others while the rewards for the successful Israeli counterattack and the crossing of the Suez Canal on October 15 were attributed disproportionately to Sharon. Ultimately his contribution to the war was less impressive than it had been in 1967. But in the public eye, or at least with some segments of the bewildered public, he emerged as "Arik, King of Israel."²¹

Even before the dust raised by this tumultuous affair had settled down, Sharon was back in politics completing the formation of the Likud and electioneering for the Knesset. Needless to say, just as he mixed politics with the strategy of the war, so did he mix the causes and the conduct of the war with electoral politics. The extent to which his personal performance contributed to the Likud gains in the elections of December 1973 is difficult to measure, but it seems plausible that the earthquake of the Yom Kippur War added a great deal of weight to the shift of the electorate toward greater support than ever before for the rightist Likud, of which Sharon was the undisputed godfather.

Nonetheless, Labor was still the dominant party and it formed the next government. Sharon had therefore no choice but to adjust to his new role as a member of the Knesset's main opposition. Evidently this was hardly enough for a man with such a drive for power. It was thus fortunate from his point of view that Rabin, his old patron in the IDF and the new Prime Minister, invited him to be his national security adviser. Sharon quit his parliamentary seat and once again seemingly crossed the lines. But not quite—Rabin's offer gave Sharon a ringing title but the power that went with the position was negligible. Frustrated, Sharon tried to convince Rabin to dissolve the cabinet, to run for election at the head of a personal, nonpartisan list, and to form a national "redemption" government. The list he proposed of members of this technocratic government primarily included retired army officers such as himself.²²

Rabin rejected the idea. Sharon's frustration therefore led him to search for new avenues to advance his career. While still advising Rabin he gradually drifted toward a vociferous support of Gush Emunim, the Bloc of the Faithful, a religious-nationalist movement advocating the immediate annexation of the West Bank. If this was not quite consonant with his position as a civil servant (as Rabin's adviser), it helped build his reputation as a forceful advocate of Greater Israel. Soon this reputation would become valuable. For in the spring of 1977 Israel was preparing for new elections. Having antagonized both Begin's Herut and his own Liberal party colleagues, Sharon urgently needed a constituency of his own in order to ensure his return to the Knesset. He therefore formed an ad hoc party, Shlomzion ("the Peace of Zion") and concocted a program with a clear appeal for frustrated Sephardis with a nationalist bent. When the votes were counted, Shlomzion had gained only 2 seats (out of 120).

This was hardly impressive, but it suited Sharon's needs. The elections created a "turnover" (*Mahapach* in Hebrew). For the first time the Likud would be close to a majority, especially if the newly formed Democratic Movement for Change (DMC), which had gained most of its seats from the Labor constituency, were to join the Likud in the formation of a cabinet. In such a constellation Sharon's two seats were priceless. He at once entered into negotiations with the Likud, formed an alliance with them, and secured for himself a ministerial position in Begin's first cabinet.

This, however, was not quite enough. For one thing it remained an insecure position because of Sharon's narrowly based constituency. Second, Sharon evidently set his eyes on the ministry of defense and ultimately on the prime ministership. He needed a more solid political base, and the ministry of agriculture gave him the leverage with which to develop it. To be sure, although of "peasant stock," as Weizman described him,²³ and the owner

of one of Israel's very few large private farms, Sharon does not seem to have had any intention of focusing on agriculture as such, since this would not earn him the electoral and party base he needed. Rather, he used his ministerial post for the purpose of gaining chairmanship of the cabinet's committee on settlements. For the next four years he nearly neglected ordinary agriculture. The flow of all his enormous energy was diverted toward one goal: building as many settlements in the West Bank as he could, even half-empty and nearly phantom ones, as a means of qualifying for membership in the inner circle of Likud leadership. In this plan he was very successful. As was noted by well-informed observers, when "after the 1981 elections, he gave up the agriculture portfolio for that of defense, he left behind him a significant monument: 103 settlements, most of them established during his tenure, with plans for some 60 more to be established in the 1980s."²⁴

This, one suspects, had little to do with Sharon's real ideological convictions. His entire career, the audacity with which he changed his allegiances, and the brazen manner in which he interpreted orders, suggests that the overarching principle governing his actions was an unideologic drive to the top. The settlement program was thus a means to an end rather than an end in itself. It helped his drive for a solid following inside the Likud which in turn earned him in 1981 the defense portfolio. Indeed, as minister of agriculture he advised Begin during the Camp David negotiations to return the whole of Sinai to Egypt. The implication was that a vast settlement effort in northern Sinai that Sharon himself had been instrumental in building would have to be dismantled.²⁵ And subsequently, as minister of defense, Sharon presided over, in fact managed, this demolition enterprise.

If Sharon had succeeded in swaying the policies of cabinets headed by powerful leaders such as Ben Gurion and Golda Meir, his impact on decision making in Begin's cabinet was virtually overbearing. This stemmed primarily from the combination of Begin's unquestioned authority over his colleagues on the one hand and his fundamental weakness in the face of Sharon on the other hand. To his colleagues the prime minister was a venerable "civilian commander." He would "listen to them with immense patience. But in the end he would leave no doubt: the decision remains what it has been from the very beginning." They would "obey him blindly and hardly dare challenge him . . . one penetrating look by Begin would be sufficient to silence any island of resistance. He focuses his eyes, wrinkles his forehead and says nothing. [But] No interpretation is necessary. At first they [the ministers] waver. But when it comes to a vote they all look at Begin and vote with him."²⁶

Faced by Sharon, however, the same man became a weak and muddle-headed admirer. "Begin has a special attitude to military people. This is seven times more so in the case of Sharon. Arik's grandmother was the midwife who delivered Begin in Brisk [Poland]. Sharon's grandfather, Mordechai Scheinerman, was the closest friend of Dov Zeev Begin, the Prime Minister's father. They were the first Zionists in Brisk. They broke together into the synagogue in order to hold there a memorial service to Herzl."²⁷ Moved by such sentiments and convinced of Sharon's military genius, Begin was ill equipped, perhaps even ill disposed, to act as a critical superior. Unlike Ben Gurion who three decades earlier had been faced with a comparable problem as a result of his colleagues' relative weakness and his chief of staff's (Dayan's) magnetic personality, Begin did not have the technical expertise, the mental concentration, the patience for detail, or, indeed, the strategic wisdom to control Sharon.

The minister of defense could thus manipulate the Prime Minister while relying on him to lead other ministers blindly in the path of Sharon's choosing. Such an unhealthy

scenario would have beset Israel with grave problems even without the occurrence of a major war. But against the background of a preparation for war, not to speak of its actual waging and the complex issue of its termination, the dangerous disruption of the balance within Begin's cabinet ultimately led to a national tragedy.

The original sin, so to speak, was not the decision to go to war. For reasons mentioned earlier the Israeli political elite, including much of the Labor opposition, had by 1982 come close to accepting the notion that the situation along Israel's northern border, and, beyond it, the political trend seemingly leading to American pressure on Israel to accept a Palestinian state, combined to make a large-scale military operation an acceptable proposition and perhaps even an urgent imperative. Rather, the original sin was the government's failure to build sufficient consensus around a clear set of objectives. When Ben Gurion had faced the decision to launch war against Egypt late in 1955, he too had difficulties in generating consensus. The proposition of a war in the uninhabited Sinai desert was in some respects far simpler than the proposition of a war in populous Lebanon. Ben Gurion's personal status among his cabinet colleagues and in the nation at large was higher than either Sharon's or even Begin's. Ben Gurion was fully aware of his unusual status. Nevertheless he was prepared to countenance the possibility that a great deal of valuable time would be lost in a search for a consensus on the objectives of the war. Ultimately, he resolved to force Sharett out of power, replace him with Golda Meir, and then renew the preparations for war. Sharon and Begin had watched Ben Gurion maneuvering during 1955-56 but apparently failed to grasp the lesson fully. They faced opposition to their definition of the war's objectives from a cabinet that was far less capable of opposing them than Ben Gurion's cabinet had been in 1955-1956. But they failed abysmally in their method of overcoming this opposition and thus doomed the enterprise from the outset.

The Calculus of Invasion

Israel went to war in Lebanon on the basis of two parallel and almost contradicting concepts. The first was Begin's. The second was Sharon's. Begin's concept was simple. He envisaged an IDF drive throughout the area under PLO control which would bring the collapse of the PLO state within a state in Lebanon. He did not plan a peace treaty with Lebanon or the replacement of President Sarkis by Bashir Gemayel or, above all, a war with Syria. The Syrian forces in the Beqa'a Valley, he thought, would have to be circumvented from the West and then offered a tacit understanding through the good offices of the U.S. special envoy Habib. Such an understanding would leave Syrian forces in place but they would remove the PLO forces within their area out of range from the Galilee. The whole maneuver, Begin thought, would take two to three days, cost a small number of casualties, and result in a quick withdrawal of the IDF followed by the deployment of a multinational force in the areas to be vacated.

Sharon, however, seems to have had a far more ambitious plan in mind. It started from the following strategic-political assumptions. First, to halt its rise to political respectability, the PLO would have to be dealt a blow from which it would not recover for years. To achieve this the PLO would have to be denied an independent territorial base. It would have to lose its command center, its depots, and its organizational hold over the Palestinian population in the refugee camps of Lebanon. Ideally it should not only lose its independent infrastructure but also come under the tight control of Syria.

This would not necessarily destroy Palestinian nationalism but it would weaken substantially the burgeoning PLO establishment, deny it any real autonomy, make it perhaps verbally more extreme but politically and militarily far less potent. If it were ever to succeed in rising again—after a long period in which Israel would have had a much-needed political and psychological breathing space—it might direct its attention to Jordan, in Sharon's perception a Palestinian state under a Hashemite establishment. If that were to happen the Hashemite and the PLO establishments would be locked in a conflict from which Israel would only gain. Meanwhile a blow to the PLO in Lebanon would lead West Bank leaders to accept the autonomy scheme agreed upon between Israel and Egypt at Camp David.²⁸

Second, if dealing a major blow to the PLO as a political force was the *raison d'être* of the entire operation, it would require the occupation of the western part of Lebanon all the way to Beirut. A more limited attack, a sort of a larger Operation Litani, would not achieve such a purpose and might even backfire altogether. If the IDF were to occupy the area between the Israeli border and, say, the Zaharani River, the political mainstay of the PLO, the PLO's organizational, logistic, and cultural centers in Beirut would remain intact. Thus, although its military force might suffer somewhat, politically it would remain as potent as ever. Indeed, a limited operation would be construed in PLO propaganda as a defeat for Israel. The mighty Zionist forces, the PLO might argue (as it had done after the Karameh Operation of March 1969 and after Operation Litani in March 1978), had been held at bay by the forces of the Palestinian revolution a long distance from the latter's citadel despite the enormous disparity in military strength. If that were to happen the PLO's case as a politically viable force would merely be enhanced by a limited operation. Therefore a massive drive to Beirut was the only alternative.

Third, if the PLO were driven out of Lebanon, a large power vacuum would be created in most of the areas it had occupied. If Israel wished to avoid a protracted occupation of this area by the IDF, with all the domestic and international repercussions this would entail, some other political authority would have to be found for these areas. The same reasons that impelled Rabin to reject the idea of allowing the Syrians into this area made Sharon and his advisers rule out this notion too. Nor did UNIFIL qualify. Israel's experience with this body had been very troublesome. It was not an effective custodian of stability, yet Israel's continual problems with it caused a great deal of embarrassment. By the same token it was undesirable to have another form of international force, such as, for example, the (mainly American) Multinational Force, in the Sinai. Israel certainly did not wish to develop friction with the U.S. government such as had been experienced with the governments that had sent troops to UNIFIL. Who, then, could solve the problem? The answer was simple enough: Bashir Gemayel and the Lebanese Front in conjunction with Saad Haddad's militia. Bashir had visibly grown into the unchallenged leader of the Front, which in itself had expanded to become Lebanon's single most important political and military factor. He could be helped into the presidency of Lebanon and thereby be legitimized. If the PLO were ousted, the internal balance in Lebanon would tilt again in favor of the Christians. The Sunnis, the Druzes, and the Shi'ites would have no choice but to fit into this scheme of things. True, Bashir Gemayel represented a minority, but the same was true of Hafez al Assad, a member of the Alawite minority who had ruled Syria ruthlessly and effectively since 1970. Bashir had shown strong signs of being potentially just as effective (and just as ruthless) as Assad. With Israel on his side he would not be expected to have greater difficulties in ruling Lebanon than Assad had faced in ruling Syria. Finally, dependent on Israel as he would inevitably

be, Bashir himself would have no alternative but to embrace Haddad. The latter's domain would be expanded up to the Zaharani River. And since he would owe his position to Israel, the Jewish state would retain an important instrument of vicarious control over the south of Lebanon even after the departure of the IDF from Lebanese territory.

Fourth, the plan would fail to obtain its objectives if the Syrian forces were not driven out of Lebanon, especially out of the vicinity of Beirut. These forces were spread in different areas, including Jezin on the Shouf Mountains and the Beqa'a Valley from south of the Qar'oun Lake all the way to the north, Tripoli and the Zogharta area, and, of course, Beirut. This form of deployment made it impossible to deal with the PLO without tackling the Syrians. It also enabled Syria to exert a critical degree of influence over Lebanon's internal politics, starting from the appointment of presidents all the way to local police matters.

To put an end to this state of affairs the Syrian forces in Lebanon would have to be threatened so effectively that they would withdraw on their own volition or engage the IDF, thus offering the latter an opportunity to administer to them a humiliating military defeat. But if this took place, the war might get out of hand. Under pressure the Syrians might be tempted to open a second front on the Golan. If Israel defeated them they might call on the Soviets for help. If the Soviets became involved the United States might find it impossible to remain a bystander. Again, Sharon and his aides had an answer to all of this and, again, it was logical. To reduce the temptation for Syria to open a second front in the Golan, Israel would have to deploy a massive force of its own there. This would have the additional advantage of pinning to this theater a large part of the Syrian army for the purpose of counterdeterrence against an Israeli attempt to relieve pressure in Lebanon through a second front on the Golan. The Syrian force in Lebanon would thus be substantially contained. It would be too small and too vulnerable to prevent the IDF from pushing it out of most of Lebanon. Indeed, if the various arms of the Syrian force in different parts of Lebanon were cut off from their center in the Beqa'a, Israel's task would be further eased.

As for the Soviets, the assumption was that they would never dream of involving themselves in Lebanon on behalf of the PLO. Moreover, if the deterrence gambit on the Golan succeeded, the IDF would not have to attack objectives within Syria itself. Under such circumstances the Soviets would most probably avoid any real action. They would help the Syrians in the United Nations and they would provide arms, but, unless and until fighting took place on Syrian territory, the risk of Soviet involvement seemed remote.

Consequently there would be no need for extensive American involvement either. The Reagan administration might go through the motions of calling on all sides, somewhat righteously, to stop shooting and start talking, but it would not be displeased at all to see the PLO beaten, the Syrians contained, and Lebanon restored to a more cohesive form. There was, of course, a need to prevent a total surprise to the United States when hostilities began. Normally, Israel would never let the United States know in advance either its objectives or its operational planning. But to avoid U.S. interference this principle should be compromised. Secretary Haig was sympathetic enough to be employed as an instrument to prepare the administration, somewhat ambiguously, for what was coming and, at the same time, to extract something amounting to a green light for action. It made no difference if he were not truly representative of his administration's position. As far as Israel was concerned he was the Secretary of State of the United States and therefore a representative and a legitimate spokesman for all his colleagues and for his president. If he inadvertently committed his government to something it basically

opposed, he might be called to task by his superior but his words would nevertheless be upheld.

Fifth, IDF casualties would be kept to a bare minimum. Begin, Sharon, and their lieutenants were painfully aware of the impact that the large number of casualties suffered in the Yom Kippur War had had over Israel's posture and over the domestic position of Labor. Begin, and subsequently others, in fact quoted the concern to limit the number of Israeli casualties as one of the most important reasons for launching the war out of choice and for not leaving the initiative to the adversaries. Personally, Sharon may have been less sensitive on this question than the prime minister. Having been wounded in battle, having seen numerous friends and subordinates lose their lives on the battlefield, having lost his own son in an accident involving a shotgun, Sharon's views on the matter of casualties may have become entirely instrumental. Heavy casualties would undercut the buoyant feeling of victory he was hoping for. They would also be cited by the PLO after the war in order to minimize their defeat. Therefore they had to be avoided, but this was not an easy task, to be sure. Much of the war was bound to take place in built-up areas. The war against the Syrians could also be costly because of the terrain. Lebanon's mountains, narrow valleys and numerous ravines gave the defender a built-in advantage, as Israel had learned from its own experience in the Golan in 1973. The terrain offered natural platforms for tank and antitank ambushes. The attacking force would not be able to spread out on a wide field or to maximize Israel's advantage in the combination of movement and fire. Sharon's staff's answer to this problem was as simple as it was brutal: artillery, masses of artillery, a heavy emphasis on air support, even at the cost of heavy civilian casualties among the Palestinians and the Lebanese.

But in order to be able to bring air power into full expression Israel needed clear skies. The Syrian air force would therefore have to be neutralized if and when it attempted to intervene. In addition, the old score with the SAM batteries that the Syrians had brought into Lebanon following the Zahle-Mount Senin incident would have to be settled. The IAF had, since 1973, developed an efficient method of knocking out the SAMs. In April 1981, these techniques were spared for a full-scale war. A war in Lebanon such as was being planned could be the occasion to employ these methods if the Syrians intervened.

Sixth, a dramatic blow to Syria with or without a military confrontation would also serve a larger purpose. Following Sadat's peace initiative Egypt had been neutralized from any effective influence over the Arab world. Syria's position, by contrast, had been elevated to that of a virtual pivot. Its military power had never been greater and, according to an internal IDF evaluation late in 1981, might by 1984 provide Syria with the capacity to initiate a devastating war, at least for limited goals. Syria's regime was stable. Its subversive power throughout the Middle East was beyond dispute. Its close alliance with the Soviets was on terms that were more favorable from the Syrian than from the Soviet point of view. In addition, Syria benefited from a geographic proximity and accessibility to all centers of the Arab world which Egypt had never enjoyed because Israel established a barrier between Egypt and the rest of the Arabs on the former's only land connection to the Fertile Crescent. Given all these factors Syria's status in 1982 peaked. Indeed, Iraq's war with Iran gave Syria another crucial uplift.

As a result Syria had become something of a dead weight on the Israeli-Egyptian peace process. Having only gained from its intransigent international and regional posture, Syria had no real incentive to permit Sadat's peace initiative to expand. For if it were to expand Syria itself would become increasingly isolated and might ultimately have

to bow again to Egyptian hegemony. Consequently, Syria would do anything to threaten other Arab players against joining the peace process. In turn, the peace process that had given Israel so much by way of security (as a result of Egypt's departure from the Arab war coalition) would be constantly threatened. If others did not join it, the process would remain limited, cold, insecure, fragile, unless Israel agreed to seek a political settlement with the PLO. But for the reasons already mentioned this was deemed unacceptable, and therefore the peace process could only be buttressed by containing Syria. A swift and decisive Israeli victory in Lebanon, Sharon and his associates hoped, would do precisely this. All the more so if the planned war were to be followed by the conclusion of an Israeli-Lebanese peace agreement.

Seventh and, of course, intimately connected with all the other assumptions, was the possible effect of such a victory over Israel's spirit and its regional and international status. The 1973 war, Sharon firmly believed, had done Israel incalculable damage not because of its military consequences—which amounted to a great success in his point of view—but because of the harm it had inflicted on Israel's morale, self-image, and international status. Instinctively inclined to believe in Dayan's theory, promulgated in 1957, that Israel should assume the image of a "detonator" or a "biting beast," convinced that Israeli deterrence would be effective only if it were based on a recurrently demonstrated ability to inflict deadly blows on the adversary, Sharon felt that Israel needed a resounding victory in order to redress the psychological balance of incentives and perceptions between Arabs and Israelis, a balance without which the Arabs would always have a built-in urge for further trials of strength.²⁹

Eighth, the mini-attribution of July 1981 had driven the PLO into a frenzied search for weapons, a substantial reorganization, and an ambitious attempt to "dig in" before the next round. Owing to a polite but rather persistent refusal by the Soviets to supply them with arms, the various PLO constituent organizations turned to some of the Soviets' clients in Eastern Europe, as well as to North Korea and to Swiss and Brazilian manufacturers. By the end of 1981 the PLO had put together three infantry brigades (Karameh, Yarmouk, and Kastel), several artillery and support units, a fledgling network of workshops to service them, some 200 pieces of artillery, and the beginning of a small tank force based on old T-34 tanks.

Some time before the Israeli invasion the PLO held for the first time a full-dress conventional military exercise at brigade level. Held near Kafr Yanta in the Beqa'a Valley, the exercise featured four battalions from the Yarmouk brigade. Their objective was to storm a fortified "Israeli" position including an artillery barrage and a concerted mechanized breakthrough into the objective.³⁰

This transformation of the PLO into a semiconventional military force played straight into the hands of the IDF, which found it far more difficult to deal with a guerrilla PLO than with a poorly trained and poorly equipped conventional PLO. At the same time, if allowed longer respite, the PLO in this new form could present the IDF with greater difficulties. In other words, if the assumption was that sooner or later a major war would have to be fought, the sooner it was launched the easier it would be for Israel to defeat the PLO and suffer only a small number of casualties.³¹

Ninth, a critical question arose about how to deal with Beirut. Involving the IDF in fighting inside the Lebanese capital had two drawbacks. Politically, this would be the first time Israel would invade an Arab capital. The result could be a great pressure by Arab governments on the United States, leading to an American attempt to stop Israel before the operation was completed. Militarily, the prospect of fighting in the streets and alleys of

Beirut was highly unattractive. Indeed, the IDF experience in the city of Suez on the last day of the 1973 war had shown that such fighting could take a heavy Israeli toll. Yet Beirut had to be rid of the PLO, or else the entire operation would fail to achieve its main purpose.

Sharon's answer to this dilemma was that Bashir Gemayal and the Phalange should take on the PLO in West Beirut with IDF artillery cover from the city's outskirts. But since there were indications that the Phalange might prove either unwilling or unable to play this role, Sharon was even prepared to consider a headlong Israeli thrust into West Beirut regardless of the cost. This strategy, the minister of defense knew very well, was bound to be costly and hence controversial. But, confident that it would succeed and convinced that it was a linchpin of the entire operation, he remained adamant about it.³²

Finally, a number of considerations critically affected the choice of time for carrying out the operation. Menachem Begin and most of his colleagues, not to mention the United States, would be opposed to, indeed outraged by, a massive Israeli war effort before the completion of Israel's withdrawal from the Sinai under the terms of the March 1979 peace treaty with Egypt. This withdrawal had to be completed by April 26, 1982. Until then a war in Lebanon might constitute such a provocation for the Egyptians that the peace process might be totally disrupted. Sharon himself did not object to testing Egypt's resolve to pursue the peace process at a time when Israel could still use it as an excuse for retaining the most critical parts of the Sinai. But Begin's commitment to the peace process with Egypt was so uncompromising that it alone ruled out any action before April 26, 1982.³³

At the same time, the operation could not be deferred for too long after this date. Lebanon's terrain and climate render warfare there in the course of the winter a practical impossibility. Snowfall and rainfall are heavy. Many passes in the mountains are blocked. There are serious problems in preventing troops from suffering the effects of low temperature. The war would have to take place in the summer. And since Sharon expected the IDF to stay in Lebanon from six weeks to three months, the war would have to be launched not later than the middle of June.³⁴

Moreover, presidential elections were due to take place in Lebanon some time in August 1982. The Syrians were trying to replace Sarkis with Suleiman Franjiyeh, their virtual vassal from Zogharta and Bashir Gemayel's avowed enemy. If Israel wished to make Bashir president of Lebanon—a linchpin of the entire plan—the IDF would have to be in the vicinity of Beirut in time for the elections.³⁵ Added to this critical personal factor, Sharon may have been worried about Haig's position in Washington. Sharon's plan was based on a partial co-optation of the United States, through the subtle manipulation of Haig. Given the latter's constant problems with the White House, his removal from office could have been imminent. It was essential to make a move before that happened.

Last, but not least, several developments in the summer and fall of 1981 may have heightened Israel's anxieties concerning the PLO. Specifically, it was feared that the PLO would, in addition to observing the ceasefire agreement of July 26, 1981, also engage in a real dialogue with the Reagan administration. Back in April 1977 the PLO had published a peace plan calling for Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories and for the establishment of a mini-Palestinian state on the West Bank. The plan failed to obtain adequate support. Fearing that Israel would soon launch an offensive in Lebanon, the PLO sought during July–August 1981 to convince the Saudi government to promote a similar plan. The Saudis agreed, and the result was an eight-point plan bearing King Fahd's

name. To Israel's dismay the Reagan administration showed a guarded interest in the Saudi idea. Ultimately the Fahd plan was aborted by Syria, which boycotted the Fez Arab summit conference of November 25, 1981, in which the plan was to be discussed and approved. Yet, from the Israeli point of view the writing was on the wall. One or two more attempts like the Fahd Plan could conceivably lead to an American conviction that the PLO had become an acceptable partner for negotiations.³⁶

Such considerations led to a critical emphasis in the initial planning on three classical principles of warfare: surprise, concentration of force, and an overall search for an indirect approach. Surprise was essential in order to throw the PLO and the Syrians off balance. If the PLO could be caught by surprise, casualties in street fighting could be kept to a minimum. If the Syrians were surprised, they would not have an opportunity to pour in reinforcements or to focus their attention on Israel's main thrust. This again would mean maximization of advantage in terms of space and minimization of Israeli casualties.

The overwhelming concentration of force would simply reinforce these same advantages. Israel had always operated on the assumption that a local superiority in critical areas was an essential ingredient of success. In all previous wars the IDF had suffered from an overall inferiority in numbers. This, however, was offset in all wars except those of 1948 and 1973 by the IDF's success in detecting important points to apply pressure which, in most cases, was based on a local superiority. This time Sharon was planning a deluxe war by IDF standards. It would be based, simultaneously, on overall superiority and local superiority in every theater of importance. If that could be achieved the pace of the entire campaign would be hastened appreciably. It would also save Israeli lives either through quick decision in battle or, as Sharon may have hoped, through the extraction of surrenders without fight by vastly outnumbered and outgunned PLO and Syrian forces.

Bridging the chronic Israeli gap between overall and local correlation of forces was also important for the purpose of applying pressure simultaneously on the maximum number of points throughout Lebanon south of the Beirut-Damascus road. By natural inclination Sharon had a penchant for complex, ingeniously orchestrated battles. From this point of view the battle of Umm Katef in the Sinai, during the 1967 war, is perhaps the best example. It was a critical battle in terms of the larger plan of the war. It involved a variety of forces transported by helicopter, APC, tank, and on foot. It was based on fine tuning. It involved both day and night fighting and, because of its complexity, if one facet went wrong, the whole gambit would collapse.³⁷

This was typical Ariel Sharon planning. From battles such as this and the crossing of the Suez Canal in the 1973 war, he had derived his reputation and his exuberant self-confidence. And he was going to perform his greatest battle ever, he hoped, in Lebanon. Of course, beyond sheer vanity this approach was an integral part of his whole design. He wanted to cut off the Syrian force in Beirut from the Syrian force in the Beqa'a Valley. He also wished to prevent a safe retreat of the PLO, before the advancing IDF, from the south of Lebanon to Beirut. Such a pedestrian strategy had been employed in Operation Litani. The results had been poor and Sharon thought, correctly, that the IDF was capable of a far more imaginative performance. Forces should, according to his thinking, move into Lebanon from virtually all directions simultaneously. A large armored force should enter from Israel's border and make its way north in two main thrusts supported by a number of smaller thrusts. Two main landings should take place from the sea, one somewhere near Sidon and one in Junieh and/or Beirut. Additional forces should land by helicopter on critical points along the Beirut-Damascus road, such

as the Dahar al Baidar pass. An advance party of, for example, paratroopers should land in the first night of the operation in the vicinity of Jezin, on the Shouf Mountains, and another party should attempt to make its way at the very beginning of the fighting straight into the heart of PLO-controlled West Beirut.

The Decision to Go to War

If Sharon had his way with his cabinet colleagues, this would have been the overall picture of what came to be known as Operation Peace for the Galilee. A plan along these lines had in fact existed in the IDF under the codename Operation Pines.³⁸ But—and here lies the very crux of the entire fiasco—not only were there important differences of opinion between the prime minister and the minister of defense but they had never been authorized to carry out such a plan. Sharon had set out to sidestep his colleagues and extract consent from them for an operation that would begin with more limited objectives (“Little Pines”) and end with the implementation of the bulk of the larger plan (which soon acquired the title “Big Pines”). The result was not only resentment, demoralization, and division, but also a significant perversion of the very specifics of the military operation.

With Begin’s full support, during a special cabinet meeting at the prime minister’s residence, Sharon presented his war plan to his bewildered colleagues on December 20, 1981. To the surprise and dismay of Begin, Sharon, and Eitan, the majority of the cabinet rejected the idea almost out of hand. What was particularly frustrating, perhaps, was the fact that no member of the cabinet really questioned the desirability of achieving the plan’s objectives. The opposition to the plan instead focused exclusively on its operational aspects. Accepting the need to deal a blow to the PLO, Begin’s colleagues were simply apprehensive about the human, economic, and diplomatic cost Big Pines seemed certain to demand.³⁹

Confronted with this unexpected obstacle Begin adjourned the meeting without taking a vote.⁴⁰ But he remained convinced that a large-scale war was called for. A few days after the December 20 meeting there was an explosion on a Greek ship headed for Haifa. Investigations concerning the incident led to the conclusion that the cause was a mechanical failure in the ship. Yet before this was clarified Begin suspected a PLO sabotage operation. He therefore summoned Sharon, Chief of Staff Rafael Eitan, and Chief of Military Intelligence Yehoshua Saguy and commanded them to proceed with the preparation for a major military operation against the PLO. Having been advised subsequently of the real cause of the incident, the prime minister recoiled from the intention to launch the war in the immediate future.⁴¹ But evidently neither he nor Sharon abandoned the plan altogether; rather, the lesson they apparently drew from the abortive attempt to prevail upon their recalcitrant colleagues was that to obtain support for a full-scale war, the PLO would have to be provoked into a large-scale bombardment of the Galilee along the lines of the July 1981 mini-attrition. In the event the cabinet would find it difficult to oppose a massive retaliation against PLO positions in Beirut. In turn the PLO would have no choice but to increase its fire, and the Israeli cabinet would no longer dare to resist a request by the prime minister and minister of defense for a large-scale operation.⁴²

The first opportunity to set in motion such a chain reaction seemed to present itself on January 28, 1982, when a party of six PLO combatants crossed into the Israeli-held West Bank near Mechola, a settlement in the Jordan Valley. The party was intercepted and three of its members were killed. Sharon at once met with the prime minister and

obtained his support for a request from the cabinet to launch an IAF strike against PLO installations in Beirut. Once again, the cabinet proved to be evasive. Rather than authorize a strike against the PLO which could conceivably act as a trigger leading to war, Begin's colleagues, headed by his close friend Deputy Prime Minister Ehrlich, proposed that Chief of Military Intelligence Saguy be sent to Washington to brief the Reagan administration of the alleged increase in PLO activity.⁴³

Sharon was inclined to believe that in the face of cabinet opposition, Begin's determination to launch the war was declining,⁴⁴ but it was the cabinet's resistance that in reality began to decrease. When Saguy returned from Washington two weeks later, his report to the cabinet provided an opportunity for yet another discussion of the planned invasion. By now it seemed that most ministers were already prepared to authorize an operation that would be larger than Litani but smaller than Big Pines.

The arguments some leading ministers employed were of two types. The first was that PLO terrorism could not be prevented by a military operation. The second was that Israel should avoid a clash with Syria. In themselves both arguments were quite logical. Yet, in the final analysis, the implication was not that the military operation should be limited but that it should not be launched at all. This was the view of Deputy Prime Minister Ehrlich. But, argued Sharon, while not doing anything would play into the hands of the PLO, the proposition of a limited operation was quite untenable. A limited operation would not destroy the political infrastructure of the PLO in Beirut; it would leave Syria in control of Lebanon; it would amount to the foresaking of the Lebanese Front; and it would involve Israel in a protracted occupation of the south of Lebanon. Hence, argued Sharon, the most logical alternative was to launch Big Pines. The argument failed, to persuade the cabinet however, and one more meeting ended inconclusively.⁴⁵

During March 1982 Sharon, presumably with Begin's support, made two further abortive attempts to extract permission from the cabinet to launch a large-scale operation.⁴⁶ Though frustrated, Sharon and Begin did not give up. On April 3, 1982, an Israeli diplomat was shot in Paris. The incident created such a shock in Israel that Begin and Sharon were apparently persuaded to believe that this time their colleagues would support them. On this assumption Begin proceeded (on April 6) to brief the leaders of the Labor opposition on the planned invasion. Although the latter expressed reservations that were not dissimilar to those of Begin's cabinet colleagues, the prime minister proceeded (on April 11) to request cabinet approval for massive IAF retaliation. Despite the seriousness of the provocation, no less than five ministers still opposed action. Nonetheless, at last there was majority support for an action that might create an adequate pretext for launching the invasion.

This time, however, it was the PLO's turn to frustrate the emerging Israeli design for a major showdown. In the spring of 1982 Arafat became convinced that the United States was conspiring with some Arab states to destroy the PLO. Arafat (not surprisingly) conceived that the United States was signaling to some conservative Arab regimes that if they allowed Israel to destroy the PLO in Lebanon, the Reagan Administration would subsequently apply pressure on Israel to force an Arab-Israeli settlement without the PLO. Arafat was also advised by one prominent Arab leader that in the event of an Israeli attack the PLO would be on its own, since the tacit consensus in the Arab world was that the PLO had become an obstacle to peace in the region. In addition Arafat also suspected that Syria was trying to employ Ahmed Jibril's organization to provoke an Israeli attack on the PLO, leading to its demise.

Whether these suspicions were well founded is a moot point. What counts is the fact

that they influenced Arafat's policy. He was absolutely determined to avoid any action leading to the confrontation Israel seemed to want. At the same time, while capable of preventing fire against Israel, he would not, according to one of his aides, stop a battle altogether once it began. Indeed, the pressure of some of his field commanders to return to military operations had become difficult to contain since 1979.

The results of this situation in terms of the PLO response to Israeli actions during April–May 1982 could be clearly seen. The Israeli cabinet decision of April 11 led to a large-scale air raid on West Beirut. Yet the PLO did not react at all. Consequently another raid was ordered (without specific cabinet approval) on May 9. This time the PLO did respond with sporadic shelling of the Galilee. But this was hardly enough to justify an invasion such as Sharon and Begin had in mind.⁴⁷

Frustrated and, owing to the approaching presidential elections in Lebanon, convinced that time was running out, the Israeli prime minister and his minister of defense decided to change their tactics. Since the cabinet's opposition to a limited operation had been gradually (though by no means entirely) eroded, they could perhaps request its permission for a limited operation. From Begin's point of view this might have been a genuine resignation to a more limited enterprise. Sharon, however, seems to have resolved to abandon persuasion and turn to unauthorized action. Convinced, for the reasons mentioned, that time was running out, that a limited operation would be quite inadequate, and that Big Pines was a feasible maneuver, he drew the conclusion that a smaller operation could be launched for a start and subsequently expanded step by step.

With this in mind Sharon and Begin convened the cabinet on May 10 and succeeded at last in obtaining permission for a watered-down version of Big Pines. However, seven of the eighteen ministers present, including Begin's powerful deputy prime ministers, Ehrlich and Levi, still raised their hands against the plan. Hence Begin concluded that there was insufficient support for the operation and, once again, declined to order the IDF to move.⁴⁸ By this stage it must have become clear to the supporters of the operation that adequate cabinet approval would only be forthcoming if the scope of the invasion were limited further. The result was the preparation of a two-phased plan: the first would entail a twenty-five mile incursion, and the second, which would not be initially implemented, would attempt to avoid confrontation with Syria, leading to the introduction of a vaguely defined multinational force into the area from which the PLO was to be ejected. This was clearly the least coherent of all the available alternatives. While proposing to disrupt the ceasefire of July 1981, it would not address itself to the perceived political menace posed by the PLO. It could not guarantee that a multinational force could really be obtained. And, accordingly, it would be little more than an expanded replay of Operation Litani.

Nevertheless, Sharon and Begin were prepared to accept this alternative for two principal reasons. First, such an operation, good or bad, could obtain cabinet approval. Second, at least from Sharon's point of view, it could create opportunities for a piecemeal expansion of the incursion until most of the objectives of Big Pines were ultimately achieved. The latter possibility was anticipated by at least one minister, who may have learned that the IDF's planning continued to be based on the assumption that it would penetrate Lebanon all the way to the outskirts of Beirut.⁴⁹ But, unwilling to play the odd man out, this cabinet member moved toward support for the new and seemingly more limited version of the original plan.

On June 3, 1982, there was an attempt to assassinate the Israeli Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Shlomo Argov. Mossad sources indicated that this was a provocation

against Yasser Arafat and the *Fateh* by more radical elements, such as the Abu Nidal group. Begin, however, was not in the mood to pay attention to such a small detail. He ordered the IAF to launch a massive attack against the PLO centers in Beirut. With Yasser Arafat away, in Saudi Arabia, the PLO supporters of a reprisal against the Israeli attack won the upper hand. The Galilee was therefore shelled heavily by PLO artillery. The long-awaited pretext for launching the invasion became available. Moreover, barely a week before these events the U.S. government, or at least Secretary of State Haig, had at last said in public a number of things that came close to constituting a "green light" for Israeli action. "The time has come," the secretary said during a speech in Chicago, "to take concrete action in support of both Lebanon's territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and a strong central government capable of promoting a free, open, democratic and traditionally pluralistic society." Prompted by the outrage of Argov's injury, emboldened by the words of Haig, and impatient to see the Lebanese/PLO issue at last dealt with, Begin convened the cabinet and offered it Little Pines, (a twenty-five mile incursion). The cabinet approved the plan by fourteen votes to two and within two days the IDF, including many reserve personnel, was ordered to cross into Lebanon.⁵⁰

Politics, Strategy, and the Decision to Expand the War

The decision on June 5, 1982, to approve the limited invasion was followed by a sequence of decisions, extracted from the cabinet by Sharon with Begin's support, which ultimately saw the IDF carrying out more or less what Begin's colleagues had previously objected to—namely, a head-on collision with Syria and the seizure of parts of the Lebanese capital. What made this possible was principally the combination of two factors. First, as in the process leading up to the June 5 decision, Begin's cabinet ministers became typical victims of what Irving Janis aptly described as "*groupthink*."⁵¹ Second, the strategic logic of Sharon's advocacy of going all the way or not going at all into Lebanon was sounder than the logic of carrying out Little Pines, a halfway measure the sole virtue of which was that it generated cabinet consensus.

"*Groupthink*" is a scholarly euphemism for conformity. Rather than deciding on the merit of a case, members of a decision unit yield to the emerging majority view. What counts is not the explicit item on the agenda but the hidden agenda of every participant and his or her own expected payoffs as a member of the group. The result is a group consensus but often an illogical decision. Groupthink is particularly likely when a decision is deliberated under stress by a decision group consisting of weak and mediocre members. And with one notable exception—Energy Minister Itzhak Berman, who chose to resign rather than conform—these were the most typical traits of most of the war cabinet members who opposed the invasion.

The two most conspicuous examples were Deputy Prime Minister Simha Ehrlich and Minister of Communications (Brigadier General ret.) Mordechai Zippori. Ehrlich had opposed all along the very idea of an invasion of any kind. Nevertheless, in public he lent his support to the idea of war in the strongest possible terms. In a radio interview a few weeks before the war, he stated:

The ceasefire with the PLO is likely to break down any day. What happens today is intolerable. We have reliable information that this is the PLO, and that the latest incidents are not the exception but the result of a carefully planned operation designed

to hurt Israel and Israelis everywhere. In my view they have crossed the "red lines." We have no doubt that the head and the hands which performed the assassination of the Israeli diplomat in Paris are those of the PLO, even if another organization claims the responsibility. From the outset it was obvious to us that the ceasefire on the northern border is a temporary situation. Sooner or later the PLO will attempt to break out with all its force and we will have no choice but to suppress and uproot it. Since the ceasefire of 24 July 1981 the PLO has been preparing to resume its activity. The digging of shelters, the underground paths, the bunkers, the enormous purchase of tanks, artillery and other weapons, have all been designed for one purpose—the renewal of the war against Israel. Sooner or later this is bound to explode. Israel cannot stand idle in the face of this. There is bound to be a moment in which Israel will have to act and with all the means.⁵²

Given this glaring contrast between what he said in public and what he said in cabinet deliberations throughout the period from December 1981 to June 1982, it is not at all surprising that when it came to the crunch on June 5, Ehrlich performed pitifully. He thought "that he was voting against the decision to go to war but he found out that he was listed in the minutes as having abstained. . . . Begin asked the Ministers 'who was in favor' and 14 raised their hands. He then asked who abstained and I was so tense that inadvertently I raised my hand."⁵³

During the discussion preceding the vote Ehrlich suspiciously inquired "What about Beirut?" apparently assuming, on the basis of a long and unhappy acquaintance with Sharon, that the latter would not settle for Little Pines. When in the course of the war these suspicions proved to have been well founded, Ehrlich nevertheless joined his colleagues in authorizing almost every step. All this distressed him deeply, but instead of following his own judgement he apparently sought consolation in a series of nocturnal tête-à-têtes with U.S. Ambassador Sam Lewis. According to one report the main topic was how to remove Sharon from office!⁵⁴

Mordechai (Motke) Zippori's record was equally pathetic. If Ehrlich knew Sharon's methods thoroughly because of their short-lived (and troublesome) political partnership,⁵⁵ Zippori knew Sharon and understood the battlefield implications of what was happening very well, owing to his long military career. Throughout the protracted debate on whether to launch the war, Zippori was the "sharpest opponent of military action."⁵⁶ Nevertheless, by June 1982 his opposition had been eroded and the notion of a twenty-five-mile incursion had become, in his own words, "acceptable."⁵⁷ At the same time he continued to insist that use of the IAF and artillery bombings should be limited. "The concentration of forces and air force bombing," he warned, "create a snowball leading to war. It is a race toward general war, the results of which no one can predict. In Operation Litani we also suffered many casualties. An incursion into Lebanon will not be simple and in the end we will have to return to where we came from."⁵⁸ With such a combination of strongly held conviction and a clairvoyant perception of what was afoot, Zippori should have been prepared to resign as a means of stopping Sharon. But he did not. In fact he continued to oppose Sharon yet subsequently allowed him to do what he saw fit throughout the eventful months of June–September 1982.

What arguably eroded the resistance of Ehrlich, Zippori, and other ministers who shared their premonitions was the fact that they did not challenge Sharon's definition of Israel's political objectives vis-à-vis the PLO and Syria, and that, at the same time, Sharon's argument for an all-out war was more logical operationally than their arguments for a more limited incursion. For the reasons mentioned earlier, the contention that PLO moderation

and great success in maintaining the ceasefire of July 1981 could stimulate further the tendency of the United States to bring the PLO into the peace process was very powerful. To some Israeli "doves" this did not seem to be an unthinkable proposition. But none of Sharon's colleagues in Begin's cabinet shared this view. Indeed, to different degrees they all regarded it as a serious menace. Holding such a view, they had to admit that a limited operation such as the one they had grudgingly agreed to would not really address the problem. In fact an expanded Operation Litani could even backfire and hasten the drift of the United States toward acceptance of the PLO.

The implication was, clearly, that the PLO had to be substantially reduced in stature which could only be achieved, if indeed at all, through the eviction from Lebanon of its political headquarters and military arm. Moreover, in order to prevent its return to Lebanon, in order to save Israel the need for an extended occupation of parts of that country, it was essential to ease the Syrian grip over the Lebanese political scene and to install Bashir's Lebanese Front as Lebanon's government. This, again, could not be achieved through a limited incursion in the south, which would undoubtedly prompt Syria to tighten its control, both politically and militarily over the central and northern parts of the country.

Furthermore, a strong case for expanding the operation could also be made on military-tactical grounds. The Syrian forces in the Beqa'a Valley reached close enough to the Israeli border to provide the PLO with a sanctuary from which the Galilee "finger" could be effectively shelled. As if to serve notice of that, there was some PLO shelling of Kiryat Shemonah while the war was already in progress. Hence, to launch a limited incursion into south Lebanon without even denying the PLO their sanctuary within firing distance of Israel was untenable.⁵⁹

Moreover, to ease the Syrians out of their positions in the south of the Beqa'a, the IDF could do one of two things: either engage the Syrian forces head on or establish itself on the Syrians' western flank in a position that would threaten the Syrians with semi-encirclement. In either case knocking out the Syrian SAM batteries which had been introduced in the course of the Zahle-Mount Senin incident of April 1981 would be a critical prerequisite. General Amir Drori (OC Northern Command), who was to lead the operation, assumed this (and more) all along.⁶⁰ And it was precisely because he acknowledged this strategic logic that Zippori, for one, initially objected to any military operation. By the same token, once he had given his support to a limited incursion his ability to counter Sharon's arguments for expanding the fighting had been severely hampered. And if Zippori with his vast combat experience could not seriously challenge Sharon's arguments for expanding the operation in the course of the war, his colleagues who had no military background certainly could not.

In a deeper sense the opponents of the war in Begin's cabinet were locked in a classic no-win situation. "Statesmen," one of the foremost military historians of our time has correctly observed, "are normally expected to provide for the security of their communities, and those who in the past have failed to do so have not earned the gratitude of posterity."⁶¹ Their acute awareness of this leads statesmen in the final analysis to respond assertively to the security dilemma. In this sense the preference order of Begin's colleagues was to prevent a Palestinian/PLO state on the West Bank without war if they could but through war if they had no alternative. In this sense, too, their preference order was to provide security for the Galilee without war if they could but through war if there was no other way. Such a perception of priorities rapidly eroded their resistance to Begin's and Sharon's war advocacy during 1981-82. Apprehensive of the implications

and far less prone to take risks than Begin and Sharon, they tried to limit the war. But since their argument for *limiting* (as distinct from avoiding) the war rested on shaky logical foundations, they were ill equipped to stand up to Sharon whenever he confronted them with further requests to enlarge the war. Only two logical alternatives presented themselves: to accept the notion of a Palestinian state, seek a negotiated understanding with the Palestinians, and run the risks this would entail, or to reject it, launch an all-out war, and accept the risks that this alternative would entail. An intermediate alternative would be a charade, and once the war began this fact was bound to become apparent within days, perhaps even hours.

The Dynamics of Piecemeal Decision Making

According to Ezer Weizman, Sharon “always knew how to present his positions in a way which would render them acceptable for the majority among the Ministers, if not, indeed, for all of them. His fingers roamed freely over maps which were utterly incomprehensible for most of his colleagues. On occasion I had a feeling that the marks on the maps were not accurate. But nobody around would admit that he does not understand much about such matters.”⁶² What made it worse was that the Israeli cabinet had no professional advisory staff capable of evaluating complex strategic problems. The entire cabinet, starting from Prime Minister Begin, was thus exceedingly dependent on the information and assessment provided to it by the minister of defense, who was determined from the outset to expand the war far beyond what had been approved by the cabinet.

During the second day of the war Sharon told the general staff that it was essential to “build a picture,” through IDF action, that would convince the cabinet that a confrontation with Syria was unavoidable. One of the Generals present responded that the “picture” would be constructed through the move of an armored division on the central (Shouf) axis. Sharon approved the move but cautioned that the IDF should avoid the impression of a concerted attack against Syria. Following this discussion at the general staff, Sharon confronted the cabinet—twenty-four hours after the beginning of the war—with a request to outflank the Syrians in a manner that would force them to retreat but also ultimately take the IDF to the Beirut-Damascus road many miles beyond the twenty-five-mile limit which the cabinet had initially approved. The dilemma, of which Sharon may have been fully aware before, was presented to the cabinet when the war was already in progress. There was no going back, and therefore the cabinet had no logical alternative but to authorize the move. In a vain attempt to prevent turning the outflanking maneuver into a general confrontation with the *Ba’ath* republic, the cabinet demanded that an approach be made toward Syria promising to avoid confrontation if the Syrian forces would not open fire. Following this cabinet request the Israeli forces facing the Syrians south of the Beqa’a in the vicinity of Hasbaiyah and Qauqaba refrained from action. In addition Begin requested President Reagan’s special envoy ambassador Philip Habib to pass a message to Syrian President Assad expressing that (1) Israel did not wish to fight the Syrian forces; (2) the decision not to open fire on the Syrian army except in response to their fire remained in force; (3) Syria should remove the PLO forces within the area under its control beyond shooting range from the Israeli border at Metula; (4) Israel calls on Syria not to reinforce its contingents in Lebanon. To give greater weight to this message, Begin delivered a televised speech in the Knesset in which he emphasized Israel’s confidence in Assad’s respect for agreements and urged the Syrian president not to order his forces in Lebanon to open fire.

Meanwhile, the race toward the Shouf Mountains of the IDF units that performed the outflanking operation was threatened as of June 7 by a column of Syrian T-62 tanks led by a small PLO force near Jezin. This prompted Chief of Staff Eitan to request an air attack on this Syrian armor. Sharon passed the request to the cabinet which approved it. Fire on Syrian forces was thus initiated by the IDF on Tuesday, June 8, at a time when Begin's cabinet was still awaiting a response from Syria. It is thus not at all surprising that the Syrian response was to send reinforcements and to add a number of batteries of SAM missiles in the vicinity of the Beirut-Damascus road.

On the following day, Brigadier General Einan's armor, the spearhead of the outflanking maneuver, encountered spirited Syrian resistance in the approaches to Ein Zhalta. To overcome the obstacle, Sharon told his bewildered colleagues that the IAF would have to be brought in. Yet the area in question was already within range of the Syrian SAM missiles. Therefore, concluded the minister of defense, there was no escape from attacking and destroying the Syrian air defense system north of the Beirut-Damascus road. The cabinet approved what was for them a new twist, only to be confronted within another twenty-four hours by a request to attack the Syrian force in the Beqa'a Valley south of the Beirut-Damascus road. Otherwise, argued Sharon, the Israeli outflanking column would itself become exposed on the right (east) to Syrian attacks. Whether this new request was explicitly granted remains unclear, but the IDF acted as if a cabinet authorization had been given. On Wednesday, June 9, Major-General Amir Drori ordered a spirited thrust toward the Beirut-Damascus road in the Zahle-Shtoura district. In the early hours of the next day, the IDF launched an attack on the Syrian forces on its left (eastern) flank. Thus, by the time Habib saw Assad, the message from Begin that he was carrying must have looked to Assad like a disingenuous act of deception.

Meanwhile Sharon had extracted incremental cabinet approval for a parallel expansion of the war in the western sector astride the Mediterranean coast. Here he could not claim the need for an "outflanking" maneuver, and therefore simply proceeded to issue operational orders conforming to the outline of Big Pines. The most important manifestation of this act was the landing early on Monday, June 6, of a reinforced infantry division north of Sidon. The landing site itself was already beyond the twenty-five-mile limit. Moreover, the landing division proceeded almost instantly north toward Damour, then took a northeasterly turn and headed for Baabdeh, a suburb of Beirut and the location of the Lebanese presidential residence.

Questioned about this approach to Beirut in contradiction with the cabinet's decision of June 5, Sharon denied any intention of entering the Lebanese capital. It was a standard maxim that the IDF does not assault Arab capitals and he was fully in agreement, he said, with this view. Here he might have been at least partially candid since, as he perceived his understanding with Bashir Gemayel, the assault on the PLO center in West Beirut would be carried out by the Lebanese Forces with IDF artillery and air support. But it soon became apparent that the Lebanese Forces had no intention of taking part in the action against either Syria or the PLO. Consequently Sharon had to face the possibility of IDF action in Beirut, a possibility that had not been clear during most of the first week of the war.

Nonetheless, as that week drew to an end it was clear to most members of the cabinet that the IDF was implementing a variant of Big Pines, the war plan that had been persistently vetoed. Outraged, two ministers (Itzhak Berman and Zevulun Hammer) demanded a cabinet discussion of the war aims. Begin promised them he would hold such a discussion but failed to do so in time for a significant change in the policy to be effected.⁶³

Most of the ministers suspected they had been the victims of a cleverly contrived deceit, and their feelings added impetus in the second week of the war to opposition within the cabinet for any further moves. From Sharon's point of view this created a real threat that he might not be allowed to bring the operation to a successful conclusion, in which case all the cost in life and material incurred during the fighting beyond the twenty-five-mile security belt in the vicinity of the Israel border would have been in vain and Sharon would be the chief culprit. He was thus thrust into the position of a losing gambler: to stop would mean sustaining an assured loss; to carry on might increase the loss but also held the possibility of an ultimate success that would justify all the costs. But, increasingly denied cabinet support, he could no longer maintain the previous pretense of acting with full authority. His only alternative from then (roughly June 14) until the completion of the operation and the beginning of the siege of Beirut was on many occasions to order the IDF to continue without any real cabinet authorization.

Sharon's last attempt to extract a mandate for continuing was during the cabinet meeting of June 15. He failed, but he ordered the IDF to carry out two major operations.⁶⁴ The first, which was already in progress at the time of the cabinet's meeting, took IDF units east along the Beirut-Damascus road up to a point—reached on June 16—east of Jamhur, a few miles west of Aley. The second operation was begun on June 21, after Prime Minister Begin had flown to the United States for discussions with the Reagan administration. This second major unauthorized assault focused on Syrian positions on the ridge of Ruisat-a-Na'aman, south of the Beirut-Damascus road, as well as against the Syrian force in Mansuriyeh, near the road in the vicinity of Behamdoun. When both operations were completed, by June 26, the IDF had taken complete control of the Beirut-Damascus road from the outskirts of Beirut to a short distance from the Dahar al Baidar peak overlooking the Beqa'a.⁶⁵

Because neither operation had been authorized, Sharon moved unhindered to a technique that the IDF had used on previous occasions, including during the critical days of October 22–24, 1973. The Israeli government had previously agreed to a ceasefire. The IDF was ordered to "improve its positions," that is, to advance. It could be expected that the Syrians would open fire, and then the blame for breaking the ceasefire would be put on them. In turn Sharon would be able to inform the government that the IDF was acting defensively.

But all told, the two operations had taken the lives of 28 Israelis and caused injury to more than 150 others. In addition, the forces that had carried out the operations could hear on Israeli radio stations such as Galei Tsahal and Kol Israel descriptions of the battle that did not tally with what they knew. This aroused resentment, and soldiers and officers reported to their families and friends and, more important still, to members of the Knesset and of the cabinet. The result was that the trick did not quite work. Having heard about the assault of June 22, Deputy Prime Minister Ehrlich consulted ministers Burg, Zippori, and Levi and, by telephone, prime minister Begin too. The latter told Ehrlich to order the IDF to cease its fire. Sharon would not obey the order. The matter was hotly debated in the cabinet meeting of June 24. But since by then the operation was nearly completed and much blood had already been spilt, Sharon once again succeeded in prevailing upon his weak and bewildered colleagues. The cabinet at last approved continuation of the attack on Alei-Behamdoun, and it was completed two days later.⁶⁶

From Sharon's point of view the further erosion as a result of the events of June 12–26 of whatever trust his colleagues had had in him was of little consequence. Having carried out the bulk of Big Pines and sent the IDF in effect to besiege Beirut, he could now

be confident that, willy-nilly, the cabinet would allow him to exploit the success. The reason was once again both political and strategic.

The PLO was under siege, but as a political force it was still essentially intact. If the IDF were to withdraw without expelling Yasser Arafat and his men from the Lebanese capital, the PLO would score a moral and political victory which would wash away the impact of everything that had been achieved in the war. Sharon's colleagues could be reminded in this regard of how Nasser had turned his military defeat of 1956 into a political victory and of how Arafat had done the same following the Karameh Operation of March 1968, in which two unmanned Israeli tanks had been left behind. This seemingly minute technical detail was turned into a historic turning point by PLO propaganda. If the IDF were to leave the PLO in Beirut the damage would be incomparably greater.⁶⁷

As will be seen, this strategic-political logic for tightening the siege of Beirut until the PLO was forced to depart was grudgingly endorsed at this stage even by some of Sharon's critics outside the government. Sharon could therefore hope realistically that his cabinet colleagues, too, would have no choice but to endorse the continuation of the siege. Thus, although previously he had time and again promised that the IDF would not approach Beirut, as of June 27 he changed course. For the next six weeks he pressed for authorization to tighten the siege and, when denied such authority, he again took initiative himself.

Ultimately Sharon had his way and the PLO was forced to accept a departure from Beirut. But irreparable damage had been done to his relations with his colleagues. On July 30 he drove Foreign Minister Shamir, who had been an ardent supporter of Big Pines all along, to the point of resignation. Shamir had paid a visit to the United States and informed his American interlocutors that the IDF would not make any further advance into West Beirut, as he had been told by Sharon. Meanwhile the IDF had been making further advances. Shamir's credibility with his American hosts had been put in question and, outraged by this, he nearly resigned.

During the August 5 cabinet meeting Sharon requested permission for another small military operation in the Beirut area. Eight ministers spoke against him. To be sure, ten ministers were still in favor, but the vote would have been so close that Begin ruled that no vote would be taken. Sharon could not possibly acquiesce with this inconclusive result. The longer the siege of Beirut, the greater became the pressure on him to step up pressure on the PLO. An extended siege, he argued (correctly), was tantamount to a victory for the PLO. Hence the pressure on the PLO had to be increased wholesale and not in a piecemeal fashion. Accordingly, if the cabinet would not allow him to do so he would issue his own instructions to the IDF.

This was the logic behind the massive bombardments of the Lebanese capital on August 6 and, even more so, on August 12, the most horrendous day of the siege. The hair-raising reports in the world press on the bombardments led to two stormy cabinet meetings on August 8 and 12 in which, at last, even Begin sided with the outraged opponents of Sharon. "You are the government's representative to the army," he reportedly told Sharon in anger on August 8, "and not the army's representative to the government."⁶⁸ Once Begin had turned against him, Sharon's isolation was underlined. The prime minister's reprimand was naturally followed by sharper criticisms from other senior ministers. When Sharon requested yet another permission for an operation west of the hippodrome in Beirut, on August 12, no less than fifteen ministers voted against him, stripping him in effect of the authority to order the IDF to make any further move.⁶⁹

And yet, by August 21, Sharon's determination seemed at last to have paid off. He may have lost the support of all his colleagues but, as Arafat and his men were leaving for a new exile in eight different Arab countries from Tunisia to South Yemen, Sharon could proudly boast in a press interview with Oriana Fallaci:

I wanted them out of Beirut, of Lebanon, so I fully obtained what I wanted. Arafat may claim what he likes, it does not count. It's the facts that count, and the developments which such facts will have in the future. Perhaps . . . [Arafat] seriously thinks to have won politically, but the future will show him that his defeat has been mainly political.⁷⁰

The Making of a Pyrrhic Victory

In a nutshell what has been argued so far is that Sharon was determined to pursue his strategy with brazen disregard to the political setting in which it was implemented. The result, however, was almost the opposite of what he sought to achieve. Rather than succeeding in decoupling strategy from politics, especially domestic politics, to the advantage of strategy, he soon saw his strategy so deeply trapped in a maze of political forces that his ability to bring it to conclusion was almost entirely destroyed.

Specifically Sharon's conduct undermined the execution of the war because of a backlash in five interlocking and highly relevant arenas of political-strategic deliberation: the cabinet, the legislature, the armed forces, public opinion, and, last but not least, relations with the United States. In most of Israel's previous wars these arenas had proved to be on the whole—but not entirely—mutually reinforcing. A united cabinet supported by a united legislature and by an equally united public facilitated a superb military performance in 1956, in 1967, and in 1973 despite the fact that relations with the United States (especially in 1956 and far less so in 1973) left much to be desired. Conversely, in 1982 a divided cabinet reinforced divisive tendencies in the legislature and in the public at large, severely undercut the performance of the IDF, and reinforced the inclination of the United States to intervene in a manner that made matters even worse.⁷¹

To be sure, this was not the first time an Israeli government faced domestic unrest in the course of a major external crisis. Immediately after the termination of the 1973 war, when Golda Meir's government faced a delicate negotiation process with Egypt and Syria involving an ongoing war of attrition and the continued mobilization of vast numbers of reserves, it also had to deal with a significant domestic crisis. In 1973 the process had started with the demonstrative act of one individual, a reserve captain by the name of Moti Ashkenazi, which rapidly developed into a mass protest movement on the same scale as that of the summer of 1982. Captain Ashkenazi had accused then Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan of failing to prepare the IDF for war and thus, by implication, of being personally responsible for the high toll the IDF paid in the Yom Kippur War. In November, a few days after the ceasefire, Captain Ashkenazi began a "sit-in" in front of the ministry of defense which he planned to continue until Dayan resigned. Within days Ashkenazi was joined by others, including some of Dayan's political opponents. The bulk of the protesters (as in 1982) were educated soldiers from combat units, many intellectuals, students, and of course bereaved families. Soon the themes of the protest were to be taken up by organized political movements. Begin and the Likud on the right rode the wave (and gained something from it in the elections of December 1973), as did the MAPAM party on the left and two new parties which actually came into existence as a

result of the mood of protest engulfing the country—Shinui and the Civil Rights Movement.⁷² Nothing demonstrates more vividly the tremendous impact of the 1973 protests than the personal account of the movement's main *bête noire*, Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan:

While the official political postmortems [of the 1973 war] were being conducted in the institutional frameworks, the Cabinet, the parties and through elections, there arose in the country a "protest movement"—a mixture of emotional and political elements. The protest movement, or more precisely, the "protest movements" demonstrated (especially against the Cabinet on days in which it was in session), carried posters, gave interviews to journalists and TV reporters and made inroads into the people's hearts. . . . In the latter stages the movements were so heterogeneous that they demanded contradictory things: religious and nationalistic elements demonstrated against Kissinger and against withdrawal in the Golan, whereas the left demanded the opposite. Moreover, their impact gradually declined, and in the final analysis they failed to unite into a constructively influential body—although they tried. They had a public impact in two matters: in their demand for change, for the replacement of former leadership (with myself at the top of the list) and in pointing an accusing finger concerning military and political failures in the course of the Yom Kippur War and the days before. The protest movements had a tremendous echo. Among the organizers and the participants many were young people who had participated in the war as well as widows and bereaved parents. This gave . . . the protests a special public and emotional weight. One could have argued with their demands, or dismiss[ed] their slogans, but it was impossible to relate to them with indifference.

Dayan's sensitivity and curiosity brought him to the unusual step of inviting Moti Ashkenazi for a talk.

The talk was almost a monologue. Moti Ashkenazi wanted to speak and I wanted to understand and gain impressions. Concerning me his words were clear: I have to resign because of my parliamentary accountability; he respects me personally, but the army, the war, the policy before the war and the previous Six Day War—are a failure, inaction and an imprudent policy. He demands the replacement of the leadership, first of all me. . . . In this war everything was bad. Pilots were sent on suicidal missions. As commander of "Budapest" [stronghold on the Suez Canal] he saw them falling, and demanded Southern Command to stop sending them to attack in the Canal and Port Said; but nobody would listen to him. In the strongholds along the Canal nothing worked properly; the armour did not fight well. The medics did not know how to deal with battle shocks; the military industry had not prepared well for the war. . . . Now we need a revolution. He wants changes in democratic ways, but there are those who are prepared to do it in violent ways; friends tell him that they are prepared to enter with Uzi sub-machine guns, to the office of the Cabinet and liquidate all Cabinet members. He will not rest until he brings about a fundamental change—in policy, in leadership, in government and in the army. The people are with him—and I must resign.

Dayan was not very impressed by the logic of some of these vehement arguments, but he drew two sensitive and significant conclusions which are worth recalling if the events of 1982 are to be put in appropriate perspective. First, he realized what in 1982 proved to be beyond Sharon's comprehension, namely, that "the Minister of Defense needs the confidence of the people. He is not just a manager of an office. More than any other political office holder, he is responsible for decisions concerning war, death and injury, prison, widowhood, bereavement. His opinions may be challenged; but there could be no

doubt as to his dedication, prudence, and responsible attitude to matters of defense. I felt," Dayan concluded, that "this confidence in me is rapidly eroding." While admitting this, indeed while several months later accepting the verdict of the protestors and resigning, Dayan also thought that the Israeli political system was in the throes of a crisis of fundamental transformation which should have been a source of grave concern to the national leadership.

In the protest movements, and in what surrounded them in the press, in TV and among politicians who sought to exploit them, there was also a streak which was presented as an ideal but amounted in fact to defeatism—the erosion of faith not only in the justice of our ways but also in our goals; the weakening of our strength and resolve. This was a serious matter in my view. I saw a harsh forecast for our ability to wrestle with the difficulties and the pressures which were facing us.⁷³

In the heat of the post-1973 debate such conclusions by Dayan could easily be depicted, and in fact were, as self-serving manipulation of national security issues for the purpose of minimizing his own personal responsibility. But in retrospect it is difficult to argue that his views were wrong. Before the 1973 war, the Israeli political system had been undergoing a major process of change, which gained further momentum in the eight years that separated the Yom Kippur War from Operation Peace for the Galilee. What the exact reasons for the change were is a question that cannot be answered here, but the import of the transformation insofar as Israel's ability to fight wars is concerned seems clear. The frustrated hopes for peace that were aroused by the 1967 victory; the heavy cost of the Canal War of 1968–70; the nerve-racking encounter with the Palestinians since 1967; the heavy cost of the 1973 war; the growing domestic rift on foreign policy; the future of the occupied territories; religion; Sephardi-Ashkenazi relations—all have added up to a lowered tolerance for pain. The Israel that went to war in 1982 was nominally more powerful and materially far stronger than it had been a decade earlier, but it had lost a great deal of its ability to withstand pressure.

Such a decline in the will to resist is more easily revealed in a war initiated by one's own country than in a purely defensive war. The 1973 war began as the result of an Egyptian-Syrian attack and not as the result of an Israeli preemption. Nevertheless it caused what Zeev Schiff aptly described at the time as an "earthquake."⁷⁴ By the same token it is not at all surprising that the 1982 war led to a major domestic backlash. In 1973 no one had accused the government of deceiving the people; the only accusations were of poor judgement, excessive self-confidence, and, in short, ineptness. Accordingly, the suspicion that Sharon and Begin had deceived the nation was bound to have serious repercussions. Given the facts that the Israeli population was already weary, that the war in 1982 was initiated by Israel, and that the PLO did not appear as immediately menacing as had the Egyptians and Syrians in 1973, Sharon's apparent deception could be predicted to have a catalytic impact which would send ripples throughout the Israeli political system. Having lived through the post-1973 period Begin, Sharon, Eitan, Shamir, and others should have been alert to this when they made the decision to launch another war. Indirectly they were, since the constant theme in their utterances during the first days of the war was that the "shame" of 1973 had been erased. But they drew the wrong conclusions. The nation they took to war again was tired of war rather than eager for a resounding victory. The best treatment for such a state of mind would not have been another war, certainly not another unsuccessful war, but rather a prolonged period of convalescence from the injury of the previous war.

This misreading of the mood of the nation on the part of Begin, Sharon, and some of their colleagues had a direct bearing on the course of the war itself. It led, as had been seen, to a deep division in the cabinet and consequently to indecisiveness and a tendency to adopt decisions only because they mustered cabinet consensus. It also spilled over from the cabinet to the parliamentary opposition, to the public at large, and, above all, to the IDF.

The result was a self-reinforcing political process, turning a war that was bound to be complicated even with a high degree of domestic consensus into an even more complicated affair. The cabinet's indecision forced Sharon to compromise his military strategy. This slowed down the pace of the war and increased its toll. The result was an erosion of morale in the battlefield which reflected in battlefield performance. The Knesset was aware of this and, by fulfilling its role and attacking the government, turned unwittingly into a colossal amplifier of the cabinet's lack of resolve. This further undermined the ability of the IDF to perform its task and, inevitably, increased the sluggishness of the operation. The public soon reacted in a similarly negative way which further reinforced the same tendencies. And when the repercussions of all these effects converged with an incoherent and ill-advised reaction by the Reagan administration, the tendencies toward irresoluteness were given a further impetus.

The original sin was unquestionably the apparent deception. For Sharon would not let go. With uncommonly dogged determination he pursued the war and remained unperturbed by the mounting criticism. Hence, the greater the pressure on him to stop, the worse the result from the broader Israeli point of view. Rather than leading either to a complete cessation of hostilities or to a determined pursuit of the war to a decisive strategic conclusion, the mounting criticism led to a halfway point between those two logical alternatives, that is, to a slow and increasingly costly grinding of the war to an end. But by (understandably and legitimately) struggling to stop the war in the middle, Sharon's critics in the cabinet, the parliamentary opposition, the public protest, and the intervention of the United States ultimately defeated not only Sharon's but also the critics' own purpose. Crudely emulating many of the young Dayan's notions, Sharon lacked the finesse, sensitivity, and responsibility that Dayan showed as a mature minister of defense. An imaginative battlefield strategist, he proved a poor grand strategist inasmuch as he exhibited a limited ability to imagine the domestic political repercussions of his actions. In the 1956 and 1967 wars, cabinet unity and the support of the Knesset had guaranteed full public support, unity of purpose, and therefore an excellent performance by the IDF and government ability to ward off American pressures in the course of the fighting. In 1982 these five interlocking spheres of action had the opposite effect.⁷⁵ The details are worth exploring at length.

The Knesset

Broadly speaking it seems clear that the pattern of parliamentary opposition to the war followed closely in the footsteps of opposition to Sharon inside the cabinet. Before the war the leadership of the main opposition—the Labor party—had at first been divided and then tended to support a limited military operation. Early in the war the Labor party resolved to overcome its doubt and to stand united behind the government. As it became clear that Sharon was implementing a variant of Big Pines, the Labor opposition, much like Sharon's critics in the cabinet, became increasingly restive. But, with the siege of Beirut, again much like the cabinet, the Labor opposition became

split again into supporters of tightening the siege and of an outright Israeli disengagement.

But pointing out the similarity between the response to Sharon's exploits in the cabinet and in the Labor party is not to say that the factors that shaped the two positions were identical. To start with the Labor party had to be very careful not to lay itself bare to charges that it was not behaving as a loyal opposition should. All of Israel's previous wars had been managed by Labor and there had never been any problem in obtaining Begin's and the Likud's support for the simple reason that the latter has always been far more hawkish than has Labor. Any sign of reluctance on the part of Labor to lend complete support to a war effort managed by the Likud could thus lead to electorally dangerous charges by Begin and his followers that the Labor party was playing politics with the single most important aspect of the national interest. Such charges were in fact leveled by Begin on the eve of the 1981 elections (in which Labor in fact did not do well), when the Labor party criticized Begin for having bombed the Iraqi nuclear reactor for electoral purposes. And given this experience Peres and his colleagues had to be, at least for a while, exceedingly careful in voicing opposition to the war.⁷⁶

However, and here lies a second critical difference between the cabinet and Labor opposition, the internal composition of Labor is such that it could ill afford not to come out strongly against the war. Labor is essentially a highly heterogeneous "supermarket" of ideological emphases representing all but the two extremes of the Israeli political spectrum, at least in terms of attitudes to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Whereas leaders such as Rabin, Hillel, Rozolio, Arbeli-Almoznino, Amir, and Nehemkin are essentially hawks, MAPAM, which was then in alignment with Labor, and leading members of the party such as Sarid and Eban, had been consistently very dovish in their outlook. The inevitable result was a split on the party's response to the nation's security problem. The doves had been close since the middle of the 1970s to accepting the idea of coexisting with a Palestinian state, even if it were controlled by the PLO. This part of the party comprises roughly one-third of the total. The rest has been as adamantly opposed to the idea as has the Likud, though for strategic rather than ideological reasons.⁷⁷ But the doves inside Labor had been vociferous enough to make it practically impossible for the party leadership to stop them from voicing criticism of a war with the declared purpose of extinguishing the PLO as a military and, by implication, as a political force. Indeed, no sooner had the war started and, at a time when the party leadership was still in support of the government, the Labor doves were condemning the entire enterprise as, in Sarid's words, "that damned war."⁷⁸ Thus, if Peres and the party leadership were to keep the party united, they had no choice but to criticize the war as soon as it extended beyond the twenty-five miles envisioned by Little Pines.

The same antagonism for and suspicion of Sharon that was manifested in the cabinet was also prevalent in the Labor party. Labor leaders such as Lieutenant General (ret.) Mordechai Gur who had served under Sharon in the Mitlah, or Rabin who had been Sharon's immediate superior in both the IDF and the government, or Peres who had been Ben Gurion's right-hand man in the ministry of defense throughout the latter's tenure, probably knew Sharon far better than did any member of the Likud and, mostly, liked him less. But, in addition to this reason for opposing the war, the Labor leadership—unlike Begin's blindly admiring cabinet colleagues—also genuinely did not trust Begin's ability to handle successfully an operation of such magnitude. For most of them this was a legacy from the days of Ben Gurion, who had considered Begin the single most irresponsible

Israeli leader.⁷⁹ In addition they had watched with abhorrence Begin's exploits as prime minister, especially moves such as the attack on Osiraq, the Golan and Jerusalem annexation laws, as well as, of course, the massive settlement of densely populated parts of the West Bank and the aggressive abuse of friendly foreign governments. But the Labor leadership also mistrusted Begin the peacemaker. They had watched him give back the whole of the Sinai and, in a show of (they thought) irresponsible magnanimity, refuse to bargain with the United States over the three billion dollars' worth rebuilding of air bases in the Negev following the return of the Sinai to Egypt. They also disputed the wisdom of Begin's West Bank autonomy scheme. Hence, the thought that Begin and Sharon would take the country to war filled them instinctively with horror on purely operational grounds.

Another difference of critical importance was that the mainstream of the Labor leadership was inspired in varying degrees by a belief in a Syrian-Israeli understanding. True, they had been the ones to initiate links with the Phalange, but while recognizing the strategic imperative of doing so they had never abandoned hope that an understanding with Syria, beginning with Lebanon but gradually expanding to a wider sphere including the Golan, would one day become feasible. In other words, they essentially advocated a policy of hedging Israel's bets in the intractable Lebanese imbroglio. The Phalange should be supported as a contingency for a confrontation with Syria, even as a tacit inducement for Syria to be more cooperative. But this gambit should never be allowed to lead to a head-on collision with the *Ba'ath* Republic.

The most vociferous and consistent proponent of this view was Mota Gur. During the spring of 1976 when he was Chief of Staff of the IDF, he went as far as advocating a signal to Syria that its forces would be allowed to advance virtually all the way to the Israeli border. Later, during Operation Litani, he pointed out that the IDF should under no circumstances allow itself to be dragged into a confrontation with Syria while pursuing the PLO. And in the spring of 1982, when a war appeared increasingly imminent, he once again returned to the same theme.

Gur's opinion was strongly supported by Rabin and not at all challenged by the rest of the party leadership. The implication, however, was a pervasive ambiguity in the party's position. Like the Likud, the Labor mainstream was apprehensive about the potential "Carterization" of U.S. policy vis-à-vis the PLO. But opposed to Sharon's idea of a potential "preventive" war against Syria, they could not extend this position to its logical conclusion, namely, a military campaign to drive the PLO out of Lebanon. What would be sufficient to destroy the PLO would entail a collision with Syria, whereas the kind of operation that was needed to avoid a confrontation with Syria could not undermine the political position of the PLO and might even add impetus to the U.S. inclination to force Israel into a dialogue with the PLO, as it had in Operation Litani in 1978 and the mini-attribution of July 1981.

A final factor affecting the Labor opposition's response to the war was in fact a complex cluster of dispositions and attitudes that were characteristic of Labor and almost entirely absent among Begin's close colleagues. Disciples of Ben Gurion, Labor politicians had a heartfelt belief in a pragmatic, piecemeal, and in the long run cumulative advance toward goals. They would rather see Israel deterring the Arabs through the accumulation of power than through its demonstrative use. Their ultimate goals were not very different from those of their Likud rivals, but, unlike the latter, they never set much store in comprehensive solutions carried out in one fell swoop. Abba Eban articulated this vague but important disposition in a typical combination of clarity and forcefulness:

[The] ideas, the ways of thought, the temperamental attitudes, the emotional preconditions that underlay . . . Sharon's and Begin's grand design were inherently incapable of being accommodated within the terms of the Israeli Labor movement. The Begin-Sharon rhetoric resounded in Labor ears like an alien language clothed in an undecipherable, exotic script. Labor Zionism, for good or ill, is skeptical about ideas that soar too far from the ground. It believes in things that are concrete, real, recognizably shaped and presented in a mood of proportion. It has its visionary component, but its particular strength lies in a proven capacity to bring aims and capacities into balance.⁸⁰

This basic disposition of the Labor party had its logical corollary in the party's attitude to the use of force in the modern world. "The Labor movement is not pacifist by tradition," Eban continues, "it is in fact the architect of the Israeli defense system, and its somewhat blunt unsentimental rationality has fashioned the psychology and vocabulary of the IDF." At the same time, while not rejecting the use of force as a matter of philosophical principle, the Labor movement is imbued with a

sober view of what military action can and cannot do in the modern age. It does . . . not believe that . . . military action can achieve much beyond its crucial defensive function. It can prevent . . . Israel from being wiped out, or deeply injured and that is no small thing. But it cannot produce durable changes in the map of history or generate the kind of reactions out of which new regional harmonies can be fashioned. If a victory is only military, it comes close to not being a victory at all. . . . The aim of modern war is not to exterminate your adversary or to deny him an influence on the postwar settlement. The aim is to change his mind and attitude so that his position in the political negotiations which follow war is not too remote to make a compromise feasible.⁸¹

Informed by such a perception of politics and strategy, some Labor leaders could very well see the logic of pursuing the PLO. But they would rather see Israel bide its time until a showdown became virtually inevitable than accelerate the process by its own initiative. They perceive the Middle East as a complex arena in which what seems is often not what is and in which Israel has often been saved from difficult straits by an unexpected twist in Arab politics. In a word, although the trend appeared to be toward either a historic compromise with the PLO (to which only the party's doves were reconciled) or a risky showdown (which they did not relish), the Labor party felt that Israel should not initiate the turmoil. It should adopt a wait and see attitude in the hope that Syria, Jordan, the vicissitudes of Lebanese politics, or all three would ultimately pull the chestnuts out of the fire to Israel's benefit. This ephemeral but all-important predisposition was reinforced by Labor's fond concern for the IDF. The IDF was built primarily by people such as Peres, Rabin, Bar Lev, and Gur. For them it was Israel's most successful enterprise, a vehicle of nation building no less than an instrument of national security, a pacesetter, standard setter, and social laboratory in which the best and the brightest were trained to kill but educated to believe in humanist values. The backbone of the IDF, moreover, are junior officers, NCOs, and combat troops who come predominantly from the core of Labor's own constituency in the kibbutzim, Moshavim, and middle-class intelligentsia. For Labor politicians such resources should under no circumstances be employed for dubious purposes or exposed to compromising circumstances, such as a war in Lebanon, they knew only too well, would be bound to create.

With such a combination of considerations the Labor leadership was impaled on the horns of an excruciating dilemma from the moment Begin presented them for the first time

with his war plan. Political instinct and concern for the unity of the party made them averse to the plan from the very beginning. Long-term security and wider political considerations aggravated matters further. To come out forcefully against the war would expose them to the charge that because of their opposition, a critical national project could not be carried out. Support for Begin's plan, on the other hand, might lead them into an abyss if the war failed, or give Begin an electorally devastating advantage if the war turned out to be the success Begin and Sharon confidently predicted it could be.

Aware of such possibilities they attempted from the very beginning to walk a tightrope between support for the war and opposition to it. On April 6, 1982, they were invited by Begin for the first in a series of meetings about the war. Present at the discussion were Shimon Peres as Party Chairman, Chaim Bar Lev as Party Secretary General, and Itzhak Rabin, the party's second most senior leader. The latter two had been chiefs of staff of the IDF. Peres had been director general of the ministry of defense, deputy minister of defense, and minister of defense. Rabin had been, in addition to his career in the IDF, also ambassador to the United States and prime minister. Together they formed a formidable team.

Begin and Sharon presented the Labor leaders with the plan for Big Pines. Their reaction was, to say the least, unenthusiastic. Peres argued against the enterprise. His two colleagues did not. Bar Lev questioned the wisdom of taking on the Syrians, whereas Rabin wondered whether the IDF was capable of withstanding the rigors of an extended stay in Lebanon which, he predicted, would be inevitable.⁸²

If Begin and Sharon seemed to be impressed by these arguments it must have been because the Labor leaders' doubts echoed those of many members of the cabinet. The result was a seeming modification of the plan leading to the idea of a watered-down version. On May 16, the Labor leaders were summoned for a second meeting. Their reaction to the watered-down version was identical to that of Begin's recalcitrant cabinet colleagues. Rabin inquired whether the town of Sidon was included in the plan. Peres expressed support for the idea of an incursion to a line extending from Sidon to Qar'oun Lake. At the same time all three Labor leaders emphasized that such a complex operation should not commence unless and until a major PLO provocation occurred.⁸³ The emphasis in Labor attitude was thus shifting from a mixture of skepticism and outright opposition to a qualified support for a halfway measure between Big and Little Pines. Begin and Sharon had thus obtained the same kind of flickering green light from Labor, as they had from their colleagues and, as will be seen, from the United States.

This idea was reaffirmed when the war broke out. The Labor leaders were again summoned to a talk with the prime minister, in which they essentially repeated what they had told him during the previous meeting. This, moreover, was reiterated on the same day in the larger forum of the Knesset Foreign Relations and Security Committee.

We must all as one stand behind this operation [Peres told the Committee]. It is no secret that there were differences of opinion on the eve of the operation and there will be differences of opinion in the future. However, all of us are patriots. As long as the operation continues, no one should raise any other thought. The paramount considerations of all of us, those who approve the operation and those who oppose it, must be the safety of our soldiers and our settlements. As of the moment the war began, we are as one with the army, blessing it and praying for its safety.⁸⁴

This equivocal mixture of overt support and insinuated opposition to the war set the tone for Labor's position as the war took its tortuous course. On June 8 the Labor party

helped the government defeat a no-confidence motion introduced by the (mainly Arab) Democratic Front for Peace and Equality. On the same day, however, Mordechai Gur warned the Knesset Foreign Relations and Security Committee in a closed session that, "They [the government] are clearly lying to us." His suspicions must have been supported by hard evidence since, as a former chief of staff of the IDF, he still had ample access to inside information. His warning was therefore taken very seriously by his Labor party colleagues, who decided there and then to instruct Peres and Rabin to approach Prime Minister Begin and underline again the need to avoid a full-dress confrontation with Syria.⁸⁵

On June 13 the Knesset Foreign Relations and Security Committee met again. Gur repeated his anxious warning that the government was withholding critical information from the committee. Three days later Peres echoed the same accusation, charging that various operations had been carried out without cabinet approval. A week later such previously private suspicions were aired in public for the first time, in a Knesset debate. Labor member Gad Ya'akobi, a former associate of the late Moshe Dayan and a former Minister of Transport, requested Prime Minister Begin to explain how it happened that a war begun for limited aims had expanded to such all-embracing proportions.

The battles of Aley and Behamdoun and the tightening noose around the Lebanese capital rapidly raised the suspicion that Sharon was planning to order the IDF into Beirut and to launch further offensives against Syria with a view to driving Syria completely out of Lebanon. The result was not only greater anxiety in the cabinet and the Labor party but also the emergence of a wider coalition of opponents to the war, cutting across party lines for the first time. On June 24 the government was called upon by the Shinui party to avoid expanding a "war without consensus" and to refrain from ordering the IDF into Beirut. Such an admonition had been expressed in closed session a day earlier, during a Knesset Foreign Relations and Security Committee meeting, by a dovish member of the Liberal component of the Likud, Dror Zeigerman, as well as by a dovish member of the National Religious Party, Avraham Melamed. This may have come as no surprise, but during the same meeting these long-standing doves were joined for the first time by a mainstream member of Begin's own Likud bloc, Ehud Olmert. The evident drift toward opposition to the war within the Labor party was thus beginning to spill over into the political center and even into Begin's own parliamentary base.

Nothing in the course of the war exposed the equivocation of the Labor party in its attitude to the war more than the prolonged siege of Beirut. Former Prime Minister Rabin, a leading Labor hawk, visited the Beirut area where he was televised in the company of Sharon, thus suggesting in effect support for the latter's moves. Former Chief of Staff Gur, a leading opponent of the war from the beginning, apparently could not overlook the logic of keeping pressure on the PLO in Beirut once the siege had begun. Indeed, he hastened to criticize a government decision to discharge some reserve troops as "premature." As if intending to prevent the impression that the Labor party had resolved to support a military solution in the Lebanese capital, Rabin exclaimed a day later that Gur's statement should not be taken as a sign that Labor was averse to a politically negotiated solution. Three days later, however, Rabin's own wavering between support for and doubt about the wisdom of what was going on was underlined in a television interview in which he stated:

The Israeli action in Lebanon brought impressive military achievements and the IDF operated extremely well, but the military operation must have a political purpose. . . .

The basic goal of securing Israel's northern settlements has been achieved. But some elements in the government had a concept . . . that the power of the IDF could be used to achieve farreaching political objectives. Statements such as "not a single terrorist will remain in Lebanon" or "a strong Lebanese government will sign a peace treaty with Israel by the end of the year" or talk about the expulsion of all foreign forces from Lebanon, including the Syrians, are objectives which cannot be realized given the IDF's achievements, and I think I would not have gone to war in order to obtain them.

Under the circumstances what must be done is to climb down from the tall tree of farreaching political objectives, get out of the quagmire of Beirut, and do everything to maintain the original purpose of Operation Peace for the Galilee, namely, securing a 25-27-miles strip north of Israel's border, to which the terrorists would not be allowed to return.

The first priority in my view is to get out of the Beirut quagmire where . . . if the terrorists do not come out or are not brought out, Israel would suffer a serious blow, the question of how we reached such a situation notwithstanding. Two methods must be used: tightening the siege, including selective bombing of terrorist targets and water and electricity cut-offs, as long as the non-combatant civilian population is allowed to leave, and, concurrently, making Israel's political conditions for a resolution more flexible.

Thus, Rabin was in effect supporting Sharon's stepped-up pressure on the PLO as a means of facilitating an Israeli withdrawal. He could not help but see that Sharon's tactics, brutal as they may have been, made ample strategic sense. His only advice for modifications in Sharon's strategy at this stage was to lower Israel's sights and aim at less far-reaching objectives than Sharon's. Moreover, much like Sharon he also expressed a critical attitude toward the role U.S. envoy Philip Habib was attempting to play in resolving the prolonged standoff in Beirut. In the course of the same TV interviews, he said:

I do not understand what Philip Habib is doing in the Arab states, as though he is seeking a refuge for the terrorists. There is a simple refuge in Tripoli, or even the Beqa'a, since a third of Lebanon is under Syrian control. Even if thousands of terrorists were to reach Damascus and Latakia they would be able to return to Lebanon.

But Rabin's position was not shared by a growing number of his party colleagues. While the former prime minister advocated tightening the siege, Party Chairman Peres and Rabin's successor as Chief of Staff in 1968, now Secretary General of the party, Chaim Bar Lev, urged the government to stop the bombings and the water and electricity cut-offs and thus, in effect, to lift the siege without results. It is impossible to tell which view was supported by a larger number of Labor members of Knesset, or of Labor supporters in the country, but it seems clear that the horrors of the siege gradually melted away Labor's initial commitment to bury the hatchet with the Likud until the end of hostilities. Indeed, on August 12, the worst day of the siege, the Labor party demanded a full-dress Knesset debate on the war. Presenting the request in the plenum, Secretary General Bar Lev had this to say:

The leadership of the Labor Party had supported the limited goals of the operation as defined to them on June 5. But on that occasion we found it necessary to warn against slipping into aims and military actions that go beyond the specified and limited aim of pushing the terrorists away from the border. Prime Minister Begin told us that the aim was to release Israel's northern settlements from the threat of the terrorists' fire.

The operation, we were told, would last a day or two. Since then 68 days have passed and there is no resemblance between what is happening in Lebanon and Operation Peace for the Galilee as defined to us. . . . For many years to come we shall be reminded of this dark hour. . . . The use of the IDF's enormous power must be sanctity saved for ensuring Israel's direct security and with respect to this there is a broad national consensus. The campaign in Lebanon exceeded our direct security needs and hence the debate and the criticism.⁸⁶

Bar Lev is a composed, down-to-earth, and eminently sober person. For him to employ such strong language was quite unusual and doubtless reflected a genuine, very strong opposition to what Sharon, Begin, and the cabinet had done. Yet, Bar Lev's anguish notwithstanding, this brief survey of the Labor party's tortuous stance from April through August 1982 suggests that inadvertently the party, much like Begin's colleagues who opposed the war, had contributed to the course of events that it criticized. The lack of consistency, the equivocation, the excessive preoccupation with tactical and immediate political considerations ultimately reinforced the tendency toward the worst of all possibilities from the Israeli point of view. Had the Labor party opposed the war in any shape or form before it had begun, the Likud government would have found it far more difficult to initiate it. Conversely, had Labor supported the war from beginning to end, it might have made it possible for the government to allow the IDF to operate according to strategic desiderata rather than according to the pace at which political authorization was extracted from the cabinet. Having done neither, the Labor party reinforced the tendency to launch a limited operation, which made neither strategic nor political sense and therefore was bound to be subsequently expanded in the wrong manner. Moreover, Labor's equivocation added impetus to a government breach with the Israeli public. Its own attitude was no doubt also partly nourished by this growing division. But its parliamentary authority, the military and political weight of its leadership, had turned it into a powerful amplifier of a public doubt which otherwise would have remained confined to a small fringe, at least until the war was over.

Public Opinion

One reason that could account for Labor's equivocation is the fact that public opinion in general was relatively slow to crystallize in opposition to the war. Ever since Labor had lost power in 1977, its leadership had been painfully confronted by a visible trend of decline in popular support for the party. Hence to oppose a war that the general public seemed to support would be tantamount to a political suicide. It would identify the party, to its detriment, with its own left-wing radicals, and it would confront it head-on with the Sephardi community which was a majority in most towns along the Lebanon border. Conversely, once strong signs of public disenchantment with the war were detected, especially when most of the initial opposition came from Labor's own constituency, the party could feel more at freedom to express its own real view of the problem.

Initially the Israeli public was clearly very supportive of the war. Indeed, Begin's declining popularity, as well as Sharon's, had been on the rise again. To the question, "Who is best suited to be Prime Minister?" support for Begin increased from 40.4 percent in May 1982 to 51.5 percent a month later. Likewise, to the question, "Who is best suited to be Minister of Defense?" support for Sharon rose from 42.1 percent in May to 56 percent in June. Another survey conducted simultaneously asked respondents to rate the performance of the prime minister and minister of defense on a scale. Between May

and June the percentage of those who felt that Begin and Sharon performed "very well" doubled.

At the time of the Aley-Behamdoun battles and especially with the acceleration of the siege of Beirut, public support as measured by opinion polls began to dwindle. Polls taken in the course of June had reflected overwhelming support for the war. In one poll 77.2 percent thought that launching the war was definitely justified, 15.6 percent that it was justified with reservations, and only 2 percent that it was definitely not justified. Another poll at about the same time found that no less than 83 percent of the respondents felt that the war was entirely justified. A month later, however, the latter poll's results dropped to 76 percent. At the same time the percentage of respondents who felt that the war was unjustified rose in this poll from 13 percent early in June to 19 percent early in August.

If these changes in public opinion in general during the period from June to August were not particularly important, the rapid mushrooming of ad hoc protest groups was very significant indeed. The first antiwar demonstration was staged by 300 students in front of the prime minister's residence three days after the end of the painful and costly Aley-Behamdoun battle. A week later the Peace Now movement organized a rally in front of the Tel Aviv municipality with the estimated participation of 100,000 people. They demanded the dismissal of Defense Minister Sharon, an immediate ceasefire, and the initiation of diplomatic negotiations.

The Peace Now demonstration set the stage for an immediate proliferation of protest movements. On July 8, eighty-six soldiers and officers set up an organization called Yesh Gvul (literally, "there is a limit," or "there is a border"). Submitting a petition to the prime minister and to the minister of defense, they demanded permission not to serve in Lebanon. Two days later an organization calling itself "Soldiers Against Silence" was formed, which included some 300 reserve soldiers who claimed (correctly) that under government instructions the IDF was silencing criticism. Had it not been for that, they contended, the siege of Beirut which was strenuously opposed by many in the service would never have commenced; hence it had been an illegal act. On July 26, Yesh Gvul and Soldiers Against Silence held two separate demonstrations in Jerusalem.

On August 5, during the bloodiest period in the siege of Beirut, thousands of torch-carrying members of Peace Now laid a symbolic siege on Begin's residence. Two days later an ad hoc Committee Against the War in Lebanon organized a protest march in Tel Aviv in which 10,000 people took part. Simultaneously another group announced that it was going on a hunger strike for as long as the war continued. On August 8, 2,000 supporters of Soldiers Against Silence submitted a petition to the prime minister in which they expressed three main demands: the IDF should not be ordered again to open fire in Beirut; the government should pursue negotiations with the besieged PLO; the silence about the circumstances in which the war had been expanded beyond the twenty-five-mile limit should be broken. The symbolic importance of the petition was underlined by the facts that the petitioners were all from front-line combat units, and their leading spokesman was Avraham Burg, son of the incumbent minister of the interior.⁸⁷

The IDF

Unlike Sharon's cabinet colleagues, the Labor opposition, and public opinion at large, the IDF, and in particular the regular command structure, could not honestly complain that it had been the victim of a cleverly contrived deception by the minister of defense. The IDF had had elaborate contingency plans for a whole variety of operations not only in Lebanon

but elsewhere in the Middle East. This in itself reflected no Israeli political intention, rather it was a standard military planning procedure that every army with a command structure worthy of the name, including the Swiss army, simply has to follow. Contingency planning delineates the army's working perception of the threats with which it might have to deal. As such it forms an essential basis for training programs, procurement programs, annual working plans—indeed, for the army's organizational structure.

Moreover, the escalation of the Syrian-Israeli arms race after the October 1973 war, Syria's intensified involvement in Lebanon, the fact that Syria had gradually become Israel's single most important foe, and, of course, the escalation of the conflict with the PLO inevitably intensified the IDF's planning concerning a variety of operations in Lebanon. This did not necessarily involve explicit instruction from the political echelon with a specific deadline. It was at least in part a matter of anticipation by the General Staff that sooner or later it would inevitably be instructed to do something about both the PLO and the Syrians. Nor was this anticipatory organizational response confined to the "drawing board," so to speak. Throughout the 1970s the IDF carried out in Lebanon actual operations involving the air force, the navy, all the available types of land forces, and of course the intelligence community. And the greater the variety of ad hoc operational responses the IDF had to produce, the greater the effort it invested in both planning and training programs which, to various degrees, were inspired by the presupposition that a major showdown in Lebanon was in the offing.

Nor would it be fair to say that this anticipation was only a cause of resentment. Like the overwhelming majority of Israelis, the IDF command at all levels looked upon Syria and the PLO with a mixture of contempt and concern which is normally reserved for mortal enemies. But in addition, the IDF had its own very specific reasons to be receptive to the idea of a military operation. For one thing, it had emerged from the October 1973 war with a frustration nourished by the heavy toll paid in that war and, at least as much, by a feeling that the armed forces were made by the Meir government to begin the war in the wrong way. Had Meir given permission for a preemptive strike, many officers felt, the course of the 1973 war would have been quite different.⁸⁸

This attitude was reinforced by an accumulating frustration in the course of the more-than-decade-long encounter with the PLO in Lebanon. The relative restraint of successive Israeli governments, including Begin's own, implied that operationally the IDF had never been given an opportunity to deal with the PLO effectively. Instead of a relentless pursuit maximizing a cardinal element in IDF doctrine, namely, "the exploitation of success," the IDF had been permitted only to engage in limited operations leading to casualties, to a great deal of waste in training resources, to a bad press, but not to any conclusive results. This feeling understandably grew after Operation Litani. Hamstrung by political constraints and heavy-handed as it appeared, this operation earned the IDF little respect and, indeed, involved it in scandals that suggested a decline in its ethics.⁸⁹ Then, early in July 1981, the IDF was given permission to pursue the PLO more fully, only to be stopped on July 24, by Begin's decision to accept a ceasefire when the general staff was convinced that the PLO was on the verge of collapse.

As deeply felt as this frustration may have been, from the IDF's point of view the real menace was Syria. According to an intelligence estimate carried out in 1981, the rapid buildup of forces in Syria, with Soviet assistance, would render 1984 a year of maximum peril. From then on, it was estimated, the Syrians might feel strong enough to initiate a full-scale war for limited gains or, at the very least, some sort of war of attrition.⁹⁰ Against this background the experience of the Yom Kippur War suggested two

utterly contradictory courses of action. One would be preventive war before Syria was ready. The IDF could then choose the time and the preferred strategy and, given previous experiences with preventive action as well as with wars initiated by the Arabs, the chances would be good that Israel could score an impressive victory at a low cost in both life and matériel.⁹¹ An alternative view, however, was the recognition that every previous war had vastly accelerated the arms race and thus proved to be to Israel's long-term disadvantage. With Egypt out of the war cycle, it could be argued, Syria felt isolated and was rapidly arming in order to improve its ability to withstand an attack from Israel. Assad was a pragmatic and cautious leader and would not run the risks involved in taking on Israel without the massive support of other Arab armies. But since Iraq was bogged down in a hopeless war with Iran, and Jordan was quite unlikely to expose itself to another disastrous war with Israel, Assad had virtually no war option at all.⁹²

Such contradictory theses represented the very epitome of a security dilemma. And, in the same way that the rest of the Israeli elite was split about how to deal with it, so was the IDF; however, in the same way that support for some operations would ultimately appear more attractive to a larger part of that elite than would an avoidance of any action, so did the IDF too ultimately tilt in its professional evaluation toward support for a major move. The debate was conducted in an Israeli setting in the latter part of the twentieth century, but both the options and, indeed, the outcome had been in a sense predicted by an age-old tradition of thought that Rousseau had so succinctly articulated in the latter part of the eighteenth century.

At the same time, there are some indications that the "war party" within the IDF was not substantially stronger than the "antiwar party" or that, at the very least, the latter constituted a formidable group. As (then) Deputy Chief of Staff General Moshe Levi was to admit, within the IDF command "the debate on the war preceded that war; it was the first [war in Israel's history] to be debated and analyzed so much before it took place. Every soldier went to war with his own assessment."⁹³ Thus the appearance on the scene of Arik Sharon turned out to be critical, since in his position as minister of defense he had the authority of an ultimate and indisputable arbiter. To oppose his verdict would mean the opponents might have to resign from the service or suffer a setback in terms of their prospects for future promotion. This would have been the case with any minister of defense, but given Sharon's well-known brutality and his vindictiveness toward any opponent, whether a military subordinate or a political colleague, the dilemma confronting those IDF officers who felt that a war was not inescapable became far more acute. On the whole—and, as one of the few exceptions to this rule, Brigadier General Dov ("Dovik") Tamari was quick to point out, not to their credit—the opponents of the war within the IDF resolved this dilemma by playing what came to be known as *Rosh Katan* ("small head"): they kept their criticisms and doubts to themselves and obeyed orders they opposed.⁹⁴ The result was that for the first time in Israel's history, a war was launched by an IDF that was not sufficiently motivated to pursue it with vigor, élan, and unwavering determination.

In fairness to Sharon it ought to be emphasized that such unhealthy tendencies would have been, and were, detected at the time he took office, a year before the war. Upon assuming office Sharon received a letter from General Avraham Rotem, who was then retiring from service:

Please view this letter as a soldier's report. . . . It is written after everything. It is not based on any personal hopes and it does not contain any personal requests. Its only

purpose is to throw light on the situation from a personal point of view. In my opinion the IDF in recent years has been led by extreme conservatives. Human relationships have become pervasively suspicious and lacking in trust. There is abuse of power and position. There is a tendency for false pretensions and excessive self-confidence.

The result is damage on two counts. a. A significant decline, even deterioration in military thinking, concepts of war, structure, organization, training and recruitment. b. An erosion of the human infrastructure, depreciation of its values and stagnation in thinking, loyalty and initiative. . . .

Conservatism (such as this) is inevitably anti-intellectual. It reflects a conceptual crudity. And it is blind to nuance. Everything is black or white. The solution is frequently all or nothing. Partial alternatives are dismissed as bad words. The extreme conservative officer is vindictive and bad-tempered. Pushed into a corner intellectually he keeps a grudge and will never forgive him who proved him wrong.

Such phenomena become worse when they go hand in hand with an atmosphere of total paranoia. For the paranoid the "clique" is a refuge and only he who is well known, he who has shared past experiences and was O.K., can join it. He who is not of the "clique" is a potential enemy and he who would not join the chorus of "yes men" harms the sacred harmony and as such poses a threat and has to be removed. Loyalty to a tyrant [sic] is to tell him what he likes to hear. Criticism—be it constructive as it may be—is perceived as a personal affront, and attempt to undermine the tyrant's position.

This situation, Rotem added, has critically affected the IDF's ability to perform.

In my evaluation slowly but surely a wrong concept of war as a static, predictable, carefully pre-phased affair settles in. The more distant the previous war, the "clearer" appears the next. The result is a defensive concept. [It begins] from the belief that, first, we'll break them in a good defensive [war] and then we'll regroup and launch an offensive. Basking in the possibility that seemingly exists for a preventive offense stifles thinking about the more realistic scenario of both an offense and a defense simultaneously. There is no thinking about an attack which is not dependent on a defense and on the adversary's planning. There are no clear objectives for an offensive. . . .

Often it seems that the handling of land forces is like a car sliding down a cliff while the passengers . . . do not seem to know what should be done. Should the hand brake or the emergency brake be used to prevent a disaster? No amount of words will alter the fact that the reorganization of land forces is urgently called for, not in order to save money but in order to give it again conceptual, doctrinal and organizational momentum. . . .

In the IDF today there is a hostility to an original, thoughtful and creative officer. His superiors do not understand what motivates him. The pretenders see with alarm the possibility of real development which will make a mockery of their own useless tricks and inventions. . . . Only a few have the restiveness and the critical thinking which stops them from accepting what is. Only few have the intellectual stamina, the energy which is needed to confront the problems and find solutions. Only a handful have the tenacity and resilience which are required to make suggestions and defend them at risk to their careers and friendships.

These are now fought by the system. It leads to despair and attrition, it sets high penalties for criticism and offers attractive prizes for conformity, silence and docility. . . .

The IDF has become a train with many cars carrying heavy and expensive duty but moving slowly on a side track, headed by an ancient locomotive which has lost its power, which rather than pulling holds back; and all it can do is to honk and

occasionally blow some smoke. The guards of the track are impressed from a distance by the semblance of the reality and by the expensive cargo, but they do not notice that the train moves by the inertia invested in the cars while consuming the energy which was gained by the previous trip. . . . Hence instead of replacing the locomotive by a new and powerful diesel, they replace some of the cars and add rusty old additional locomotives . . . soon the energy will be spent, the inertia will dissipate and the train will come to a halt.⁹⁵

This concerned critique by a person who was typically perceived as a strict and loyal disciplinarian clearly suggests that the IDF that had been ordered into Lebanon in June 1982 had suffered a serious malaise long before the war. The mediocre performance in the war cannot therefore be blamed only on Sharon's putative deception. If Rotem is correct in his analysis, and it seems that he was at least correct to a certain extent, the war, any war, would have been fought sluggishly even if there had been no deception and no domestic criticism. Against this background Sharon must have further aggravated the malaise by acting like a tyrant, visibly exceeding his authority, and, above all, denying the forces in the field clear instructions about their specific objectives during the latter phase of the war.

The importance of this last factor cannot be overstated. Over the years the IDF had evolved a remarkable degree of technological sophistication. From an infantry militia in 1948, it had become one of the world's best equipped armed forces. But its superb performance in the past had never been the result of sheer technological aptitude. In the final analysis, its technology had always been a secondary factor, more of a "sufficient" than a "necessary" condition. Its real strength had always lay in a racing, competitive spirit among individuals, units, corps, and services. The best examples reflecting this trait were the 1956 and 1967 wars, in which not only battlefield outcomes but—especially in 1967—the very outcome of the campaign as a whole was the result not of political decisions but of a race toward the Suez Canal, the Wailing Wall in the Old City of Jerusalem, and Kuneitra and the Hermon peak on the Golan.⁹⁶

The state of mind that had such a galvanizing and crystallizing effect on the forces from the general staff all the way down the chain of command could have been created and nurtured only by an unshaken belief that what they were doing was at once critical, inescapable, ethical, and honorable. Acting instinctively on such assumptions, they turned, as Dayan put it, into "galloping stallions." Dayan was fully aware of the fact that this had sometimes led to military outcomes that significantly reshaped the government's political intent (such as reaching the banks of the Suez Canal in 1967 when they had been explicitly instructed to destroy the Egyptian army and stop west of the Gidi and Mitlah passes). But the alternative, Dayan had fully acknowledged, was that the IDF would be like "lazy oxen." Between the two alternatives, Dayan for one had always preferred the former.⁹⁷

One of the most ironic twists in the Lebanon war was the fact that Arik Sharon himself had been Dayan's chief instrument of transforming the IDF from lazy oxen into galloping stallions. Yet in Lebanon his determination to pursue the war first and to rely on a successful outcome as the principal means of generating consensus later ultimately accelerated the transformation of much of the IDF command back into lazy oxen. To be sure, this swing of the dispositional pendulum did not lead to symptoms of disintegration such as personal cowardice, command from the rear, or any noticeable decline in the IDF's very special degree of camaraderie. Thus, a survey conducted by the IDF Department of Behavioral Science on a sample of 1,500 soldiers from front-line combat units came up with the following results:

85% felt that the soldiers at their own level (their peers within their combat units) had fought and performed well under fire.

60% said that their morale had been “high” or “very high” while they were in battle with their units.

86% said that they received a “high” or “very high” degree of mutual support from their peers in their units while in battle.

80% said they had a “high” or “very high” degree of confidence in their immediate superior commanders.

76% said they had a “high” or “very high” degree of confidence in their equipment and the way it performed in battle.⁹⁸

Rather, Sharon’s heavy-handed bullying of the IDF into a war that many felt was not entirely justified critically increased their existing propensity to act like lazy oxen in terms of drive and readiness to take risks of both officers and enlisted men. Whereas overextension and overexertion in previous wars had been a ubiquitous and often even a dangerous phenomenon, during Operation Peace for the Galilee there were “islands” of such behavior in the middle of “lakes” of caution sometimes bordering on lethargy. Officers would not readily commit their subordinates to missions involving grave risks. There was hardly any fighting during the night, previously the IDF’s preferred time for major operations. There was a noticeable tendency to stall, to call for immense artillery and air preparation before an assault. “There was a feeling,” in the words of the commanding officer of a crack paratroop unit, “that it was preferable to go slow but be safe [rather] than advance rapidly and take risks.”⁹⁹

Such tendencies may have been reinforced by a number of additional factors that were not of Sharon’s making, in any case not directly. According to one critique, the IDF had experienced a significant decline in the quality of manpower signing up for extended regular service. Consequently many mediocre soldiers succeeded in rising in the ranks because others had retired to a civilian career.¹⁰⁰ If this assertion contains a grain of truth—which is very difficult to establish¹⁰¹—the effects may have been compounded by the shattering impact on morale the experience of a war in densely populated civilian zones had on Israeli soldiers. “This is the most terrible war we’ve been in,” one soldier said in an interview. “You entered the camp—the people you saw in front of view were just civilians—and then someone shoots at you from some house. Well, you have to shoot back in self-defense, even when you know there are women and children inside too.”¹⁰² To minimize civilian casualties, the IDF operated within very strict procedures which had been carefully worked out in advance of the war. Yet, paradoxically, this too slowed down the pace of the campaign and further deteriorated its overall momentum.

If such a factor was relevant only in the western sector of the fighting along the Mediterranean, where the IDF deployed some two divisions or roughly one-third of the total invasion force, another, quite different factor had a similar impact in the central and eastern sectors of the war, where approximately four IDF divisions were confronted mainly by the Syrian army. Specifically, when civilians were not involved this was caused by the nature of the terrain. Though preparing for the possibility of a war in Lebanon, the IDF had essentially kept its earlier doctrine unchanged; it had spent a great deal of resources on the further mechanization of the main force and on the performance of a successful combined arms operation. But implicitly it had retained the emphasis on fast,

mechanized thrusts of the kind ideally suited for wide, open spaces but less so for mountainous areas such as Lebanon.

In tactical terms the main difference between war in an open space and war in a mountainous terrain lies in the fact that in the mountains movement is confined to a few, curving, easily defended roads. The defender, in this case the Syrian army, can confront the attacking force with tank and antitank ambushes and fortified positions. The attacking force has little room to maneuver and is often forced to proceed in single file on utterly predictable axes of advance. As a result large fighting forces turn into convoys in which the lead tank does most of the fighting and incurs most of the risks. When it is incapacitated it becomes itself a roadblock that increases the vulnerability of the rest of the force behind it.

Israel had had ample experience with this kind of warfare during the siege of Jerusalem in the 1948 war. Ultimately the price of breaking through the narrow Jerusalem highway became so high that it was necessary to pave a "Burma Road," bypassing the Arab forces in the area behind their backs. A similar solution was applied to the Lebanon war in one instance when the IDF engineers paved, in startling speed, a bypass road which ultimately enabled the forces of Brigadier General Yossi Peled to establish positions on Jebel Barouq from which they could prevent Syrian reinforcements from pouring into the Beqa'a. But apart from this instance the IDF fought primarily on the existing, predictable, and therefore dangerous road system.

For the most part it had succeeded in attaining its objectives within the timetable of the pre-fighting planning. But on a number of occasions it paid a heavy price, or proved slow in carrying out the plan, or, indeed, both. The result must have been a peculiar sense of confusion. On the one hand the IDF was on the offensive at a time and in a method of its own choosing. It also enjoyed a significant quantitative edge. Yet, at the same time, the buoyant feeling of a speedy, sweeping, and decisive victory that had been generated by the advances in previous wars and, in turn, contributed to such victories, never quite developed in this operation.¹⁰³

Strictly speaking Sharon could not have been held responsible for the fact that the IDF was not optimally prepared for the kind of war it was asked to carry out in Lebanon. The IDF of 1982 was largely the product of the major buildup of forces that had taken place primarily under Minister of Defense Shimon Peres, Chief of Staff Mordechai Gur, and Prime Minister Rabin at a time when Sharon was allowed virtually no influence in this regard. In addition, at least in the formal sense, the specific tactics of the war were not Sharon's responsibility but rather the responsibility of General Eitan and the general staff. But in reality Sharon did exert an overbearing influence over the actual conduct of the campaign, and in many respects acted as a kind of super chief of staff. The result was yet another source of confusion which further reinforced the lack of a real racing spirit. The war in Lebanon was characterized not only by an excessive concentration of force in relation to space but also by an excessive concentration of command structures per space, units, and quantities of manpower. Sharon was constantly breathing down Eitan's neck and often bypassing him, giving direct orders to Eitan's subordinates. If Eitan had any complaints in this regard he could be blamed for doing much the same thing to General Amir Drori who, as OC Northern Command, was commissioned with the management of the campaign. Indeed, Eitan's involvement was often carried to an extreme when he actually rode along with his subordinates' spearhead units. Amid this chaos Drori's legendary self-composure and taciturn manner were undoubtedly assets. But then his own staff had the entire general staff kibitzing about it out of a sheer, some may say childish, urge to be

close to the action. Finally, a similar situation on a lower level developed in General (“Yanush”) Ben-Gal’s management of the campaign on the eastern front. Ben-Gal acted as commander of a huge force amounting to an army group. But the proximity of his staff to the divisional commands subordinate to them was so close that interference and the inevitable fracturing of the normal chain of command occurred there too.¹⁰⁴

Such chaos was not merely harmful in itself but also underlined another source of imperceptible but significant trouble, namely, Sharon’s knack for antagonizing and demoralizing all but a few of his subordinates. That a minister of defense with such an awe-inspiring personal record would create around him an air of complete and unchallenged authority was neither new nor entirely surprising. Dayan had had a similar effect on people and he too could boast a remarkable military career prior to his tenure as minister of defense. But Dayan’s impact on people was all in all positive. He spoke little and interfered less. On certain issues he would be brutally decisive, on others he would not take a stance—for example, in a disagreement between him and the general staff he would wait for the chief of staff to bring the matter to the prime minister for arbitration.¹⁰⁵

Sharon’s impact was very different and, especially against the background of a deeper malaise, disastrously counterproductive. He would interfere with minute details, bully and humiliate people, and, above all, show neither respect nor even curiosity toward others’ opinions. The result was that subordinates would sooner or later either confront him head-on and find themselves relieved of their responsibilities, or, worse still, avoid challenging him even when it was urgently warranted.¹⁰⁶ Such a Byzantine suppression of dissenting views is the enemy of creativity. It leads to blind subordination and, in an essentially healthy situation, to the accumulation of pent-up resentment which sooner or later bursts into the open, usually to the detriment of the entire system.

Sharon had a rich track record of causing outbursts in the ministry of agriculture and in the ministry of defense. In both capacities he had inherited a smoothly functioning bureaucracy with an excellent record of achievement, and succeeded in rapidly demoralizing them to such an extent that many of the best members of these organizations either quit their posts or planned to do so.¹⁰⁷ Thus, even if the war of 1982 were to develop into a great success story, it was probable that he would generate a great deal of resentment. But the fact that toward the end of the first week of fighting the lack of consensus began to have its effect must have added impetus to the process in which the minister of defense was fast losing his authority over his IDF subordinates.

This, to be sure, was not just a lack of consensus with regard to the Lebanon war in particular, but a deeper division concerning the general outlook of the Likud government. A virtually paradigmatic example of a citizen’s army, the IDF, especially when mobilized to full capacity, cannot but reflect general tendencies in Israel society as a whole. Its greatest victories, in 1956 and 1967, were won when complete national consensus on foreign policy facilitated a hermetic insulation of the armed forces from politics—maybe not entirely so at the level of the general staff where appointments are, in effect (though not formally), authorized by the government, but very much so at the lower levels. Conversely, the rapidly polarizing debate in Israeli society over the future of the occupied territories pervaded the army as well, especially at the lower and therefore reserve-based echelons. The earlier confidence that Israel was at war only because of Arab hostility gave way to doubts on the part of all center-to-left opinion whether at least a certain part of Arab hostility might be nourished by Israel’s own intransigent commitment to retain territories occupied in 1967. Signs of strain in this regard were already discernible before the 1973 war, but they were multiplied as a result of the Likud government’s policies since 1977, especially the massive

settlement of the West Bank and the suppressive policies there of Sharon, as minister of defense, in the year preceding the invasion of Lebanon.

These divisions were aggravated in the course of the Lebanon war because of the government's misguided tendency to articulate the aims of the invasion in the rhetoric of integral Zionism, which to at least half the Israel population—and thus, by extension, half the IDF—was strange, if not utterly objectionable. Instead of emphasizing the strategic security rationale of the pursuit of the PLO, government spokesmen, in particular Prime Minister Begin, Defense Minister Sharon, and Chief of Staff Eitan, presented the invasion of Lebanon as the Battle for Eretz Israel. For Begin's domestic constituency this may have been a sufficient cause for war, but the overwhelming majority of soldiers in the IDF's best fighting units were not from Begin's populist constituency but from kibbutz, Moshav, or middle-class intelligentsia background. To them Begin's nationalist rhetoric was either ridiculous or virtually alienating. And the clearer it became that the war was expanding beyond the stated original aims, that the toll in life was heavier, that the war had become more prolonged, the greater the alienation of these soldiers from the war.

The immediate cause of the outburst of resentment against Sharon inside the IDF was the "crawling" phase in the war on the Beirut-Damascus road and in the siege of Beirut. In both instances Sharon appeared to be instructing the IDF to carry out operations that had not been authorized by the cabinet. Consequently he could not issue sufficiently clear statements of objectives of the kind that had been available in phase I of the same war and that could conceivably have rekindled the IDF's customary racing spirit. If such confusion was sufficient in itself to transform the units in question into lazy oxen, this tendency was amplified and became the source of an explosive situation because the "crawling" method of advances caused heavy casualties. In the case of the Beirut siege, on top of that, the troops were confronted directly by the results of their own actions against the civilian population. In the fighting near the Beirut-Damascus road Sharon created the impression, moreover, that he intended to pursue the Syrian forces further than he actually did, whereas in the Beirut siege he appeared to be heading toward an order to break into the besieged sector of town. Above all, in both instances officers and enlisted men could see how his maneuvering to bend cabinet decisions had become the cause of poor tactics in the field which resulted in presumably unnecessary casualties.¹⁰⁸ Consequently there was a self-reinforcing process in which the IDF became embittered and tended to ignore the minister's orders or water them down; army officers contacted politicians and the press with complaints; the pressure on the cabinet to restrain Sharon increased and, inevitably, so did his tendency to issue new unauthorized orders.

Much of this remained subterranean until the resignation of Colonel Eli Geva, Commanding Officer of the seventh armored brigade, which had spearheaded the advance on the coastal road toward the city of Beirut. Eli Geva had been considered a brilliant officer. Son of Major General Joseph Geva, who retired from service shortly after the 1967 war after a distinguished career in the IDF, Eli Geva was one of the most quickly promoted officers in the history of the IDF. During the third week of July, 1982, when it seemed that Sharon was adamant about entering West Beirut, Geva applied for an interview with the chief of staff, asking to be relieved of his command but to be permitted to remain with his soldiers as a private. "I do not have the courage," he told Eitan, "to look into the eyes of the parents of the soldiers who would be killed going into West Beirut."¹⁰⁹ According to Geva, General Eitan did not understand his arguments against making a "straight frontal assault" into the Lebanese capital. "He never read about Lebanon, he does not know about Lebanon," was Geva's reaction. But Eitan was

open-minded (or shrewd) enough not to make a decision on his own. He took Geva to Sharon, who "listened carefully," but the "talk soon turned into a big argument." Sharon then took Geva to Prime Minister Begin, whose response was that "Sharon and Eitan knew what they were doing, and that he, a young colonel, should do what he was told." Frustrated, Geva resigned his command and was dismissed from the IDF. Sharon and Eitan later charged that Geva had been politically motivated, that he had suffered mental fatigue, that he was dishonest, and that he had abandoned his soldiers.¹¹⁰ But this kind of attempt to counter Geva's act of protest, which had cost him an exceedingly promising career, could no longer be effective. The resignation acted like a detonator. It opened a vent for all the bitterness against and frustration with Sharon that had been bottled up in the previous six weeks of fighting. The segmentation of the IDF from the general public which Sharon had attempted to foster in order to be able to proceed with the implementation of Big Pines thus collapsed.¹¹¹ In the coming months a great deal of information about other incidents of protest within the IDF during the war would quickly reach the public. In turn, Sharon's authority in the IDF, like his authority in the cabinet, became so eroded that not even the removal of the PLO from Beirut would suffice to restore it.

The United States

The Israeli siege of West Beirut ran almost contrary to what had been envisaged in Big Pines. Studies conducted by the IDF in the course of the planning process, as well as a full-dress war game held by the IDF general staff on March 8, 1982, had indicated not only that it would be difficult to bring the whole war to a decisive conclusion but also that the IDF should do its utmost to avoid an entry into the Lebanese capital. The Phalange, the war game suggested, were utterly unreliable and if the IDF were to enter Beirut it could expect only trouble of virtually catastrophic proportions. This notwithstanding, Sharon and Eitan prepared a plan for a "straight frontal assault" into the town as soon as the IDF reached it, while at the same time banking on a flimsy and ambiguous understanding with Bashir Gemayal according to which the Phalange were to deal with the PLO in Beirut with IDF support from the outside.¹¹²

When the encirclement of the city was completed, however, it became clear that the leader of the Lebanese Front had no intention whatsoever of implementing his part of the plan. Worrying about relations with the Arab world following the Israeli invasion, he could not possibly expose himself to charges that he was acting as an Israeli stooge against the PLO, the Arab world's declared favorite son. Sharon and Eitan were thus confronted with an acute new dilemma, possibly the worst since the beginning of the war. Having encircled the city they could not order the IDF to lay off without a disastrous loss of face. But given the mounting indications of opposition in the cabinet, in the Knesset, and in the public, to the notion of making a break into the city, such an enterprise was also unacceptable except if no other alternative presented itself (or so the minister of defense and the chief of staff thought).

This dilemma was further aggravated as a result of the response of the United States. Again it ran contrary to one of Sharon's most important assumptions. In Sharon's scenario Haig would be co-opted on behalf of the Reagan administration. Sharon knew only too well that no other leading member of the administration would permit Israel to carry out the military campaign that he had in mind. He suspected, as has been shown, that sooner or later the Reagan administration might be tempted to push Israel toward an accommo-

Table 1. U.S. Arms Deliveries to Israel, January–March 1980, 1981, 1982 (in U.S. dollars)

| <i>Item</i> | <i>1980</i> | <i>1981</i> | <i>1982</i> |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Aircraft | 22,300,000 | 142,454,000 | 187,604,000 |
| Vehicles and Weapons | 1,702,000 | 17,000 | 20,410,000 |
| Ammunition | 278,000 | 1,068,000 | 6,725,000 |
| Missiles | 16,000 | 3,179,000 | 127,000 |
| Miscellaneous Support Equipment | 11,000 | | 104,000 |
| Training, Maps, Other Assistance | 412,000 | 1,300,000 | 2,631,000 |
| TOTAL | 24,719,000 | 148,018,000 | 217,601,000 |

Source: Defense Security Assistance Agency, Washington. Quoted by Claudia Wright in *In These Times*, 14 Sept. 1982.

dation with the PLO. But he also realized Haig's different perspective on the same set of issues, specifically the latter's inclination to permit Israel to bleed the PLO. Therefore he was apparently led to believe that Haig could somehow be co-opted. That would enable the minister of defense to convince the Israeli cabinet that the United States had given a green light for a military operation and, more important still, it would force the administration to back up Haig's position afterward. Unlike Israel's previous wars, the military operation would thus be conducted without significant American attempts to stop it, despite the fact that not the entire administration would be supportive. In a way Sharon hoped to use Haig as a shield against U.S. interference with the operation.

In the months preceding the outbreak of hostilities there were clear indications that Sharon's gambit would work insofar as the United States was concerned. For one thing the Department of Defense showed an inordinate willingness to step up shipments of arms ordered by Israel. This is clearly reflected in Table I, which compares arms deliveries in the first half of 1982 with the same period in 1980 and 1981. The table shows that in the first quarter of 1982 Israel took delivery of \$217,601,000 worth of supplies, or nearly ten times more than in 1980 and over 50 percent more than in 1981. The main items accounting for the change were ten F-15 planes, fourteen tank recovery vehicles, nineteen self-propelled 155 mm howitzers, and over six million dollars in bombs and munitions, all of which were important for the approaching war.

Simultaneously there was a noticeable buildup of U.S. naval forces in the eastern Mediterranean. Shortly before the war the U.S.S. *Ranger* was ordered to sail from San Diego, California. It reached the Indian Ocean on June 1, five days before the war. As soon as the *Ranger* was on station, another aircraft carrier, the U.S.S. *Kennedy*, was ordered to sail to the shores of Lebanon. It crossed the Suez Canal on June 3 and was close to Lebanon before the outbreak of hostilities. Also on June 1, the aircraft carrier U.S.S. *Eisenhower* and its escorts left Naples, Italy, and sailed southeast to take up position within range of Soviet naval anchorages near Crete. Simultaneously, U.S. marine and amphibious landing equipment were assembled at the Spanish port of Rota and readied to sail for Lebanon. This force left Rota on the day the war broke out, headed toward Lebanon with the expressed purpose of evacuating Americans from the war zone.

Moreover the force in question had also been trained during the preceding three months for a landing operation. Indeed, one report suggests that the U.S.S. *Guam*, a helicopter carrier which later participated in the marine landing in Beirut, had left Norfolk, Virginia, en route to Rota, Spain, as early as May 24. These and other

movements of the U.S. fleet led to the accumulation by June 23 of not less than thirty-nine U.S. vessels close to Lebanese shores.¹¹³

Whether this was done in coordination with Israel's war plans is a matter of some dispute. Logically it seems implausible that the Reagan administration would allow itself to become a partner in an Israeli war plan that even Haig did not explicitly endorse. But the IDF was fully aware of the accumulation of this American fleet near Lebanon and probably pleased to see it take place, thus adding a considerable deterrent against any possible Soviet interference in the war. Moreover, assuming that the American buildup reflected an intense anticipation in Washington of an Israeli invasion and given the number of times Sharon had spoken openly of his plans, the minister of defense had every justification to argue later that the United States could not "tell . . . [Israel] that . . . [it was] caught by surprise." I "used to see Habib, Haig and Weinberger exclusively to discuss the problem of terrorism and the PLO," he said. "I never kept secrets from them. I never made mysteries . . . when I spoke about Lebanon. I kept warning them: Don't be caught by surprise."¹¹⁴

Sharon's argument, at least in this regard, is corroborated by a number of highly credible sources. During a meeting with Philip Habib at the residence of U.S. Ambassador to Israel Samuel Lewis on December 4, 1981, "Minister Sharon described in some hypothetical detail that concept for what ultimately . . . was called 'Big Pines.' . . . Habib was . . . rather dumbfounded by the audacity and the political concept that this seemed to involve." According to Ambassador Lewis, "Habib reacted at that point very vehemently. . . . He made it extraordinarily clear to Sharon that this was an unthinkable proposition as far as the U.S. Government was concerned." Moreover, Habib reported the talk in Washington, and the result was a written warning from the president to Begin not to go to war.¹¹⁵

Neither Sharon nor Begin, however, had any intention of taking this no for a formal, binding, and irreversible U.S. answer. During his mission to Washington late in January 1982, Chief of Military Intelligence Saguy shared Israel's plans with Secretary of State Haig and returned home convinced that Haig was sympathetic. As contacts with other administration officials in the coming months made plain, however, Haig's response was not shared by many in Washington. Fully aware of this, Sharon nevertheless traveled to the U.S. capital in May 1982 in order to nail Haig down more. When the two ex-generals met, Haig raised no objection to an Israeli operation in Lebanon provided it would be quick, surgical, and decisive.¹¹⁶

Given the vast differences between Haig on the one hand and the rest of the administration, including the president, vice president, secretary of defense, and Haig's own State Department subordinates on the other hand, it is not at all surprising that Sharon's plan to tie the hands of the United States in advance by informing senior officials of his intentions did not work as well as he had hoped. President Reagan and his entourage heard about the Israeli invasion as they were leaving for a series of high-level talks with European leaders. According to one study they were "furious at both the timing and substance of the Israeli action."¹¹⁷ Moreover, within a short time they were confronted not merely by Arab complaints but, indeed, by an expression of Soviet concern from the hot line and by intelligence reports that the Soviets alerted the same units that they had prepared for intervention in 1973.¹¹⁸ Anxious to avoid the possibility of Soviet intervention on the side of Syria, Haig proposed to arrange a ceasefire between Israeli and Syrian forces but not between Israel and the PLO. He added a stiff warning to Israel not to break this arrangement. The fact that the IDF continued its operation, including the

campaign against the Syrian forces, was thus at once an affront to the United States and to Haig personally. He was now accused by most other high-level foreign policy advisers, especially in the White House, of having tacitly acquiesced with Israel's position to the detriment of U.S. interests in the Middle East. Nevertheless, convinced that ejecting the PLO from Beirut would assist in the achievement of some sort of a settlement, Haig remained adamant that no pressure should be applied to force Israel to lift the siege before the ejection of the PLO.

Haig's position concerning Syria confronted the Israeli government with a dilemma. Sharon was anxious to exploit fully the IDF's success on both the Syrian and the Beirut fronts. The fact that Haig would ward off pressures in the administration concerning only the Beirut area therefore forced Sharon to make a choice: Should the IDF accept the ceasefire with the Syrians before accomplishing all its goals, or should it do so in the Beirut area? Since the declared rationale of the operation was to liquidate the PLO and not to fight Syria, Sharon basically had no choice. He instructed the IDF to halt its advance toward Shtoura and Zahle—which in his estimate would take only an additional twenty-four hours. His hope was that this move would ease U.S. pressure and would permit the IDF at least to break the back of the PLO in Beirut. As it happened, this too proved more difficult than Sharon had expected.¹¹⁹

While Haig was acting more or less in accordance with Sharon's Beirut scenario, however, other prominent members of the administration—including Vice President Bush, Secretary of Defense Weinberger, Assistant Secretary of State Nicholas A. Veleotes, Ambassador Philip Habib, the White House staff, and U.S. Ambassador to Israel Samuel Lewis—were in fact taking steps to undercut Haig's position, ultimately leaving Sharon's plan in this regard in ruins. Following the death on June 14 of King Khaled of Saudi Arabia, Bush and Weinberger flew to Riyadh for the funeral. While there they promised their hosts that the United States would do its utmost to prevent Israel from entering Beirut.¹²⁰ Sharon's implied threat that if the PLO did not leave the Lebanese capital on its own, the IDF would eject it by force was thus being undermined not only by Israeli public opinion but also by the vice president and the secretary of defense of the United States. The news was no doubt conveyed by the Saudis to Yasser Arafat, thus encouraging him in one of his worst moments to play for time rather than to yield to Israel's pressure.

To be sure, from Arafat's point of view yielding to Israel within a few days of the siege did not make much sense in any case, except if it were to be traded for an American or, at least, a UN declaration recognizing the Palestinians' right to self-determination. Short of that the PLO could not leave its last independent base close to Israel without at least putting up some resistance, since a rushed submission to Israel's demands would undoubtedly destroy Arafat's position irreparably.¹²¹ Alternatively, if the PLO held Israel at bay for a prolonged siege, it would gain world attention on a grand scale and might after all succeed in extracting some politically meaningful concessions from the United States. At the very least, a submission after a protracted siege could be justified in the eyes of the Palestinian masses. Against the background of such a calculus, an American promise transmitted through Saudi Arabia that the IDF would not be allowed to attempt a break into the beleaguered city was, for Arafat, a significant present.

Yet what was a present for Arafat was a catastrophe for Sharon. Given the opposition from all directions, now including the United States, to an entry by the IDF into West Beirut, the only alternative was to keep up the siege and hope that ultimately the PLO would agree to leave. But if the PLO was playing for time with active U.S. support,

Israel's position—Sharon's in particular—was becoming increasingly embarrassing. Indeed, the rapidly changing mood in Israel indicated that there was even a danger of domestic pressure leading to an Israeli decision to lift the siege without results. In that event the ultimate objective, the very *raison d'être*, of Operation Peace for the Galilee would not be achieved and Sharon personally would suffer a major setback. It was therefore essential from Sharon's point of view to obtain quick withdrawal of the PLO at almost any cost.

Such a calculus led to Sharon's orders to the IDF gradually to tighten the siege on West Beirut. By so doing Sharon was joining Arafat in a cruel game which was to be played out on Beirut's civilian population. It also ran contrary to the wishes of the Reagan administration, with the exception of Haig. Consequently the IDF's "crawling," leading to an ever-tightening of the siege, merely accelerated Haig's decline in Washington. Sensing this, he indicated to President Reagan toward the end of June that he intended to resign following the congressional elections in November. In a sense Reagan had been waiting for such a gesture. On June 24 he "accepted" Haig's resignation and proceeded to appoint George Shultz to the post. Shultz had been widely regarded as pro-Arab. He had been president of the Bechtel Corporation, which had extensive business in Saudi Arabia, and he had been on record as supporting Reagan's program on all issues with the exception of Israel. His appointment to replace Haig in the middle of a major bout of misunderstanding between the Begin government and the Reagan administration was thus widely regarded as a setback for Begin, Sharon, and their colleagues. From Sharon's point of view this meant, or so it seemed, that a critical element in his calculations before the invasion had collapsed.

Meanwhile it seemed that U.S. special envoy Philip Habib, who on June 16 had been assigned by Reagan the difficult task of bringing about a PLO withdrawal, was running into great difficulties. The reasons were at once substantive and procedural. If the crux of the Israeli intention in moving against the PLO had been to undercut a visible trend in U.S. policy toward some recognition of the PLO, the last thing that should have been allowed to happen was direct negotiations between Habib and Arafat at Israel's behest. The alternative, however, was that Habib would negotiate with Arafat through one or another prominent Lebanese Moslem. But not all Lebanese were acceptable to Arafat. Hence it took some time before a solution to this was found: the go-between would be Lebanese Sunni Moslem Prime Minister Shafiq al Wazzan. But negotiating a difficult agreement such as this with Arafat through the good offices of the Lebanese politician could not but be extremely time consuming and so it was.

Substantively too the Israeli position made finding an acceptable formula for PLO withdrawal a complicated matter. Arafat and many of his colleagues were prepared to withdraw to the Beqa'a valley and/or to the town of Tripoli in north Lebanon as early as June 11–12. However, both areas were under Syrian control and Israel, by the declared purpose of its policy, reiterated at the White House during Begin's visit on June 21, that it was determined to see the removal of all foreign (Syrian, in the first place) forces from Lebanon's territory. How could Israel insist that the PLO was a foreign force but at the same time allow it to settle down on Lebanese soil?¹²²

The alternative, which Israel would agree to, was the removal of the PLO to Syria proper. Haig's last act as secretary of state was, in fact, to try to convince the PLO and the Syrians to accept this proposal, which he passed through the Saudis.¹²³ But the idea had serious drawbacks from the point of view of both Syria and the PLO. To be sure, a Syrian force of nearly brigade size had been trapped in West Beirut. At the same time

Syria saw Israel's difficulties, the tensions with the United States, the domestic criticism, the blemishing of the Jewish state's image in the Western media. This added up to an important gain for Syria even at the price of one infantry brigade. Syria, therefore, did not seem to be in any hurry to relieve Israel of this situation. Beyond that, Syria's relations with the PLO had always been exceedingly ambivalent. The Syrians may have reasoned that to accommodate Yasser Arafat's 15,000 armed agitators could cause problems inside Syria itself. Accordingly, Syria rejected this idea on July 9.

Had Syria not rejected the idea that the PLO would find shelter on its territory, it is almost certain that the PLO itself would ultimately have rejected it. If the realities of power in the Middle East are to be judged by official declarations, such a speculation would appear quite unwarranted. After all, few governments in the Arab world had a better record of verbal support for the cause of the PLO than the *Ba'ath* regime. The "old" *Ba'ath*, which had ruled Syria from 1963 until the coup d'état of February 1966, had in fact been the true godfather of Yasser Arafat's own *Fateh*. In reality the key persons on the Syrian side who had been most intimately involved in setting up this organization were Ahmen Sueydani and Hafez al Assad. The latter was one of the two key figures in the coup of 1966 that had replaced the "old" *Ba'ath* with the "new" *Ba'ath* (meaning predominantly Alawi in its ethnic composition and more radical in its political orientation). Moreover, since this coup Syria had steadfastly committed itself to a stance in the Arab-Israeli conflict that was sometimes even less compromising than that of the PLO.

But beyond this facade of utter devotion to the Palestinian cause, Syria had often been, Yasser Arafat knew only too well, the most ruthless suppressor of the Palestinians' freedom of action. The Jedid-Assad regime threw the entire *Fateh* leadership into a Syrian prison in May 1966. It had been behind an attempt to assassinate Arafat and some of his colleagues a few months later. While arming, training, and supplying the *Fateh* and later the revamped PLO during 1963-66, 1967-76, and 1977-82, while in fact invading Jordan in September 1970 for the expressed purpose of rescuing the PLO from the wrath of King Hussein's Bedouin troops, the Alawi *Ba'ath* had also engaged intermittently in the active suppression of the Palestinians. It had set up and maintained organizations such as *al Saiqa*, a constituent member of the PLO but also a direct instrument of Syrian policy. It had severely restricted the PLO's freedom to operate against Israel from Syrian territory. In the course of the Lebanon civil war, especially during the spring and summer of 1976, Syria, using *al Saiqa* and units of the Palestinian Liberation Army (PLA), and finally Syrian regular troops, attempted to stop the PLO from fighting alongside the LNM under Druze leader Kamal Jumblatt against the Maronite-dominated Lebanese Forces. During the Litani Operation of March 1978, Syrian forces did nothing at all to assist the PLO in its confrontation with Israel. And on the eve of the 1982 Israeli invasion Syria may have employed *al Saiqa* in order to provoke Israel at a time when Arafat was at pains to avoid such a provocation. In a word, Syria's policy toward the PLO was governed entirely by the Alawi *Ba'ath* concept of the Syrian national interest. If Yasser Arafat were to go from Beirut to Syria he would be in fact terminating his organization's hard-won political autonomy. A PLO operating exclusively from Syria would not be more meaningful than Ahmed Shukeiri's PLO in Egypt during the years immediately preceding the Six-Day War. The entire edifice that Arafat had spent all his life setting up would thus be destroyed as a result of a peculiar but very real conjunction of interests between Arik Sharon and Hafez al Assad.¹²⁴

To realize that such considerations would decide the PLO's response to the idea that they should move from West Beirut to Syria does not require an elaborate intelligence

operation. The record in this regard is so starkly clear that the conclusion can be very simply deduced. It is thus astonishing that Haig could have seriously believed that the concept of a PLO retreat from West Beirut to Syria proper had any chance of being accepted by either Syria or the PLO. Yet it took a precious two weeks for the U.S. government to realize that this formula would not work. At this stage Philip Habib came up with another, equally unworkable idea, namely, that the PLO be disarmed but permitted to stay in Beirut as a political organization. One possible inspiration to try this idea came from the French government which supported such ideas and which since the second week of the war had acted as an active intermediary between the PLO on the one hand and the United States government on the other. But if the French were instrumental in focusing attention on this proposal so were Habib and the State Department. Indeed, the notion that a solution should hinge on a political (rather than terroristic) PLO represented a legacy, a residue of thought, a philosophy, which had existed in certain sections of the state department since the early 1970s. During the Carter administration the supporters of this line came into their own, since the president, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, the NSC Middle East staff, and in particular William Quandt had all adhered to them with the single-mindedness of religious faithfuls. Since Alexander Haig did not share these views, they were put on ice by the secretary's subordinates. But the crisis in Lebanon seemed to open up opportunities for a revival of this policy which essentially boiled down to a second phase in the policy of Camp David, in which the peace process would shift from the Egyptian-Israeli dimension to the Jordanian-Palestinian-Israeli nexus.

Specifically what Assistant Under Secretary of State Veleotes and Ambassador Habib had in mind was that the weakening of the PLO as a result of the Israeli invasion should be exploited in order to force the PLO to back up Jordanian-Israeli negotiations. Jordan, bound by the Rabat Summit decision in 1974 which had declared the PLO the "sole legitimate representatives of the Palestinians," could not move without Arafat's blessing. Arafat's weakness owing to the IDF siege of West Beirut could thus be exploited for the purpose of forcing him to give King Hussein such a blessing. In exchange for this, the United States would guarantee that Israel would lift the siege.

This plan, however, failed to appreciate fully Israel's political purpose in the Lebanon war, namely, destroying the PLO as a political force capable of claiming a Palestinian state on the West Bank. This idea would have been rejected by the Labor party no less than by the Likud. It was therefore not at all surprising that Sharon rejected it out of hand.¹²⁵ Meanwhile the uproar in Israel was building and therefore so was the pressure on Sharon to tighten the siege and, inevitably, the misery of the civilians who had become pawns in this game.

Consequently the U.S. government was slowly coming to the conclusion that it had led itself into an abyss. Its policy hitherto, resulting as it had from the backstage fighting between Haig and his rivals, had the effect of encouraging Israel to invade but to stop the IDF at the gates of Beirut, too far from Zahleh to have an adequate impact on Syria. The same policy had also inspired hopes in the Arab world that the United States would find a solution to the intractable Israel-PLO deadlock. But American diplomacy alone was evidently incapable of pulling such a fast one. If the crisis were to be resolved it could only be the result of a greater American involvement. The upshot was a realization in Washington, encouraged no doubt by Philip Habib, whose own mission was hopelessly in trouble, that American troops might have to be committed to the Beirut scene.

The first indication that the Reagan administration was coming close to such a decision was given by the president himself. On July 6 he mentioned somewhat obliquely

that he would consider "in principle" the possibility of contributing "a small contingent" of U.S. troops to a multinational force for "temporary peacekeeping" in Beirut.¹²⁶ When this announcement was made it was still perceived as part of an effort to persuade Syria to take the PLO. When the topic was negotiated with Arafat, he indicated that wherever he and his men were going they would need reliable protection for themselves as well as an assurance that their families and the rest of the Palestinian population would not become prey to Phalangist brutalities. Since a Lebanese Army capable of carrying out such a duty was not available and since Israel would not even consider any kind of Arab peacekeeping force, a foreign force acceptable to all the different parties became the only alternative. And since the United States was the chief intermediary, it was clear that it would have to lead the way in this regard.

The hint that the United States might consider such a step was obviously insufficient to make Haig's "Syrian solution" more workable. In fact it may even have been so objectionable to the Syrians and their Soviet allies that the latter's position hardened further. An indication that this was the effect on Syria of Reagan's announcement was given three days later, on July 9, when Syria announced that it would not take the PLO.¹²⁷ Faced with this impasse Habib now focused in his indirect negotiations with Arafat on the last remaining option for a solution: a PLO withdrawal to a variety of Arab countries willing to accept it with PLO agreement under the protective umbrella of a multinational force consisting primarily of American GIs.

In retrospect this solution appears clearly to have been an ill-conceived "quick fix," and against the hideous background of confrontation in Beirut it was a cumbersome and very inadequate solution. In essence it involved at least four sets of separate but simultaneous negotiations: Reagan had to negotiate with Congress in order to obtain backing for the proposition that U.S. troops would once again be committed to a scene of conflict overseas; Arafat had to persuade his divided and suspicious colleagues to leave; both Arafat and the U.S. government had to negotiate with a variety of Arab countries the terms under which the PLO would be allowed to take shelter in their territories; and the U.S. government had to find eligible and willing partners for the risky and most unattractive task of peacekeeping in the Lebanese capital. To this negotiating nightmare one could easily name additional difficulties with the Israelis, the fundamental problem being created by the fact that Habib could negotiate with Arafat only through al Wazzan, and, last but not least, the fact that all these negotiations involved some very intricate technical problems.

Theoretically, of course, the matter could have been simplified if only the United States had agreed to send its own forces alone, if only Yasser Arafat had agreed that his people would go to one, rather than to several, countries, and if only Israel had agreed that Habib would maintain a direct contact with Arafat. In practice it was equally improbable that any of these actors would accept such a simplification. From the U.S. point of view the proposition that less than a decade after the Vietnam War, American GIs would once again be exposed to risk within the framework of an open-ended mandate was totally unacceptable. Other powers would have to be brought in if sending of U.S. troops were to be palatable to the American public.

From Arafat's point of view, going with all his forces to one Arab country, even if it were not Syria, would risk giving up the PLO's independence. The main source of Arafat's success in previous years had been his remarkable resourcefulness in taking advantage of inter-Arab differences. This strategy was greatly enhanced by the quasi-transnational configuration of Arafat's main constituency, the Palestinian refugees from what had become Israel proper. If he were to seek one center in place of Beirut in a

country that had, unlike Lebanon, an effective government, he would almost certainly find his organization severely restricted by the host government. In fact, given the experience of the PLO in Jordan, it could be taken for granted that any Arab host government would be loath to allow a powerful agitating body such as the PLO any real measure of independence. The implication from Arafat's point of view was simple. He would have to hedge his bets. The PLO would suffer from the distance from Israel—its prime target for guerrilla operations—and from its dispersal. But its continued existence would not be immediately in jeopardy as the result of a decision of a single Arab government. Indeed, Arafat was in search of weak and preferably moderate Arab states, which would find it difficult to suppress the PLO because of the anticipation of a chorus of criticism in the larger Arab family of nations. The distant Tunisia, Morocco, and South Yemen were thus preferable to powerful countries such as Syria and Egypt which were Israel's immediate neighbors.

The reasons why direct negotiations between Habib and Arafat were inconceivable from the Israeli point of view have already been mentioned. There was no way this multiple negotiation tangle could be significantly simplified and hastened. Indeed, it is remarkable that a solution was worked out in six weeks. Meanwhile, however, Israel's position vis-à-vis the world and Sharon's position vis-à-vis the Israelis generally and his cabinet colleagues in particular were becoming virtually unbearable. The siege of Beirut turned into the single most intensely televised and reported war in living memory. Journalists were able to operate on both sides of the encounter and thus produce vast quantities of uniquely synoptic material every day. Yasser Arafat, always more of a media manipulator than a traditional guerrilla leader, was exceptionally astute in taking advantage of the situation. The PLO was becoming a household fact in the day-to-day lives of millions of Americans and Europeans. There were hair-raising pictures of destruction, pain, anger, and mutilation, shown in a quantity that the world's media had never before been able to gather. Israel, to the abhorrence of most of its citizens, was losing the last shreds of its earlier image as a beleaguered little David and assuming instead the ugly image of a brutal Goliath.¹²⁸

The fact that Arafat in his own way was essentially a full partner in Sharon's relentless strategic game, that he was playing for time at the expense of the Lebanese and Palestinian population he purported to be defending, could no longer matter. In terms of the emerging images and perceptions of the situation, Sharon turned out to be the only villain of the piece. The Israeli image of Sharon is that of a person with no regard whatsoever for what is said about him. "Is Sharon fat?" inquires an Israeli war joke. "No," runs the answer, "it is all skin." Whether or not this image is accurate is a moot point. The important fact is that the hideous game of images played out in Beirut was undermining his political purpose and, along with it, his political career. Hence if he had to choose between his image and his career, the latter counted more. Specifically, the situation in Beirut made it logically imperative from Sharon's point of view to increase pressure on the PLO in order to thwart Arafat's play for time and force Habib into a virtually frenzied search for a resolution. In turn the suffering of the population in Beirut increased, Sharon's and Israel's image suffered further eclipse, the domestic pressure on Sharon to put an end to the tragedy was further stepped up, the demoralization of the IDF intensified, and the rift between the Begin and Reagan governments grew wider.

The pressure on the besieged PLO could be stepped up in two different ways. The first would be slow and cumulative. The second would be abrupt and decisive. The first tactic had been the hallmark of Sharon's piecemeal orders to the IDF to tighten the siege

in the latter part of June and the early part of July. Stripped increasingly of the authority to initiate sustained action and hamstrung by a succession of ceasefires negotiated by Habib, Sharon's only alternatives were either to resign or to issue unauthorized operational orders in a piecemeal fashion. The result was the "crawls" and subsequently such an outcry in the IDF that even this method had henceforth to be employed sparingly. Thus by the middle of July Sharon was left with virtually only one alternative: tightening the siege while employing massive artillery and airpower in order to maximize the impact on the situation but minimize the danger to the life of IDF personnel. Such means make little impact if employed incrementally. In tactical terms, then, this implied that the IAF and the IDF artillery would have to be employed sparingly but in a concentrated fashion. The shock wrought by this method would be the greatest. At the same time, obtaining cabinet permission would be easier because of the reduced danger of loss of life on the side of the IDF. If it came to the worst and the cabinet refused permission, Sharon could simply ignore the cabinet, order the action, and deal with his colleague's criticism later, when the results of his action would have been already obtained.

This seems to have been Sharon's strategy in August. During August 2–3 the IDF concentrated a force of some 200 tanks on the green line separating East and West Beirut and seized the key crossing points between the two parts of the town. On August 4 this advance was turned into the basis for an intensive "combat day," the purpose of which was to narrow the siege around the main concentration of the PLO in Ouzai and Fakhani. The attack proceeded from three directions. One thrust began at the port crossing south of the green line in the seaport area. A second thrust took place in the center, at the museum crossing, and was aimed at the PLO headquarters in the Fakhani district. The third thrust occurred along the coastal highway and was directed at the Ouzai district. All the attacks were supported by heavy artillery from land and sea. By the end of the day Israel had nineteen dead and sixty-four wounded. Sharon would later be accused of direct responsibility for this heavy toll, since he had had no authorization for this combat day and so ordered the IDF to fight its way "without artillery or air support."¹²⁹ But the noose around the PLO had been substantially tightened and the need for blind shelling of the whole of West Beirut had virtually disappeared.

Having come in the wake of promises by Prime Minister Begin and Foreign Minister Shamir that Israel would observe the ceasefire, the attack caused an angry exchange of notes between President Reagan and Prime Minister Begin. But the impact on the PLO had been deadly. "Although I did not tell my colleagues at the time," Arafat recalled later, the Israeli attack on August 4 caused him to feel

completely upside down—confused—for some hours. I could not understand how the Israelis had completed their encirclement of Ouzai and Fakhani in just six hours. So I went and I prayed for thirty minutes. And when I finished my prayers I said to my colleagues: I feel the winds of Paradise are blowing. . . . According to our religion and our traditions I was saying two things. First that I was ready to fight and die as a martyr and so to enter paradise. Second that I was expected to die. Then I issued my final battle order with that slogan "The Winds of Paradise are Blowing."¹³⁰

Whether Sharon knew how close Arafat was to surrender is difficult to say. By the Palestinian leader's own admission¹³¹—confirmed by pro-Israeli sources¹³²—the IDF Intelligence Division had informers inside the PLO centers throughout the siege. Although Sharon had undoubtedly planned a final assault in the event of a failure of the Habib mission, it never came to that because of the impact of the fourth of August on

Arafat. On the sixth of August he accepted Habib's evacuation scheme. This acceptance in principle still left many points open, however. The negotiations dragged on. Therefore Sharon made another move. On August 12 the IDF began a massive aerial bombardment. The attack began at six o'clock in the morning and continued uninterrupted until five o'clock in the afternoon. PLO sources claimed that the IAF dropped no less than 44,000 bombs causing 1,000 casualties, but the truth is that the IAF resorted extensively to noisy simulations that maximized the psychological impact but minimized the real damage as well as the cost (in \$US) to Israel. In all the IAF flew 77 sorties and dropped a few hundred bombs. Nevertheless, 128 people lost their lives and 400 were wounded (compared with no Israeli casualties at all). In the course of the day, the air bombardment was joined by barrages from both sea and land. The main targets were the PLO centers in the refugee camps and all the areas south of the Corniche Mazra'a. There were also attacks against PLO-Syrian positions in the area of Manara. Simultaneously IDF armor was moved closer to Byblos and secured the mountain village of Aqoura—the high point in the area controlling access to Byblos and the road north to Tripoli, a direction in which the PLO could have attempted to break out of the siege.¹³³

There can be little doubt that the deadly method used on August 12 was the direct result of the outcry following the heavy toll of Israeli life paid during the combat day of August 4. Nevertheless, the August 12 attack brought upon Sharon such recrimination in the cabinet that he was virtually stripped of all authority to act without cabinet approval. President Reagan reacted similarly. Having seen on television a picture of a badly mutilated baby (which later turned out to be misleading and therefore led UPI to issue a correction), Reagan phoned Begin to express his "outrage" and to demand an ironclad promise that the Israeli fire would not be renewed. "The symbol of this war," he reportedly said to Begin, "is becoming a baby without arms."¹³⁴ And yet, in the final analysis, it is clear that Reagan's own diplomacy through Habib and other channels was greatly enhanced by this cruel combat day. With Arafat having no good reason to leave Beirut, a further delay in the negotiations would make matters only worse unless, of course, the IDF were to withdraw without evicting the PLO. Habib alone could not have persuaded Arafat to leave. Without the shattering effect of the bombardments Arafat would have gone on negotiating without any result. The American position would then have suffered a major setback too. Sharon's audacity had thus in a sense solved a problem not only for Israel but also for the Reagan administration.

Indeed, by August 19, President Reagan could announce that eight hundred U.S. Marines would join with French and Italian forces in protecting the safe passage of the PLO on its way to a variety of Arab destinations. Three days later the Lebanese parliament elected Bashir Gemayel to Lebanon's presidency. The siege of Beirut had come to an end, and Sharon's plan seemed on the verge of successful implementation. At this time Sharon, Eitan, Begin, and even their critics in the cabinet and in the Knesset could feel that, although pyrrhic, the invasion had been a victory after all. Within a matter of a few weeks, however, it would begin to assume the proportions of a defeat. Ironically, the same interplay of forces that had turned the march on Beirut into such a painful experience would also shape the process of Israel's retrenchment back to the international border in the three years that followed.

4

Retrenchment

In its most basic form the notion of a security dilemma explains why nations go to war or engage in other, less brutal forms of self-help. Thus, it might seem that a decision to retreat is not a response to the basic condition of anarchy that has been described here as the cause of the security dilemma. Further reflection suggests, however, that in certain circumstances the logic that impels nations to lower their profiles and to reduce their involvement in foreign arenas is related in the most fundamental sense to the same problem.

Specifically, withdrawal from occupied territories or disengagement from involvement in a war may be propelled by the same search for security and self-interest that leads to involvement and assertive behavior. If this takes place within the context of a reciprocal understanding with the former foe, it is a type of accommodative behavior that often generates a similar response on the part of the adversary. But when the retrenchment is a unilateral act inspired by a reevaluation of objectives and capabilities, it may well turn out to be an assertive act in disguise. The chief reason is not to induce the adversary to cooperate, but rather to curb one's own losses. Having failed to induce the cooperation of the adversary, the nation in question withdraws even if the act in itself is likely to cause damage to others. A power vacuum is bound to be created. A struggle to fill it will ensue, and the outcome could be an intensification of chaos. Nevertheless, determined to cut its own losses and, if possible, to teach the adversary a lesson, the defending nation washes its hands of all this and, ignoring the damage to its neighbors, exits from the scene. However such an act may be publicly presented, whatever its ultimate consequences for others, it is primarily motivated by the same *amour propre* that leads to "normal" assertive behavior in response to the security dilemma in its classic form.

Israel did not invade Lebanon in order to save the Phalange. It did so in response to a perception of a threat, and in doing so in fact embraced the Phalange out of necessity rather than charity. Having gradually realized that the whole scheme led to mounting costs without tangible results, it slowly effected an about-face and began a painful and prolonged process of disengagement during which self-interest in its purest form was the only real consideration. As in the assertive phase that led to this unhappy escapade, the Jewish state sought to improve its security in the short run in the hope that this would not decrease its security in the longer run. This may have been a reverse response to the

security dilemma, but by no stretch of the imagination can it be described as a form of accommodation.

This point is perhaps most cogently underlined by a look at the motives of those who took Israel out of Lebanon. As in the assertive phase leading to the war, the response to the problems was hardly uniform or automatic. Ideology, images of the world, and above all the domestic political context played a prominent part in shaping not only the government's reaction but also the reactions of its critics. It would be predictably difficult for Begin's government, which took Israel into Lebanon, to admit failure, to give up a living dream, to effect a drastic change in its position and pay the domestic price for it. But the Labor opposition was moved by not dissimilar considerations. Not even Arik Sharon's most persistent critics ever called on him to resign and permit a reversal of policy in order to induce a cooperative response from anyone outside Israel. As before the war the emphasis was on the costs and benefits to be accrued to the supporters of disengagement in the context of Israeli domestic politics. Such a frame of reference is seldom made explicit. But it was clearly implied by the arguments of most of the parties, groups, and individuals who contributed to this painful process.

Such an argument, harsh as it may sound, is not based on any assumption of Israeli guilt. Throughout the foregoing discussion the emphasis has not been on judgment but on an attempt to trace the pragmatic logic that governs Israeli politics. The same logic, it will be seen, also operated in Israel's process of withdrawal. But this makes Israel neither worse, nor, indeed, better than other international actors. The Jewish state, however it came into existence, ended up playing the game of the world. Rightly or wrongly, it played the game of the world when it invaded Lebanon and, again, rightly or wrongly it played out the same game as it struggled to extricate itself from the morass that its own actions had so sadly exacerbated.

As in the process that culminated in the siege of Beirut, the policies that led to the final departure of the IDF from Lebanese territory were shaped in response to a bewildering array of forces: the Lebanese Forces, the Druze-led LNM, the Shi'ites, Syria, the PLO, the United States, and, last but not least, a variety of factors in Israel's own domestic political process—three successive cabinets, the Knesset, public opinion, and the IDF. Given this complexity and the emphasis in the analysis on the interplay of these actors, the coherence of this phase as a chapter in history can easily be distorted. If, on the other hand, the emphasis is entirely chronological one can lose sight of important matters. Hence the most suitable order of presentation requires a combination of both techniques.

As in chapter 3, the discussion in this chapter is divided into sections dealing with the cabinet, the Knesset, the public, the IDF and—where necessary—the United States. At the same time the narrative is arranged in the order of the main focal points of attention: the disintegration of Begin's war cabinet; the abortive attempt to arrive at an agreement with Lebanon; and the final reckoning which led to the withdrawal.

The War Cabinet Unravels

With the nightmare of the Beirut siege over, the Israelis felt that they could relax. Sharon may have drawn the IDF and the country, in a ruthless and unacceptable way, into something beyond what he was authorized to do, but ultimately the achievement seemed quite impressive. Yasser Arafat and the PLO had been driven out of their Beirut

stronghold into an exile in faraway lands. Syria had suffered a devastating defeat. Bashir Gemayel had been elected president of Lebanon. Throughout the areas under IDF control, the Israelis were warmly received by a population that showered them with rice, befriended them, and made them feel for once like liberators of a people who had chafed under the yoke of PLO and Syrian occupation. All of a sudden East Beirut was crowded with Israelis window-shopping, dining out with Lebanese friends, taking pictures. Busloads of Jewish-American tourists could be seen traveling throughout South Lebanon. It seemed like the days after the 1967 war and the days after Sadat's visit to Jerusalem. A heavy price had been paid, but yet another victory was accompanied by a feeling that the seemingly impenetrable wall of Arab hostility was coming down like the walls of Jericho before Joshua.

That this was a grand misperception dawned on the Israelis at first only slowly, almost imperceptibly. In policy-making circles it was not at all forgotten that Bashir Gemayel had studiously denied the IDF any help in completing the military campaign in the Beirut area. If this nagging doubt concerning his loyalty could be shrugged aside once the siege of Beirut was over, the Israelis were immediately confronted with great difficulties in ensuring Bashir's election to the presidency. Bashir's candidacy was backed by Israel but opposed by a formidable alliance of Sunni leaders from West Beirut, the parliamentary representatives from Tripoli and northern Beqa'a Valley, and the Franjiyeh bloc of Maronites. In addition Camille Chamoun suddenly seemed to have had second thoughts about Bashir's election, and this reduced the latter's parliamentary backing by six more seats.

Bashir would therefore have to obtain the support of every other delegate in the Lebanese legislature just to get barely elected. Some of Bashir's close aides, notably Jean Nader, as well as some members of the Israeli intelligence community began to wonder whether it would not be preferable to support a compromise candidate or even the reelection of Sarkis. Such a president, they reasoned, would be so weak that he would have to rely on Bashir's support. Bashir would have the real power without further antagonizing either Syria or his Lebanese opponents.

Such suggestions could dissuade neither Bashir nor Sharon. Though at pains to foster an image of a certain distance from Israel and though keeping contacts with Syria, the Saudis, and even the PLO throughout the siege of Beirut, Bashir had gone too far to back down so late in the day. He was seething with expectations for the moment he would have a real chance to put the Lebanese humpty-dumpty together again and was elbowed by his enthusiastic supporters not to let this opportunity slip by. Sharon's calculus was not dissimilar. His entire concept rested on the assumption that Bashir would turn out to be Lebanon's own Assad, that Bashir's ruthlessness and charisma was the only force capable of putting all the pieces of Lebanon together. He was therefore in no mood to listen to any advice that Israel should settle for other, less brazen methods.

The practical implication was that both Bashir and the Israelis would have virtually to coerce some recalcitrant delegates to toe the line. Zahi Boustani, Bashir's campaign manager, set out to achieve this through a combination of fearsome threats and lucrative bribes (running at the rate of half a million dollars per delegate). Israel exerted pressure on some undecided Shi'ite delegates from the south. Simultaneously a campaign to obtain Chamoun's support through assiduous persuasion was launched by other Israelis, notably Rafael ("Rafi") Eitan, Begin's adviser on terrorism (not to be confused with the chief of staff who bears the same name).

On election day, August 23, 1982, it was not assured that a sufficient number of

supportive delegates would turn up. The Phalange concentrated a large force around the assembly compound. Many delegates were brought under heavy guard. Some delegates requested to be seen being pushed into the building by force with Phalangist guns conspicuously pointed at them. The IDF's contribution was to airlift by helicopter some delegates from the south. At last sixty-two delegates were assembled; a quorum was assured. Fifty-seven of them voted for Bashir.

The details of the bizarre election process did not become known to many Israelis for a while and therefore had no effect on the optimistic mood that had settled in after the horrors of the Beirut siege. But Israeli officials knew what happened and realized within days of Bashir's election that he would not rush enthusiastically into Israel's political embrace.

From Bashir's point of view, openly intimate relations with Israel could undermine entirely the edifice that he was attempting to build. Domestically he had to consolidate his power through the combination of coercion and violence with cooperation and persuasion. Given the complexity of the coalition of Druzes, Shi'ites, Sunnis, and rival Maronites that he faced, he had no realistic hope of becoming an effective president of a united Lebanon without reassuring these rivals and drawing them into active participation in the process of reconstruction. Externally he was determined to rid Lebanon of Syrian domination. To achieve both these related domestic and external goals he needed support from the mainstream of the Arab world. In turn, his difficulties in building support within Lebanon would increase too. He could not rid Lebanon of the Syrians and the PLO without Israeli support. But neither could he afford to become Israel's stooge, a Sarkis taking orders from Tel Aviv instead of from Damascus. In a word, Bashir had to lure Israel into helping him, but if he were rational—and it seems that he was—he also had to distance himself deliberately in public from the Israelis. A controlled conflict with Israel was thus a desired and inevitable outcome as soon as the siege of Beirut was over.

The result of such a rational calculus was a series of seemingly little incidents between Bashir and the Israelis throughout the three weeks between the end of the siege of Beirut and the death of Bashir Gemayel. Even before his election the Lebanese leader was heard several times saying that because he aspired to be president of all the Lebanese, he could not enter into too close a coordination with Israel. On several occasions he boasted having cheated Israel on the question of helping their military effort. Troubled by this issue and anxious to provide evidence to the Israeli public that the war was justified because Israel had gained a new Arab friend, Israeli officials appealed to Bashir to make public gestures of sympathy toward Israel. Bashir refused. As soon as he was elected he began to tell the Israelis in no uncertain terms that "personally" he would always be their friend but that "politically" he had to adopt his father's policy of keeping strong bonds with the Arab world.

Begin, Sharon, and the entire pro-Phalange "party" within the Israeli policy-making elite were bound to feel cheated. But this alone does not fully account for their reactions in the weeks preceding Bashir's assassination. Two other important considerations have to be added. The first relates to the Israeli government's position at home. Having demanded so much of its people, having argued again and again that the war, the hundreds of Israeli casualties, the tensions with the United States, Israel's tarnished image in the international media, the untold number of Lebanese and Palestinian casualties were all justified given the political outcome, the Israeli government was badly in need of tangible proof. Thus, although neither Begin nor Sharon really considered it one of the war's explicit objectives, obtaining a peace treaty with Bashir's "new" Lebanon was bound to

become an ex post facto Israeli goal as soon as the war was over. And even if a peace treaty were to require several months of negotiations, the Begin government could ill afford to be publicly slighted by its own proudly celebrated protégé.

Second, given the fact that the IDF was deployed throughout over half of Lebanon, including Beirut, Israeli policy makers could reason that Bashir's mischief had its limits. They did not wish to resort to explicit coercion. Begin in particular must have been fully aware of a possible analogy between the IDF's role in Lebanese politics and the role the Red Army had played in effecting political change in postwar Eastern Europe. Doubtless he did not wish to see Israel cast in this role. He genuinely believed in the IDF's role as a liberator of the long-oppressed Lebanese—but the stakes for Israel, and for Begin's government, were too high. If Bashir decided to renege, he would have to be put in his place. If persuasion failed, blunt coercion would have to be employed. Might would in this case be right.

Apparently informed by such considerations Begin met Bashir on August 30, 1982. The result was one of the most strained encounters between the Israelis and the Lebanese that ever took place. The Israeli prime minister was in a somber mood and made no secret of it. He scolded Bashir for failing to assist the IDF in the war. He demanded an official visit by Bashir, as soon as he took office, to Jerusalem or at least Tel Aviv (presumably thinking in terms of Sadat's example five years earlier). He told Bashir that Lebanon would have to sign a peace treaty with Israel no later than the end of 1982. He demanded full recognition by the Lebanese government of Major Saad Haddad's status and an official appointment for him in the Lebanese army. He warned the Lebanese president-elect that Israel would not tolerate so many pro-Syrian elements being allowed to maintain their positions within Bashir's entourage.

Bashir emerged from the meeting shaken and outraged. Begin's manner had been insulting. But beyond the personal affront, it indicated that Bashir's intricate balancing act with Israel, Syria, the United States, the Arab world, and various Lebanese factions would be extremely difficult to implement. Conflicting pressures from all these quarters were bound to require a great deal of courage, patience, and skill on Bashir's part anyway, but the blunt Israeli *diktat* suggested that he would have to perform this balancing act in a straitjacket.

His first reaction to the meeting suggests that he either lost control or assumed that Israel's real ability to pressure him was more limited than Begin thought. Declaring that he was severing all ties with the Israelis, he assumed a sulky appearance. Sharon rushed to Beirut in an attempt to pacify him. They met on September 12, 1982, for five hours; it seemed that the Israeli minister of defense had succeeded in mollifying the youthful president-elect. For not only did they proceed to have a celebratory dinner together afterwards with many others and with a band playing the Israeli anthem in the background but they also reached understanding on several points of substance. Sharon was anxious to see the Lebanese move into the part of West Beirut that the PLO had left. Israel itself was forbidden to do so by the terms of the U.S. negotiated agreement of PLO evacuation which had been concluded on August 21. Given the mood in Israel, Sharon was also loath to send the IDF deeper into the city. There were clear signs that some PLO personnel had stayed behind. They were lying low for the time being, but it could be presumed that they would do their utmost to restore, or at least maintain, their influence and cells in that part of Beirut. Given that the declared aim of Israel's invasion was to put an end to PLO presence in Lebanon, Sharon was anxious for results. He needed Bashir's help and wanted his promise to do something shortly to remove the last remnants of PLO presence in Beirut.

Bashir promised to turn the whole Palestinian enclave in Beirut into an “enormous zero” within one month. Sharon apparently was not too inquisitive about the precise manner in which this would be done, and Bashir did not volunteer any details about how he proposed to carry it out within such a short time. Both apparently were content to leave with a somewhat sinister yet tacit understanding. Within a week it would become clear what could have crossed their minds in this last meeting on September 12.

However careful Bashir may have been to distance himself from Israel, he evidently failed to convince Syria of his sincerity. From the Syrian point of view Bashir had become a tool of Israeli policy. He seemed bent on consolidating his position and on reducing Syria's influence over Lebanon's internal affairs. A Lebanon acting as an Israeli proxy was even less acceptable to Syria than a Lebanon acting as a Syrian proxy was to Israel. For the Jewish state the main concern vis-à-vis Lebanon (but not vis-à-vis the PLO) was insulation of the Jewish population of the Galilee from Lebanon's turbulence. But from the Syrian point of view the stakes were higher. A minority regime, the Alawi *Ba'ath* was anxious to build the image of a legitimate authority accepted by all Syrians. The surest way to achieve this was through a combination of repression, a dynamic nation-building process, and a constant harping on the most fundamentalist themes of Syrian nationalism. Within this context Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, and of course Israel were ultimately illegitimate concepts. Whether Hafez al Assad himself took this seriously as an operational objective is difficult to know, but his manner and style suggest that he was manipulating this ideology for concrete political ends. The implications were, of course, clear-cut. If neither Israel nor Lebanon were legitimate entities, a Lebanon controlled by Israel was doubly unacceptable. Moreover, beyond the question of legitimacy direct Israeli control of Lebanon's internal affairs would turn the latter into a virtual beachhead for Israeli military operations against Syria in the event of a war.

The key to the implementation of Sharon's grand design was installing Bashir as Lebanon's own Assad, and the key to Syria's policy in Lebanon was to thwart this plan. Removing Bashir was a Syrian objective of the highest priority and was equally important to certain segments of the Lebanese, such as the clandestine Syrian National Party, who accepted the Syrian vision and were certain to be suppressed by a Lebanese regime headed by Bashir. Syria therefore had a powerful motive for attempting to liquidate Bashir, as well as an instrument with which to do so. Most Israelis, including some of the key opponents of the war, failed to grasp this fully. Bashir's death in a bomb explosion on September 14, 1982, was thus the first event in a chain that would ultimately restructure Israeli perceptions of Syria altogether.¹

The death of Bashir confronted the Phalange, the United States, and Israel with a quandary. He had had a galvanizing impact on the Phalange, and there was no readily available successor. His older brother, Amin, had never been very popular with the Phalange. But, confused by Bashir's death and hoping that through Amin they would be better placed to maintain control over the regime, the Phalange ultimately decided to support Amin's candidacy for president.

This decision may have been affected by two additional factors. First, Sarkis's presidency was due to terminate within a week, on September 22. Therefore very little time remained for canvassing. Second, Amin was not only willing to assume the responsibility—he was actively lobbying for the job—but he was supported by the U.S. government. He seemed to offer a promising solution. Although he was known to be sometimes pro-Syrian, he seemed weak enough to be manipulated by the guardians of Bashir's legacy. Since he promised to go along with the Israeli connection and received

the warm, even anxious, support of the United States, his policies would ultimately fit into the scheme that Bashir had charted to his loyalists.²

The considerations of the U.S. government were partly overlapping and partly almost contradictory. The single most important immediate goal was to stabilize the situation in Beirut in order to facilitate Israel's quick departure from it. Amin seemed to fit into the Reagan administration's perception of U.S. interest in the Middle East better than his late brother had. The fact that he was far less prone to defy Syria seemed to American policy makers an advantage and not a liability. The fact that he had remained untainted by close relations with Israel made him seem a far better link to the Arab world. With him in power the United States could in one master stroke reduce Israel's presence and work out a Lebanese-Syrian-Arab modus vivendi, thus facilitating both the stabilization of the Lebanese scene and the continuation of the Arab-Israeli peace process, with the United States acting as the main outside "honest broker."³

From the Israeli point of view, however, the issue appeared in quite a different light. Amin was not trusted because of his contacts with Syria and Saudi Arabia. With Bashir gone, the Israelis preferred that Sarkis remain in power. He would appoint a new government under Johny Abdu, and this cabinet would govern for a time with emergency powers. Sarkis had the image of a Syrian surrogate, but beyond this appearance he was merely weak. The Israelis knew this since they had had ample opportunities to measure him up in personal contacts both in Lebanon and abroad.⁴ The thought of a second Sarkis presidency was therefore entirely acceptable. Abdu was the Chief of Intelligence of the Lebanese Army. He was considered a careful, intelligent, and honest man. Behind the backs of a Sarkis-Abdu team, Israel might succeed in ultimately realizing its objectives in Lebanon.

But Israel was in no position to stop the United States from engineering the election of Amin Gemayel, mainly because of the impact of the Sabra and Shatilla massacres on U.S.-Israeli relations, but also because of Israeli-Phalange relations and, above all, the domestic political scene in Israel itself. As the full details of this horrendous event have only a limited bearing on the present discussion and have in any case been discussed in detail elsewhere, a brief summary will suffice in this context.

Ever since the departure of the PLO from Beirut the Israeli government had been intensely preoccupied with the situation in the parts of West Beirut from which the PLO had been ejected. The reasons are not very difficult to understand. One of the chief points of contention in the negotiations preceding the departure of the PLO was how to ensure the safety of the Palestinian population in West Beirut once the PLO had left. From Yasser Arafat's point of view this was a negotiating gambit but also a serious concern. He knew that the Phalange had been waiting for an opportunity to deal with the Palestinians. He may also have suspected that Israel would not be averse to some action that would cause the bulk of the Palestinian population to flee. Therefore he had to insist on U.S. assurance that this population would not become easy prey to oppression and atrocity.

This concern was partly shared by the U.S. government, and in any case Philip Habib had to find a solution if he was to facilitate an agreement leading to the departure of the PLO and to the end of the siege. Ultimately the only solution was an American guarantee, backed by the presence of the multinational force on the scene. Consequently Israel was denied an opportunity to supervise firsthand the PLO centers after the latter's departure. The Israelis suspected, with some justification, that the PLO had left behind a discreet but sufficient presence to ensure an ability to restore its hold over these parts of Beirut when the opportunity arose.

The only way Israel could come close to proving that such a hidden PLO infrastructure did not exist and would not be able to grow again was through Lebanese intervention. For this reason Sharon's most pressing demand from Bashir all along, and for the last time two days before Bashir's assassination, was that he take immediate action to extend his control over the former PLO centers. Now that Bashir was dead, Sharon faced a difficult choice. If the situation in Beirut got out of hand as a result of Bashir's death, the opportunity to carry out the search in the PLO centers would be missed. But since the declared and, indeed, real objective of the entire war was to destroy the PLO's infrastructure, a failure to complete the task in West Beirut could severely compromise the main purpose of the operation. At the same time the IDF could not move into the camps of West Beirut because such an act would be contrary to the agreement with the U.S. government.

Sharon consulted Prime Minister Begin and Minister of Foreign Affairs Shamir and, with their consent, resolved to make one more fast move: the IDF would enter instantly into West Beirut. What he apparently did not tell Begin and Shamir was that, in his view, in order not to compromise the agreement with the United States too abrasively, the Israelis should keep out of the camps and allow the Lebanese army, the Phalange, or a combination of both to carry the search into the camps. This would have the additional advantage of preventing yet more Israeli casualties, but it would have one critical disadvantage—namely, that the Phalange who were seething with a desire to avenge the death of Bashir might do so under the protection, indeed almost with the blessing, of the Israeli government.

There is no need to speculate about the possibility that Sharon might have tacitly hoped that a Phalange atrocity against the Palestinians would cause the flight of the bulk of the refugees from Beirut to the Syrian zone of control. Whether this possibility crossed his mind is impossible to establish, but the fact that he was prepared to run the risk of a Phalange atrocity is quite sufficient. It reflects an uncommon lack of sensitivity not only to human life in general but also to some of the most cherished values of Sharon's own people and in particular of the army under his command. Beyond that it also reflects how desperate he and some of his colleagues had become concerning the results of the war Israel had launched under their leadership.

The results of these decisions by Begin, Sharon, Shamir, and subsequently Eitan on the night of September 14 were catastrophic. The IDF moved into West Beirut and accomplished its mission without great difficulty. The Lebanese army, acting on instructions from Moslem Premier al Wazzan, refused to take any action. The Phalange, who previously would not lift a finger to help the IDF, now seemed very anxious to participate and entrusted the task of clearing the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatilla to the elite units of the Lebanese Forces under the notoriously ruthless Elie Houbeika. The latter moved into the camps in the evening of September 15 and performed a tremendous atrocity, even by Lebanese records. Many officers and men in the IDF suspected that something terrible was taking place. Some passed their suspicions on to their superiors. Others brought the issue to the attention of members of the Israeli press. But, owing to apathy, confusion, and the fact that this was taking place on the evening of Rosh HaShana, one of the most important Jewish high holidays, no drastic action was taken to stop Houbeika and his men until the next morning. Meanwhile hundreds of Palestinian men, women, and children lost their lives at the hands of the Lebanese assassins.

The news about Sabra and Shatilla touched off one of the worst public and international furors in Israel's history. Having hastened to remove the multinational force

from Beirut, the United States, France, and Italy felt they had no alternative but to bring it back as a means of facilitating an immediate Israeli withdrawal from West Beirut. Public opinion in the world was shocked and Israel received the worst press in its history. But the most important reaction took place in Israel itself. Spontaneous demonstrations in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa, and on the Lebanese border took place within two days after the massacre. Most of these demonstrations were not authorized and therefore led to small skirmishes with the police and to a number of arrests. The Labor party accused the government of indirect culpability. As the furor grew, the party's leadership issued a request for a judicial commission of inquiry and, for the first time in its history, called for a mass demonstration against the government. Begin reacted almost apathetically at first. Commenting on criticism in the world media Begin exclaimed that "a gentile massacres another gentile and the Jew is held responsible." His government discussed the issue and, although there were some heated exchanges in this meeting, it decided to wash its hands entirely of all responsibility. The blame was put on an unidentified Christian group which, according to an IDF communiqué, entered the camps through a corner where no IDF personnel could have observed them. This was of course a clumsy attempt to conceal the fact that Begin, Shamir, and Sharon knew in advance of the intention to let the Phalange into the camps. But the public would not accept this explanation. The pressure on Begin to appoint a judicial commission of inquiry mounted. He rejected the idea on the grounds that the very appointment of a commission was tantamount to an admission of guilt.⁵

In a sense the reputation of the IDF became the focal point of the debate. Sharon argued that any attempt to investigate the massacres would shift the blame to the IDF. This caused an uproar in the IDF, the general feeling being that the minister of defense was trying to shift the blame from himself to the army.⁶ As the same suspicion was shared by virtually the entire political, professional, and intellectual elite, the result was an even greater pressure for the appointment of a judicial commission of inquiry. Whatever Begin and Sharon had to say about it, the only way in which a clear responsibility could be apportioned would be through an independent investigation. Without it the blame would remain not only on the government and the IDF but, indeed, on the entire nation.

Nevertheless, Begin was adamant in refusing to accept the appointment of an independent commission of inquiry. He would not change his stance even in the face of a mass demonstration, the largest in Israel's history, in which an estimated 400,000 (10 percent of the population) took part. He felt that the demonstration was organized by the Labor party for political reasons and that the participants were in any event typical Labor supporters. To the extent that can be judged, this was more or less the case.⁷ Indeed, there were a number of counterdemonstrations in various parts of the country not in support of the Phalange atrocities but rather against what seemed to be a vile campaign by Labor against Likud.

What ultimately made Begin change his mind was not a reconsideration of the moral and public aspects of the issue but the pressure from some of his coalition partners, mainly Minister of Education Zevulun Hammer of the National Religious Party and Minister of Welfare Aharon Abu Hatzaira of the Tami Party. At first both supported the Begin line, but faced with the upsurge of unprecedented public criticism, they changed their minds and increasingly pressed the prime minister to accept the notion of an independent commission of inquiry. If they brought the pressure to a point of resignation, Begin's cabinet would lose its parliamentary majority. The prime minister therefore had no choice but to yield to their demands.⁸

He stalled for a few more days, during which the pressure on him mounted further. The Israeli Bar Association joined the demand for a judicial inquiry. High-level delegates of Jewish organizations from the United States and Western Europe arrived in Israel and attempted to apply pressure on Begin to yield. The President of the State of Israel, Itzhak Navon, took the unprecedented step of joining the public demand for a commission. Begin proposed, in a barely veiled attempt to save face, that a nonjudicial commission of inquiry under the chairmanship of the Chief Justice would be quite enough. But on this too he was rebuffed when Chief Justice Kahan announced that the matter had become *sub judice* because two appeals to the Supreme Court had already been submitted. Begin gave in and, on September 28, his government made a formal decision to turn to the Supreme Court in accordance with the 1968 Commissions of Inquiry Law with a request to appoint a commission to investigate the responsibility for the massacres in the refugee camps of West Beirut.⁹

The Commission was formally appointed on October 1. It was chaired by President of the Supreme Court, Chief Justice Itzhak Kahan. Its terms of reference were very broadly defined, namely, "to investigate all the facts and factors connected with the atrocities perpetrated by a unit of the Lebanese Forces, the Phalange, against the civilian population in the Sabra and Shatilla camps." It had the power, though not the obligation, to make specific recommendations to the government. In the event that such recommendations were offered, they would not be formally binding. The experience with the Agranat Commission, which investigated the reasons for the strategic surprise entailed in the Yom Kippur War, suggested, however, that psychologically and morally such recommendations would be hard to ignore. The commission consisted of three members: Supreme Court President Kahan; Supreme Court Justice Aharon Barak; and Major General (ret.) Yona Efrat. Judge David Bar-Tov, the registrar of the Supreme Court, was appointed as the Kahan Commission's Secretary. A senior police investigator and two senior state advocates were appointed as special investigators. The commission was housed in the Givat Ram campus of the Hebrew University, where a wing of one building was specially redecorated. Hearings before the Kahan Commission took place from October 20 to January 16. Various ministries and agencies, the Israeli Broadcasting Corporation, and the IDF provided the commission with no less than 12,000 pages of documentation. Forty-nine witnesses appeared in 58 hearings, 24 of which were held in public. The Kahan Commission spent a total of 655 hours listening to testimonies. Meanwhile the staff investigations conducted on behalf of the commission questioned 160 separate witnesses, and the commission accumulated masses of newspaper clippings and television film clips related to the investigation.¹⁰

On November 24, 1982, there was a first sign that the Kahan Commission's work could lead to serious consequences for some of Begin's colleagues and subordinates. Nine people, among them Prime Minister Begin, Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, Foreign Minister Itzhak Shamir, and Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Rafael Eitan, were served with formal warnings that they were likely to be "harmed" by the Kahan Commission's investigations or its findings. The warning suggested that these nine individuals were the most likely to be the focus of the commission's inquiry at this stage and that at least some of them might be found "responsible," at least indirectly, for the Phalange atrocities. Begin himself announced immediately that he felt he was not guilty of any direct responsibility and that, accordingly, he would not seek any legal advice or prepare any kind of "defense." Some of the others, however, did hire lawyers to assist them in preparing their presentations to the commission. Indeed, by the end of the investigation

the Kahan Commission was faced with a formidable battery of lawyers representing some of these nine policy makers and bureaucrats.¹¹

Sensing the tense expectation with which Israel was awaiting the publication of its report, the Kahan Commission did its utmost to complete the investigation as soon as possible. By February 9, 1983, it was ready to submit its report to the government. It had ruled that Major General Amir Drori, OC Northern Command, Major General Yehoshua Saguy, Head of the Intelligence Branch of the IDF, and Brigadier General Amos Yaron, Commander of the Division that held the Beirut zone at the time of the massacre had "committed a breach of the duty incumbent upon" them. The report recommended a reprimand for Drori, a suspension of Saguy, and the denial of a promotion or of a field command for one year for Yaron. As for Chief of Staff Eitan, the Kahan Commission "arrived at grave conclusions" regarding his "acts and omissions," but since he was due to retire shortly the commission did not recommend his dismissal.

So much for the military echelon. With regard to the political echelon, the Kahan Commission had neither compliments nor reprimands to the government as a whole but, by implication, it reflected a tacit criticism of the manner in which the cabinet conducted its business. At the same time, the commission's harshest judgment related to Minister of Defense Sharon:

It is our view that responsibility is to be imputed to the Minister of Defense for having disregarded the prospects of acts of vengeance and bloodshed by the Phalangists against the population of the refugee camps and for having failed to take this into account when he decided to have the Phalangists enter the camps. In addition, responsibility is to be imputed to the Minister of Defense for not ordering appropriate measures for preventing or reducing the chances of a massacre as a condition for the Phalangists' entry into the camps. . . . We have found that the Minister of Defense bears personal responsibility. In our opinion it is fitting that the Minister of Defense draw the appropriate personal conclusions regarding the failing revealed in the manner in which he discharged the duties of his office, and, if necessary, that the Prime Minister consider exercising his authority under [the law] according to which 'the Prime Minister may, after informing the cabinet of intention to do so, remove a minister from office.'¹²

Begin presented this devastating report to the cabinet, indicating that in his view there was no way of ignoring these recommendations.¹³ The result was a three-day discussion in the cabinet leading to a vote. Sixteen ministers supported the endorsement of the report as it stood, Ariel Sharon voted against it. Begin faced a hard decision. If he were to allow Sharon to stay in his position, the public and the defense establishment in particular would be outraged. If on the other hand he were to exercise his rights according to the law and dismiss Sharon, an act most of the members of the cabinet seemed to support, Sharon could turn to demagoguery and incitement that might tear Israeli society apart and, at the very least, harm the Likud's prospects in the next elections. Begin proposed that Sharon be removed from his post in the ministry of defense but be permitted, if he insisted, to remain a cabinet minister without portfolio.

Sharon's adamant refusal, in his own words, to offer his "head," and Begin's wavering and inclination to meet Sharon halfway were leaked to the press. The result was a public outcry of significant proportions. Peace Now and the bulk of the left staged demonstrations whose main purpose was to force Begin's hand and prevail upon him to remove Sharon altogether. On the right there was a heated response of ardent Likud and, primarily, Begin and Sharon supporters. There was an ugly and very conspicuous

connection between ethnic origin, level of education, and political position. Lesser educated and primarily Sephardi demonstrators marched in support of the government and the minister of defense. Better educated and primarily Ashkenazi citizens demonstrated against Sharon. Tensions rose high and, on February 10, they led to one of the ugliest scenes in Israel's political history. Toward the end of a Peace Now demonstration opposite the prime minister's office, a hand grenade was tossed into the center of the demonstrating crowd. There were a number of casualties including one dead, a Peace Now activist named Emil Grunzweig.¹⁴

It seemed at first to bring the Jewish state to the verge of a civil war, but Grunzweig's tragic death ultimately had a sobering effect. Begin, President Navon, the leadership of opposition and coalition alike hastened to call on the public to show restraint and maturity. The victim's funeral and subsequent memorial services turned into massive but restrained demonstrations. There were no further disturbances. The police launched one of the most intensive manhunts in the state's history and ultimately captured the person who tossed the grenade, a simple-minded and not entirely sane fanatic from a settlement on the West Bank, named Yona Avrushmi.

Meanwhile Begin's cabinet was changing. Sharon remained a member but was stripped of any power or responsibility so effectively that, within a short while, he was considering resignation. Moshe Arens, the Ambassador to the United States, was recalled and appointed Minister of Defense in Sharon's place. Lieutenant-General Eitan, retired from the IDF, was bracing for a political career with the right-wing *Tehiya* Party. His position was taken by Moshe Levi, a veteran paratrooper with a clearly professional (that is, nonpolitical) leaning, an organizer more than a dashing field commander. Most important of all was the change in Begin himself. Since the death of his wife, Aliza, in November 1982, he had become increasingly withdrawn. Gone was the fire that had been so typical of his leadership. His participation in cabinet work declined. He seemed increasingly despondent and remote. Early in the summer of 1983 the press began to publish rumors that he was considering resignation. Then, in mid-July, he canceled an important visit to Washington just a few days before he was scheduled to leave. The reasons were not immediately announced. A month later, he confirmed his intention to retire. This led to a wave of demonstrations by his supporters calling on him to stay. He hardly responded to these calls and early in September tendered his resignation to President Herzog. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*

The May 17 Agreement

The impact of the growing outcry in Israel against the war on the conduct of Begin's government during the summer and winter of 1982-83 is difficult to ascertain. It can be assumed that the mounting public pressure acted as an added inducement for the government to come up with clear results to prove that the casualties and the other costs of the war were justified. But it could be assumed with the same amount of certainty that the government would feel obliged to produce tangible results even without any domestic pressure. Likewise it can be assumed that Begin, Sharon, and their colleagues could not possibly ignore the domestic signs of displeasure. It seems almost trite, but it can also be argued that the effect on their conduct could have been precisely the opposite of what their domestic opponents wished to achieve. Instead of feeling guilty and obliged to yield to public pressures, they could have become, and to a certain extent did, more belligerent

and more prone to entrench themselves further in their positions. From their point of view there was no question that the war was justified.¹⁴ Therefore they could feel that their political opponents were trading in blood for the purpose of undermining their domestic position. Moreover, since the most vociferous opposition came from the Labor party, especially from its left wing, Begin and Sharon could assume that they had no reason to be particularly impressed by this opposition. Public opinion polls continued to reflect fairly widespread, if slowly waning, support for the government. The mainstream of the Likud constituency continued to reject Labor criticism. If there were signs of decline in the Likud's standing, it may well have been the result of the deteriorating economic situation rather than of genuine displeasure with the war and its aftermath. The implication was therefore clear: there was no reason whatsoever for the government to hasten to adopt any action that might compromise the results of the war. Indeed, the postwar negotiations were complicated enough by a variety of external factors. They should therefore be insulated as much as possible from the domestic pressures.

Be that as it may, the postwar negotiations got off to an inauspicious start not only because of the objective complexity of the situation in Lebanon but also owing to a fundamental incongruence, indeed contradiction, between the intentions of the United States and Israel. The Israeli position was, in the words of Sharon,

that the negotiations should go on simultaneously in two lines: one, a direct negotiation between Israel and Lebanon with the participation of the United States, dealing with security arrangements and normalization, which . . . [Israel] regarded to be part of the security arrangements. At the same time [there should be] other negotiations conducted by the United States which would deal with the withdrawal of all the external forces from Lebanon. Those negotiations had to be conducted by the United States, since it was the only participant that could talk to all sides. It had to negotiate with Israel, Syria, Lebanon and with the PLO terrorist organization through mediators.¹⁵

The logic of this position was simple. In politics in general and in the Middle East in particular, things change fast. A prudent strategy would attempt to maximize advantage by exploiting military success through diplomatic means. Israel had just dealt a major military blow to both the PLO and Syria. The campaign may not have been as quick and decisive as had been planned, but this was a very good reason to move fast in the immediate aftermath of the hostilities. Israel could not talk to Syria because Syria would not agree. It did not wish to talk to the PLO—though the latter might conceivably agree—because the overriding purposes of the campaign was to destroy the PLO as a political force. The United States could therefore be very helpful in offering a significant diplomatic bridge between Israel and its adversaries. Given that the United States had a vested interest in gaining momentum as an honest broker in the region and in further establishing itself as the fulcrum of power, it was not entirely unreasonable to expect such a helping hand from it.

Or was it? In all likelihood the assumption on the part of Sharon concerning U.S. policy was utterly wrong. In the first place, during the summer of 1982 American officials felt that "a full peace treaty" between Israel and Lebanon was "too ambitious" a goal. It would not only cause a "revolution" in the Arab world against Lebanon but it would also be quite contrary to the wishes of most American officials who were involved in the issue at the time. "We were angry with the Israelis," said one official, "angry over the invasion, angry over Sabra and Chatilla (*sic*). We were in no mood to hand Begin the spoils of his victory."¹⁶

Second, as Sharon reported to the cabinet early in June, Ambassador Philip Habib who, some believed at the time, "was actually formulating and executing U.S. policy in the region,"¹⁷ had told him that "one should understand that the Syrians have got more right to be in Lebanon" than Israel had.¹⁸ Moreover, Habib was of the opinion that Israel "should not expel the PLO" from Beirut "but ask them to turn over their weapons. . . . He said 'let them turn over their weapons and let's turn them into a political PLO.'"¹⁹

The rationale of Habib's comments seems to have been as follows. The crisis created by the Israeli invasion should be used as an opportunity to launch a major new American peace initiative. But to succeed, such an initiative had to answer a number of critical prerequisites. Israel should not be allowed to tear Lebanon too far away from the Arab world, and therefore an Israeli-Lebanese peace agreement should be deferred until after the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian-Jordanian problem. Syria could not perhaps join peace negotiations for the time being, but there was no reason to antagonize it by attempting to force it out of a Lebanon in which Israel would have extensive influence. The PLO should be disarmed and turned from a military-terrorist into a nonviolent political organization and then invited to join Israeli-Jordanian negotiations. Jordan alone would not participate in such negotiations against the wishes of the PLO because, according to the Rabat Summit decision of 1974, the PLO was the "sole legitimate spokesman for the Palestinians." But a disarmed PLO, still controlled by Yasser Arafat who had been visibly heading toward a more realistic posture, might be willing to legitimize a Jordanian bid for peace with Israel in which the PLO would take part and which would be supported by the United States.

If such negotiations were concluded successfully, the Camp David accords between Israel and Egypt would gain a new lease on life, the United States' position in the Middle East would be dramatically enhanced, and the Soviet Union's inability to deliver any political gains for the Arabs would be forcefully underlined. This might convince Syria that it was in its interest to join the process as well, supplying the most important key for a stable settlement in Lebanon. Israel and Syria would then settle the issues both of the Golan and of Lebanon. The latter's internal problems would also be mitigated. If Syria were not to join the process the option of moving to solve the Lebanese problem would still exist and this, in turn, might be so threatening from Syria's point of view that it would not be able to resist for much longer joining the settlement process. Syria would then have to expel the Soviets, and a solid Saudi backing for the entire enterprise would be as good as guaranteed.²⁰

Which scenario, Sharon's or Habib's, was more realistic is difficult to say. In retrospect it seems that the real question should be, which of these scenarios was less realistic? They were almost contradictory, in both their long-term expectations and their short-term operational implications. Sharon's goal was to weaken Syria, isolate it, and drive it out of Lebanon. Needless to emphasize once again, Sharon had no use for the PLO, whether it was political, military, or both. Habib on the other hand was looking forward to a new era in the Middle East in which the PLO would be pacified, the Syrians would be mollified, the Lebanese would be restrained, the Jordanians would be brought back into the center of diplomatic activity, the Saudis would be satisfied, the Soviets would be eased out, Israel would be reduced in stature, and, above all, the United States would at last create the Pax Americana it had been seeking since the end of World War II.

Operationally the Sharon strategy implied a quick move to implement an Israeli-Lebanese agreement, while seeking to drive Syria out of Lebanon through a combination

of Israeli military pressure and American diplomacy. Habib's peculiar blend of Kissingerian ideas ("take advantage of a crisis and work through Jordan with a view to expelling the Soviets") and state department/Jimmy Carter philosophy ("the PLO is the heart of the problem")²¹ suggested that Syria should be ignored for a while, Lebanon should be prevented from rushing into Israel's arms, and Israel should at last be advised about who really works in whose service. Essentially incompatible, the two strategies did overlap on the idea of initiating Lebanese-Israeli talks. Consequently a bewildering blend of cooperation and conflict between the two governments became almost inevitable, with serious repercussions for both.

The opening shot in this new phase of misunderstanding was the Reagan peace initiative of September 1, 1982. The substance of the plan merely echoed the long-standing U.S. view that the solution would be found in returning the entire West Bank to Arab control and implementing special security arrangements in this area which would satisfy Israeli expectations. The West Bank, President Reagan said in the speech in which he presented the plan, should be demilitarized, linked to Jordan but controlled in day-to-day life by a "self-governing Palestinian authority."

If this was unacceptable from the Israeli point of view, the manner in which the plan was launched made matters far worse. Expecting Israel to leak word of the plan in advance of its announcement as a means of shooting it down, the administration decided to coordinate the plan in advance with King Hussein. On September 7, 1982, the Arab heads of state were planning to meet in a summit conference in Fez, Morocco. Assuming that if Hussein was favorable to the plan he would also succeed in obtaining support for it at the Fez summit, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Nicholas Veleotes undertook a secret visit to Jordan late in August. The king's response to the plan was positive. It sounded to Veleotes as though the chances of the plan's approval at Fez were good. The new Secretary of State, George Shultz, assumed that the judgment of his senior advisers on the Middle East was sound and therefore encouraged the president to announce the plan publicly. If Shultz thought that this was a sound idea, the president who had just appointed him had no reason to think otherwise; Reagan made the speech on September 1.

Outraged, Begin hastened to announce that the plan was incompatible with the Camp David accords, that it had been launched in a manner that did not befit relations between friendly governments, and that Israel would therefore refuse to have anything to do with it. A negative reaction from Begin had been expected in any case (hence the secrecy prior to the announcement), but a negative Arab response came as an unpleasant surprise to the United States. Rather than addressing themselves to Reagan's ideas, the Arab heads of state authored a plan of their own at Fez. It hinted at a recognition of Israel but did not mention Israel by name. It called for a Palestinian state on the West Bank with its capital in Jerusalem, and it reaffirmed the substance of the 1974 Rabat decision about the special status of the PLO in representing Palestinian rights. The American hope that King Hussein would fight for the Reagan plan against the rest of the Arab world was thus dashed within days of the president's speech.²²

If this rebuff made the Reagan administration look like a babe in the woods, the fact that the new presidential initiative had virtually nothing to say about Lebanon further underlined this impression. On September 10, 1982, ten days after launching the stillborn initiative, Reagan yielded to Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger's urging and authorized the removal of the multinational force from Beirut. Four days later, as the last troops of the MNF were boarding their ships, Bashir Gemayel was killed. This was

followed by the Israelis' entry into West Beirut—contrary to U.S. promises to the PLO—and by the Sabra and Shatilla massacres. Clearly Lebanon rather than the West Bank deserved the full attention of the administration. On September 29 the Marines of the multinational force again landed in Beirut. Their assignment was "peacekeeping," a code name for making sure that the IDF would withdraw. Their mandate was open-ended. In fact the administration had no idea how soon they would be withdrawn.

One of the most astonishing aspects of the Reagan initiative was that its virtual dismissal by the Arabs did nothing to deflect the indefatigable Habib from his chosen strategy. This became clear when, in October 1982, Amin Gemayel came to Washington on his first visit as Lebanon's new president. Arriving in Washington he was visited at his suite in the Madison Hotel by Robert Bazil, an American of Lebanese origin who supported the Lebanese forces and had close contacts with the Israelis. Bazil brought to the new president a message from Israeli Ambassador to Washington Moshe Arens. The message was blunt: "Israel wanted a peace treaty with Lebanon. If Israel did not achieve that treaty, then Israel could unilaterally initiate a course of events in Lebanon which could lead to the collapse of the Lebanese Government." Specifically, Bazil pointed out to Gemayel, "Israel would probably withdraw to the Zaharani River and would do nothing to help the Lebanese Government hold the land it evacuated." Arens did not intend merely to intimidate Gemayel. He therefore added an explicit inducement for Lebanese cooperation: if Amin were to go along with the Israeli plan, Israel would attempt, hoping for American support, to expel the Syrian forces that were still on Lebanese territory.²³

The message Bazil had brought to Amin Gemayel in Washington was intended to influence his calculations during his talks with U.S. officials. The Israeli government was convinced that the Reagan administration would do its utmost to pull Amin in a different direction and sought desperately to prevent this. But if that was Israel's intention, it clearly failed. The Americans, according to Lebanon's Ambassador to Washington Abdullah Bouhabib, "like many Lebanese, gave plenty of reasons why Lebanon should not sign a treaty with Israel: economic (the possibility of a boycott by other Arab states); sectarian divisions; Arab identity."²⁴

It would be idle to speculate how Bashir Gemayel would have decided if faced with the same dilemma. Amin, in any case, was ill experienced, weak, and confused. In the final analysis, it is not surprising that he decided to follow American rather than Israeli advice. If he were to follow the Israeli advice he would antagonize the United States at a time when he was in great need of its support. He would also antagonize the Arab world, even if the United States were not to leak his refusal to go along with it (which could not be guaranteed). He would be locked alone with Israel, for whose goodwill he probably had less than full regard. Finally, he could be certain neither of Israel's willingness to push the Syrians out of Lebanon by force nor, indeed, of Israel's ability to maintain a large force in Lebanon for as long as would be required. He must have been fully aware of the outcry in Israel and, even if he did not fully understand the intricacies of Israeli domestic politics or the full complexity of the IDF as a reserve-based citizens' army, he was sufficiently aware of Begin's domestic difficulties to fear that the IDF's sojourn in Lebanon might not after all be very long.

Conversely, if he were to go along with Habib's advice the risks would be smaller and the possible payoffs greater. A Lebanon ruled by the Maronites under the protective canopy of a Christian foreign power was an ingrained part of the dream with which every Christian Lebanese was inculcated from birth. The United States was a mighty power and, for all its difficulties in the post-Vietnam era, it was not a paper tiger. In any event it seemed

like a more solid rock than Israel, in the throes of its own Vietnam-like domestic crisis. Moreover, relying on the United States would be far more palatable than reliance on the Jewish state to the Saudis and others in the Arab world with whom Amin Gemayel hoped to cultivate relations. The United States might not be liked by Syria, but a Lebanese alliance with Israel would be even less attractive to the *Ba'ath* Republic. And if Lebanon succeeded simultaneously in gaining American support and in mobilizing Saudi support, Syrian opposition would surely be far less menacing. Finally, given Israel's dependence on the United States, if Amin Gemayel were to ignore Israeli advice and opt for the American alternative, he could still hope that the United States would prevail upon Israel not to carry out the threat of unilateral withdrawal which was at the center of Arens's message.

Amin Gemayel therefore decided while in Washington to go along with Habib's scheme and, with American blessing, agreed in principle to the initiation of talks with Israel on November 7, just a few weeks later. Ostensibly the planned talks were precisely what Israel had hoped for—after all, Begin had sternly demanded direct Israeli-Lebanese talks of the late Bashir Gemayel—but in reality this was not the outcome the Begin government wanted. On Habib's firm assurances that Syria would not pose any serious problem, no attempt had been made to take advantage of Syria's defeat in June and to seek its removal from Lebanese territory altogether or at least from the northern Beqa'a valley. Moreover, Begin in particular was anxious to turn the negotiations with Lebanon into a dramatic affair with all the pomp and ceremony that had attended the Egyptian-Israeli peace talks during 1977–79. But Amin Gemayel was no Sadat, and tiny and fractured Lebanon was not Egypt. From Lebanon's point of view there was every incentive to keep the talks in the lowest possible profile. Whereas Sadat relished dramas and was a master of turning them to his political advantage, Gemayel was afraid of Arab reactions and was tacitly encouraged by his newly acquired American mentors to resist Begin's request for publicity and drama. Consequently, six more weeks were wasted in empty bickering over the location of the talks: Should they convene in Jerusalem and Beirut (as Begin insisted), or on the Lebanese-Israeli border as they had for the Joint Armistice Commission (as Gemayel preferred, in order to be able to say to the Arab world that this was little more than a return to the Armistice regime)?

Finally it was agreed that the talks be held in Khaldeh, near Beirut, and in Kiryat Shemonah, on the Israeli side of the Lebanese-Israeli border, starting January 3, 1983. Meanwhile, however, Israel and Lebanon were engaged in secret parallel negotiations concerning the details of the security arrangements in south Lebanon. The architect of these negotiations was Sharon, who was seeking a way to prop up his declining domestic position as well as a way of decoupling, at least partly, the Israeli dialogue with Amin Gemayel from the trilateral discussions under the overbearing guidance of the United States. On the Lebanese side the negotiator was Sammi Maroon, a wealthy friend of the Gemayels. The Israeli positions in these talks had been worked out in a series of discussions early in October. Two alternatives were considered. The first, representing a minimalist view, sought to extricate Israel from Lebanon as soon as possible. It rested on the assumption that from Israel's point of view the most important thing was to obtain a formal Lebanese acknowledgment of Israel's right to operate inside Lebanon's territory for the purpose of ensuring the security of the Galilee. It was less concerned with the future of the regime in Beirut and with normalization of relations between the two countries, and it was even prepared to acknowledge Syria's right to leave its troops inside Lebanon. The second alternative was clearly anchored in a more ambitious concept of Israeli objectives, resting on the assumption that the withdrawal of Syrian forces was

critical. It postulated that Israel should agree to a complete withdrawal of the IDF from Lebanon if Syria would agree to withdraw its own forces. At the same time, however, it envisaged the creation deep inside Lebanese territory of Israeli "surveillance" stations, a code name for significant contingents of the IDF.

The Lebanese position in the secret parallel talks was, of course, very different. From the very beginning the Lebanese were not really interested in these talks. Having resolved to rely on U.S. support, Amin Gemayel was anxious to reduce Israeli-Lebanese relations, or at least their formal, contractual part, to a minimum. But with the IDF on Lebanese soil, and not entirely convinced that the United States would offer as much support as he needed, he was anxious to develop a kind of insurance against a last-minute American retreat. He actually held secret talks with Israel while at the same time leaking some of their content to the United States regularly.

To the Lebanese the fruit of these secret negotiations would be a secret understanding about the detailed terms of the far less clear instruments which would be worked out in the public, formal negotiations. The Lebanese were not apparently very keen on having the public negotiations concluded swiftly. Given their precarious position in the Arab world and the strong pressure from American officials, they were inclined to drag on the formal negotiations as long as possible. But because of this they could not altogether reject an Israeli demand to thrash out the main features of the *modus vivendi* between the two countries.

The Lebanese position on the substance of the talks was not very close to Israel's. Whereas Sharon, Kimche, and Tamir, the Israeli negotiators, insisted on an important role for Saad Haddad's militia throughout the south of Lebanon, Sammi Maroon, the Lebanese negotiator, did his utmost to reduce this role to the very minimum. Whereas the Israelis were very concerned about the issue of "normalizing" relations through trade, cultural agreement, exchanging diplomatic legations, and the like, the Lebanese concern was to avoid a formalization of these relations (though Maroon did not mind at all if trade did take place).

The final Israeli position in these talks was endorsed by the cabinet on October 11, 1982. Foreign Minister Shamir took it to the United States and obtained what seemed to be unequivocal American support. The position was based essentially on the second alternative, namely, the more ambitious one which emphasized Syrian withdrawal and the role of Israeli surveillance stations. As the Lebanese were in no hurry to conclude anything with the Jewish state, it took a great deal of Israeli pressure to force them into formulating their position for these talks. In fact, taking advantage of their occupation of half Lebanon and of their numerous contacts with Lebanese leaders, the Israelis actively applied pressures in the course of the process whereby the Lebanese were preparing their position for talks with Israel. On December 14, 1982, the Lebanese position paper was ready. Two days later Sharon, Kimche, Tamir, and Maroon met secretly at Sharon's Negev ranch. If Sharon wanted to, he could have extracted a Lebanese signature on a mutually agreed document. Kimche and Tamir, his advisers, in fact urged him to do so but, lacking the authority to sign the document, Sharon balked. Meanwhile the United States had been informed by the Lebanese of the agreement and urged the latter not to sign anything. According to a Lebanese source, when Habib "found out" about the agreement "he went ballistic and demanded President Gemayel not to sign it." Gemayel obeyed and flatly denied that Maroon had any authority to negotiate. Apparently determined to force Gemayel's hand, to expose the United States, to demonstrate to the Israeli public that he was making significant headway, or a combination of all these things, Sharon announced

in public that he had engineered a major "breakthrough" which more or less guaranteed an agreement with Lebanon. If the intention was to force Amin Gemayel's hand, it was clearly ill conceived. Facing U.S. objections and the certainty of criticism in the Arab world, Gemayel would not confirm Sharon's claim in public. In desperation Sharon rushed to Beirut. He went to see Pierre Gemayel, Amin's octogenarian father, and told him that, if the agreement were not endorsed, Israel would resort to unilateral action and Amin would be reduced to the status of president of a small part of Beirut. In a sense this was a cruder restatement of Arens's threats to Amin Gemayel during his Washington visit in mid-October 1982. But for the same reasons that Amin had to ignore the threat in October, his father had to reject Sharon's demands in December. "If we open one gate to Israel," the old patriarch reportedly told Sharon bluntly, "we will lose twenty gates to the Arab world because of it."²⁵ The result was that everything that had been achieved in these semi-secret Israeli-Lebanese talks had to be renegotiated in the formal Khaldeh-Kiryat Shemonah talks which began two weeks later. Instead of an agreement late in December 1982, it was not signed until five months later, on May 17, 1983, by which time the entire situation had changed considerably.

Meanwhile Israel and the United States were at loggerheads on other issues too. The U.S. department of defense was very anxious to obtain from Israel a great deal of valuable information that had been assembled by the IDF during the fighting of the previous summer. This information was primarily technical data about Soviet weapons in use by the Syrians. Israel was prepared to supply the information but, from Sharon's point of view, there was no justification for giving the data to the United States without adequate quid pro quo. Acting on the assumption that the United States needed Israel much more than it cared to admit, Sharon was determined to force a link between Israel's supply of information and the American position vis-à-vis Israel on other issues. Driving such a hard bargain, Sharon created much irritation in Washington which doubtlessly affected the atmosphere surrounding the Lebanese issue too.²⁶

To make matters worse the Reagan administration called for a halt to Israeli settlements in the West Bank and fought to convince Congress to reject an Israeli request for increased aid of half a billion dollars. Congress ignored the wishes of the administration, but the very fact that the White House, the State Department, and the Department of Defense appeared united in an effort to punish Israel raised the temperature of U.S.-Israeli relations.²⁷ Meanwhile the two countries were increasingly in conflict over the relations of the Marines in Beirut and the IDF units around them. Concerned with maintaining the image of the MNF force as a neutral, peacekeeping factor, the administration was at pains to prevent any kind of direct communication between the Marines and the IDF. In practical terms this was an amazingly naive idea. The areas under the control of the Marines and the IDF were adjacent. The situation there was exceedingly volatile; a great number of incidents occurred virtually every day. The Israelis and occasionally the Americans were the subject of numerous hit-and-run attacks by Palestinians and Lebanese alike. The IDF had never been disposed to deal with such situations defensively. Its orders were to pursue attackers vigorously. To avoid casualties they were also instructed to use preventive area fire. Consequently, without prompt and direct liaison between Israeli and American units, friction between the two sides could simply not be avoided. In fact, without direct communication between local commanders, every time there was a misunderstanding it would have to be cleared through Jerusalem and Washington.

On February 2, 1983, this untenable situation led to a crisis of sorts. An Israeli tank

in hot pursuit of Arabs who had attacked moments earlier came up against a unit of Marines who were determined to carry out their orders and prevent any infringement on the area under their control. The commander of the Marines, Captain Charles Johnson, pulled his pistol and threatened to shoot at the Israeli tank if it moved any farther. A journalist took a photograph that was shown on television across America within hours. Secretary of Defense Weinberger probably made matters worse when he hailed the bravery of the marine captain and proceeded to decorate him. U.S.-Israeli relations were clearly in a quandary.²⁸

During the following months a number of factors converged to cause a marked improvement in U.S.-Israeli relations. Less than a week after the incident, the Kahan Commission presented its report on the Sabra and Shatilla massacres. Several days later Sharon had to quit his post and Arens was recalled from Washington to take his place. Arens was (and still is) at least as much of a hawk as Sharon. Whereas Sharon had come from a Labor movement background, Arens was a clear product of Begin's right wing hawkish revisionist movement. As a young man he had been a member, and later a leader, of the Revisionist-Zionist Beitar youth movement in the United States. When he emigrated to Israel in the early 1950s, he joined Begin's Herut party immediately. Whereas Sharon had become a member of Begin's Herut in a tortuous and roundabout way, suggesting ambition and determination to advance his career more than a true ideological commitment, Arens had always been a regular Herut member and only attempted to rise in the party's ranks after a long professional career as a professor of aeronautics at the Technion in Haifa and a high-ranking official in the Israel Aviation Industries. Moreover, whereas Sharon had been instrumental in convincing Begin to accept Sadat's demand that the settlements in northern Sinai be removed under the terms of the Camp David accords, Arens had opposed the demand and ultimately voted against the peace treaty that Begin had signed with Sadat.²⁹

The replacement of Sharon by Arens therefore did not at all signal an ideological reorientation, but personal style turned out to be of immense importance in this case. By the winter of 1983 Sharon had become virtually a *persona non grata* in Washington. His bullying style, his rudeness, his abrasiveness, his tendency to say one thing on one occasion and its opposite on another, his indulgence in personal accusations proved too antagonizing for most of the American officials who had to deal with him.³⁰ By contrast Arens had been one of Israel's most successful envoys to the United States. Brought up and educated in the United States, he had a superb command of English and an instinctive understanding of American habits and styles. He was always firm on substance but gentle and polite in manner. He was therefore highly regarded and almost liked in official Washington, even though his views were if anything less popular there than those of his predecessor had been.

The failure of the Reagan initiative was another, and possibly more important, reason for an improvement in U.S.-Israeli relations in the spring of 1983. Rebuffed by the decisions of the Arab summit at Fez in early September 1982 but sustained in their course primarily by the Saudis, the architects of the president's initiative were not deflected from their hope that it would ultimately be endorsed by a substantial group of Arab regimes. Having elbowed an unsuspecting president and a newly appointed secretary of state into a public presidential enunciation of the plan, the proponents of this policy were not in a position to admit failure. They were thus prone to advocate patience and persistence, a code name for holding on to this policy in the vain hope that it would after all lead to positive results. This disposition not only sustained the administration in its conviction

that Israeli theses concerning Lebanon should be rejected but also led to constant pressure on King Hussein, endless attempts to prevail upon the Saudis, and possibly on Saudi and Jordanian advice, fresh attempts to gain the cooperation of the PLO.

What probably reinforced Washington's optimism were the persistent but ultimately misleading signs that Hussein and Arafat were drawing together and genuinely attempting to work out a joint approach. Following the rejection of Reagan's initiative in Fez, Hussein's only options were either to resign himself to the plan's failure or to find a way of convincing Arafat to support a Jordanian response to the American plan. Hussein's own inclination may have been to avoid any serious action, but U.S. pressure on him included a barely veiled threat that a shipment of F-16 planes would not be delivered until he made a genuine effort to endorse the Reagan initiative. The implication was that Hussein would have to seek a deal with Arafat as a means of obtaining greater support from other Arab governments. If the Jordanian monarch were successful, he would gain; if not, the blame would go to Arafat. Hussein dropped a hint that West Bank mayors who were supportive of the PLO could perhaps participate in a Jordanian delegation to peace talks with Israel. This was not enough from the PLO's point of view. But it seemed to signal sufficient flexibility on Hussein's part to justify a meeting between the king and the PLO leader. To be sure, Arafat was running into difficulties with the more militant segments of his organization for undertaking even such a limited step. But having been expelled from Beirut, he simply had no other diplomatic method for retaining some momentum. He was clearly aware of the extent to which the Reagan administration had become interested in drawing the PLO into the political process. A favorable response to this U.S. position was supported by one part of the PLO, but an equally powerful part of the organization and, perhaps more important, Syria rejected it.³¹

All the available evidence suggests that Arafat was maneuvering very carefully toward, on the one hand, a consensus in the Arab world and, on the other hand, a parallel consensus inside the PLO allowing him sufficient leeway to approach Hussein and, through him, ultimately the United States. The meeting of the Palestine National Council in Algiers during more than a week in February was at once a culmination of these efforts and a measure of how unsuccessful Arafat had been. Syria attempted to prevent the meeting by threatening to set up a rival, Damascus-based, PLO. Libya coaxed all the PLO hardliners to stop Arafat. Nevertheless the meeting took place on schedule. During it there were, however, massive efforts to prevent Arafat from obtaining a mandate to continue his drift toward a positive response to the Reagan initiative. Consequently Arafat was successful in preventing an outright rejection of the Reagan plan but unsuccessful in obtaining a clear mandate for his policy.³² Sensing that the PNC was missing a unique historical opportunity and referring to the tendency in the conference to portray the Beirut siege and expulsion as a great victory, one of the delegates declared in despair: "It was outrageous that all of the secretaries general of the different PLO organizations painted a picture of Lebanon as a glowing victory. Lebanon was a disaster. I bow my head to the courage of the people who fought there. But if Beirut was such a great victory, then all we need is a series of such victories and we will be holding our next National Council meeting in Fiji."³³ The speaker was Dr. Isam Sartawi, a one-time PLO radical who had become a moderate as a result of a strong sense of realism which seemed to be so patently lacking among some of his colleagues. Having made such a speech he resigned his membership of the PNC in protest. A few days later, while in Portugal, he was assassinated, presumably as a warning to others not to adopt his views.

The assassination of Sartawi was at once a demonstration of the extremes to which

some militants would go and a resounding proof that Yasser Arafat's determination to drag the PLO toward the Reagan initiative was having results. Indeed, if it were not for that, the PLO militants, or the Syrians, or the Libyans behind them, would not have felt sufficiently intimidated to resort to violence. From the point of view of the Israelis the message was ambiguous: it suggested that the age-old militants' veto over PLO moderation was still powerful, but it also suggested that the PLO was moving under Arafat's patient leadership one notch closer to a stance that would make it acceptable to the United States. Needless to say the message to the United States was basically the same. It implied that the militants were still powerful but also that Arafat was inching closer to an endorsement of the Reagan initiative within the framework of an understanding with Hussein.

Those in Washington who wistfully emphasized the promising aspects of the PNC meeting were probably heartened to watch Chairman Arafat travel to meet with Hussein in Aman a few days later. At last a PLO-Jordanian understanding capable of giving a new lease on life to the Reagan initiative seemed within reach. Judging by the press reports in Washington during the days of this meeting, the U.S. capital was holding its breath in tense expectation. But the meeting led to no clear results. Hussein and Arafat were basically aspiring to the same thing: control over the Israeli-held West Bank. Hussein would not act as Arafat's messenger boy. He would not commit himself to negotiate with Israel and the United States in order to deliver the fruits to Arafat within the framework of a Jordanian-Palestinian "confederation" that would leave the Hashemites without any real control over the Palestinian "region." Nor would Arafat agree to give Hussein his blessing to act once again as a spokesman for the Palestinians. Arafat had wrested this cherished right from the Arab Rabat Summit in 1974 and, anxious as he may have been to respond to President Reagan, he would not throw it away less than a decade later. Indeed, even if Arafat personally were willing to be more forthcoming his colleagues in the PLO, Syria, Libya, and other radicals would simply not endorse it and might even attempt to deal with Arafat as they had with Sartawi.³⁴

What would have put Israel in a critical position—a PLO-Jordanian compromise—was thus aborted by the Jordanian king and the Palestinian leader. A few days later Hussein admitted his failure to come to terms with Arafat.³⁵ An ill-conceived American thesis had thus reduced the United States to the role of helpless spectator and, worse still, had caused a six-month delay in the negotiations between Israel and Lebanon. If that was not enough to convince the Reagan administration that its strategy was in ruins, domestic American considerations—often the ultimate arbiter in U.S. foreign policy making—added impetus to the search for an alternative approach. The president could send the Marines to Beirut for any length of time so long as they were not involved in combat. They had been deployed there on September 29, 1982, and at least for the time being there was no public pressure to evacuate them. One reason why the pressure to remove them was not felt at once was probably that the pro-Israeli element in Congress was either divided or positively supportive. But this ironic source of support for keeping the marines in Beirut could not be relied upon for much longer, since American soldiers were increasingly becoming targets of attacks. An ominous portent of things to come was the car-bomb attack on the American Embassy compound in West Beirut on April 18, 1983, in which sixty-three people, including seventeen Americans, were killed. Subsequent pressure from the Pentagon and the Department of Defense to remove the GIs must have been an important factor too in causing a reappraisal of the entire policy. But even without such pressures the import of the loss of American lives could not have escaped the White

House and the State Department. To be sure, 1983 was not an election year, nor was it even clear whether President Reagan would seek a second term in the 1984 elections; yet merely to keep his options open the president would have to remove the Marines from that hopelessly dangerous point near Beirut airport where they were deployed.

Mindful of such considerations, sensing that with Arens in Sharon's place, dealing with Israel would be more businesslike, and above all aware of the abysmal failure of the policy that had been tried since the previous summer, Secretary Shultz seemed to have made up his mind in mid-April to switch course. Instead of virtually encouraging the Lebanese to play for time and avoid serious business with the Israelis, instead of viewing Lebanon as a sideshow and the West Bank as the main focal point, he became determined to push energetically toward a Lebanese-Israeli agreement. It would facilitate, he hoped, the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon—Israelis, Syrians, Palestinians, and, of course, Americans.³⁶

On April 27, nine days after the bomb attack on the American Embassy, Shultz undertook personally to bring the Khaldeh-Kiryat Shemonah talks to a quick conclusion. When he arrived in Jerusalem 80 percent of the text of the proposed agreement, had already been agreed upon between the parties, but only 5 percent of the major issues had been settled. Shultz, for whom an unsuccessful intervention would constitute a major personal setback, depended on a "sustained, totally private effort at the negotiating table and an almost Socratic technique of leading the opposing negotiators toward the desired conclusion by encouraging them to believe that they had discovered the desired path on their own." The critical phase of the negotiations lasted from the morning of May 3 to the evening of May 5. During this phase Shultz forced the two governments into an "intense, non-stop, final burst of high risk bargaining, when each side had to decide whether there would be an agreement or whether the talks would collapse." To achieve this concentration on the heart of the proposed agreement, Shultz pressed the two governments to abandon "nit-picking" on legal, procedural, and semantic matters and to acknowledge that the matter "amounted to a political decision that each side had to accept, along with its larger consequence." This was a particularly difficult experience for the Lebanese because of their deep internal divisions. To overcome their inclination to avoid substantive decisions Shultz "probed the rationale for each detailed position that the Lebanese negotiators took" and "kept them talking until they made a decision. From time to time he left the details to the U.S. negotiating teams, headed by special envoys Philip Habib and Morris Draper and joined by Assistant Secretary of State Nicholas A. Veleotes, and conferred privately with [President of Lebanon, Amin] Gemayel." A breakthrough occurred only after the application of great pressure by the Secretary of State on the recalcitrant Lebanese negotiators. In a final session attended by Shultz, Habib, Wazzan and Gemayel, the secretary reportedly "forced the issue, saying that the time had come, the Lebanese must accept the text on the table before them or there would be no deal, and the Israelis "would remain in control of most of southern Lebanon."³⁷ Conversely, he added, if they accepted his proposal, the United States would back up the Gemayel regime in the face of Syria. Shultz had not obtained clear authority from Washington for such a commitment. Secretary of Defense Weinberger had certainly not been consulted and would probably have objected strenuously. But the Lebanese were not aware of this and, from their point of view, it seemed to meet a truly critical prerequisite. Hence they overcame their hesitations and internal differences and endorsed the document.³⁸

Shultz then proceeded to Jerusalem, where he faced a marathon meeting lasting until the early hours of the next day, May 5, during which he had to perform a similar task. If

the Lebanese were intimidated by the overt threat of American support for Israeli control of south Lebanon, the Israelis were threatened in effect that if they did not accept the secretary's proposals U.S.-Israeli relations would suffer a major eclipse. Whether Shultz thought of sanctions is difficult to establish. But he reportedly did say that it "was time to stop haggling over details and move to the larger political questions of whether Israel would cooperate with the United States or blow the negotiations out of the water."³⁹ By the morning of May 5, Begin appeared to be ready to submit the document to a cabinet discussion. That was followed by a whole day of further haggling over details. The next day he submitted the text to a cabinet vote; getting the endorsement of seventeen ministers. Sharon and Minister of Science Yuval Ne'eman of the *Tehiya* party had voted against it. The Lebanese then sent emissaries to seek the blessing of Syria and Saudi Arabia. The Syrians appeared to demur. Shultz himself paid a visit to Damascus and came back convinced that the Syrians would ultimately approve the document. The Lebanese government signed the agreement on May 17.⁴⁰

The Battle for the Treaty

Throughout the process leading to the conclusion of the Lebanese-Israeli agreement, all the participants seemed to be consciously aware of an analogy between their endeavor and the process that led to the Israeli-Egyptian peace agreement. The Lebanese sought to emulate the Egyptian negotiation strategy, in particular the Egyptians' emphasis on employing the United States as a lever with which to pressure Israel. The Israelis were fully aware of this and attempted to resort to all the same methods they had used in 1977-79 in order to neutralize any tendency on the part of the United States to go along with the Lebanese. Beyond this the Israelis looked upon the Egyptian-Israeli peace as a model to be emulated in its totality in the Lebanese context—hence their insistence on the public and symbolic aspects (where the negotiations would be held, the status of joint liaison committees, the establishment of diplomatic legations in both capitals) and on the substantive issues of normalization of relations and, in particular, of the establishment of a security zone on Lebanese territory. In a word, the Israelis wished the agreement with Lebanon to be a kind of Camp David II. It should have added momentum to the process that had begun with Egypt and it should be followed as soon as possible by Camp David III, IV, V, and so on, until the elimination of all hostility in Arab-Israeli relations was reached.

By the time of George Shultz's shuttle it had become rather clear to all the participants that the Egyptian model was simply inapplicable to this case. Such realism made an agreement possible, but it also turned it into a species unto itself. Ostensibly the agreement was a standard international document regulating the relations between sovereign governments. In the preamble the signatory powers acknowledged their commitment to the "maintaining and strengthening [of] international peace based on freedom, equality, justice and respect for fundamental human right." Accordingly they also had no difficulty in affirming their "faith in the aims and principles of the Charter of the United Nations" and in the "right and obligation to live in peace with each other as well as with all states within secure and recognized boundaries."

This standard preamble is followed by a text repeating all the legal clichés that states resort to when declaring their solemn intention to live in peace. In article 1 the parties agree to respect each other's "sovereignty, political independence and territorial

integrity," and to terminate the state of war between them. To this Israel added a solemn commitment to withdraw its forces from Lebanese territory. In article 2 the parties agree to rely only on "peaceful means" for the purpose of settling disputes between them. Article 3 mentions the establishment of a "security zone" between the parties as a means of enhancing their security. Article 4 deals at length with the responsibility of the signatory powers to prevent the use of their territory as a basis of operation by "irregular forces, armed bands," or other "organizations" that have hostile intentions toward the other party to the agreement. Article 5 commits Israel and Lebanon to avoid any hostile propaganda against one another. Article 6 contains a mutual commitment not to allow the use of the territory of the parties by regular forces of third parties. The next article makes an explicit exception to the stipulations of article 6 inasmuch as it calls for the stationing on Lebanese territory of "international forces requested and accepted by the Government of Lebanon to assist in maintaining its authority." Article 8 focuses on the establishment of a "Joint Liaison Committee . . . entrusted with the supervision of the implementation of all areas covered by [the agreement]." Article 9 commits the parties to abrogate all "treaties, laws and regulations deemed in conflict with the . . . agreement." Finally, articles 10–12 are procedural. They commit the parties to ratify the agreement, specify how interpretations of the agreement should be handled, and stipulate that the agreement should be communicated to the Secretariat of the United Nations "for registration in conformity with the provisions of Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations."⁴¹

Though all this is more or less standard, it has an eerie quality when observed in the specific Israeli-Lebanese context. Technically Lebanon had been at war with Israel ever since the Jewish state's inception or at least ever since the abrogation of the Armistice Agreement by Lebanon in the course of the Six-Day War. From this point of view it was perfectly normal for the new agreement to be phrased as it was. But in reality Israel and Lebanon were not at war. With the exception of a short period in 1948, Lebanon had never posed a threat to Israel nor did Israel invade Lebanon against the wishes of the Lebanese. The invasion was carried out in collaboration with an important part of Lebanese society in order to serve an Israeli interest through helping to deliver Lebanon from the yoke of occupation by foreign forces. Hence all the stipulations in the agreement referring to a mutual obligation to respect the independence, territorial integrity, and sovereignty of both parties did not really address themselves to the main problem. The war was between Israel, Syria, and the PLO and not, as the agreement suggested, between Israel and Lebanon. Hence the agreement terminating the war was in a sense signed by the wrong parties.

Moreover, the agreement committed Lebanon to the implementation of a variety of arrangements which it could not uphold. If Lebanon could prevent the use of its territory by the PLO and its invasion by Syria, there would not have been a war in the first place. Conversely, the fact that Lebanon became committed to implementing such arrangements through an international agreement had virtually nothing to do with its real ability to carry these obligations into effect. To an extent this is recognized in the agreement, in article 7 which stipulates the right of Lebanon to invite international forces to assist it in "maintaining its authority." As will be seen, the signatory powers, including the United States, really believed at the time the agreement was signed that such forces would be both available and sufficient to maintain Lebanon's authority. But if they were not absolutely certain of this the agreement had a patently hollow quality.

Another peculiarity of the May agreement was that it was terminating a state of war without establishing a state of peace. As such it was no different from the Armistice

Agreements of 1949 except in one respect: instead of UN responsibility for the work of joint commissions, the Liaison Committee established under the agreement was bilateral. Between the lines of article 8, which deals with this issue, can be read one of the most thorny points of disagreement in the course of the negotiations. The Lebanese did not mind the establishment of practical relations on a wide front, including tourism, trade, and government-to-government contact, as much as they were reluctant to codify, formalize, and ratify such arrangements. From the Israeli point of view the priorities were virtually the opposite. Israelis may have dreamed of spending their holidays on the ski slopes of Mount Lebanon, but the main national interest was to establish formalized, open, declared, and fully ratified relations underlined by the establishment of fully fledged diplomatic legations with national flags hoisted proudly on their rooftops. Such an incompatibility was difficult to overcome. Therefore the solution was found in the creation of an elaborate facility for joint commissions which, by the terms of the agreement, would resemble diplomatic legations.

This fundamental problem gave rise to yet another oddity of the accord. Forced by the United States to accept a written agreement, the Lebanese pressed all along either to refrain from making the formal instrument very detailed or, at the very least, to give problematic aspects contractual expression in secret agreements. The result was that the most important parts of the document from the operational point of view are not in the main, public document. Rather they are contained in an annex and in a separate Israeli-American secret understanding both of which are longer and more important substantively than the main document.

Specifically the annex deals, as its subtitle proposes, with "security arrangements." Based essentially on Sharon's unsigned document from December 1982, at its heart is the notion of an Israeli security sphere inside Lebanon. The southern boundary of the security zone would be on the international border between the two countries. The northern boundary of the zone was not specified in the annex, but a map in its appendix showed this northern line corresponding roughly to the Awali River some 30 miles from the Israeli border. The map also interpreted another element in the annex, namely, the internal division of the security zone into two belts. In the southern belt, lying astride the Israeli border, Lebanon would be permitted to deploy a territorial brigade. This was in a sense a code for Haddad's Israeli-supported militia; although the Lebanese would simply not agree to mention the name of the renegade major. But as Major General Avraham Tamir, the chief architect of this part of the agreement, told the Knesset Foreign Relations and Security Committee, Major Saad Haddad's militia, instead of being disbanded (as the Lebanese demanded), would be made the nucleus of the southern territorial brigade. Haddad, Tamir told the committee, "will supply 1,000 men to the brigade while another 1,000 men will be mobilized from among inhabitants of southern Lebanon."⁴² Thus, ingeniously, the annex solved the thorny issue by differentiating between this southern part of the zone and a northern belt beyond it through specific stipulations regarding the deployment of "Lebanese" regular forces. This did not seem dissimilar to the Israeli-Egyptian arrangements in the Sinai. Indeed, the specification that Lebanon undertake limitations on the quantity of forces to be deployed and on the types of weapons they would be allowed to have reads almost like a replication of the Camp David Accords. But in practice the differences were immense: there would be no demilitarized areas at all; there would be joint Israeli-Lebanese patrols (under Lebanese command); and, above all, Israel would be allowed by implication to maintain a surrogate army wearing Lebanese uniforms.

This may have entailed a major Lebanese concession, but it fell far short of Israel's initial expectations as formulated by the above-mentioned working paper of October 11, 1982. What Sharon had in mind in October was the establishment deep inside Lebanon of electronic surveillance stations manned by Israelis. This formula was partly a semantic trick and partly a reflection of real concern. The genuine part was a perceived need for effective surveillance as a means of maximizing early warning against Syria and thus also minimizing the incentives for Syria to initiate hostilities. The contrived part was complex. Sharon intended the "stations" to be manned by substantial forces, which would presumably ensure that no PLO or Syrian forces would be able to approach the Israeli border. While this was a tenable proposition militarily, it was formally incompatible with Lebanese sovereignty. Hence Sharon invoked the precedent of the surveillance system in the Sinai. Egypt had accepted the existence of such installations on its sovereign territory, even though they would be manned not by Egyptian soldiers but by non-Israeli "civilian technicians." Therefore Lebanon would not object to a similar arrangement, or so Sharon had apparently hoped. But the Lebanese were adamant on this point and, since the United States was more anxious to have an agreement per se than to make sure that such arrangements would be worked out, Sharon's colleagues ultimately had no choice but to accept the compromise of two belts inside a reorganized security zone. In order to cut their losses they extracted from the United States an unpublished agreement whereby Israel would be permitted to undertake raids into Lebanon if the security arrangements proved inadequate.⁴³

In the final analysis, however, neither the Israeli demands nor, indeed, the Israeli concessions were of any consequence. Here, in fact, was the weakest element in the entire edifice. The agreement stipulated that it "shall enter into force on the exchange of the instruments of ratification." Thus, all the value of these stipulations depended on ratification by Lebanon. But Lebanon, as it turned out to the chagrin of both Israel and the United States, would not even submit the document for ratification without the endorsement of both a broad internal coalition and an external Arab coalition. And since to a great extent the support of an adequate internal coalition largely depended on the support of an external array of forces, chief of all, Syria, the ultimate decision on the future of the agreement was left to powers that had not participated at all in the negotiations and were not bound by the agreement to which the negotiations led. Indeed, nonsignatory forces, headed by Syria, were not just aloof but in fact determined to undo everything the May agreement had sought to achieve.

In retrospect it is tempting to jump to the conclusion that Syria's opposition to the Lebanese-Israeli accord was predictable and should have been taken into account by the United States when it forced Israel and Lebanon in the summer and fall of the previous year to engage in negotiations without Syria. Sharon for one had been saying so all along and so had some of his critics in the Labor party as well as some academics.⁴⁴ Yet a careful examination of the facts suggests that shortly before the accord was signed and for a while thereafter, it was not entirely unreasonable to expect the Syrians to approve it. For one thing, while generally critical of the U.S.-sponsored talks, Syria had on the whole kept a rather low profile on this issue until the very eve of the signing of the agreement. On February 14, 1983, to quote one example, Syrian Foreign Minister Abdul Khalim Khaddam told his French counterpart that "Syria would withdraw her forces from Lebanon if the Israelis withdrew their troops."⁴⁵ Two months later on May 5, only twelve days before the accord was signed, Syrian President Assad told the Italian Foreign Minister Emilio Colombo that while opposed to the Lebanese-Israeli deal as it had been

evolving, he thought that stationing a UN force throughout the south of Lebanon would be a good solution.⁴⁶ Then, ten days before the signing of the accord, the Syrian leaders were sounded out and did not seem to be utterly determined to destroy it. When Lebanese Foreign Minister Elie Salem met Hafez al Assad on May 11, the Syrian president seemed to be in a somewhat intimidating yet on the whole good mood. He remarked to Salem that "when President Anwar el Sadat of Egypt went to Damascus to brief him on his planned peace initiative with Israel, Syrian officers suggested locking him up in jail or shooting down his plane as he took off." When a pained look crossed the Lebanese foreign minister's face, Mr. Assad reassured him, saying: "Don't worry, we won't keep you here."⁴⁷ What Assad told Salem later in the same meeting is not known. Yet during the same week he met Secretary of State Shultz and left him with a feeling that Syria's position would not be entirely negative, and that in fact the planned Israeli-Lebanese accord had a good chance of success.⁴⁸

Such a perception of the Syrian position must have been strongly encouraged by a number of other seemingly logical considerations. Syria's surrogates inside Lebanon, the domestic Lebanese barometer with which the mood in Damascus could be quite accurately gauged, was the position on any issue of Lebanese power brokers such as Walid Jumblatt, Rashid Karamah, and Suleiman Franjiyeh as well as Syrian proxies such as George Hawi, head of the Lebanese Communist party, and Asem Kanso, head of the Lebanese *Ba'ath* party. Their views on any matter such as the accord with Israel would be represented at the Lebanese regime level by Prime Minister Shafiq al Wazzan. During the final stages of Shultz's shuttle, the greatest worry of the secretary's staff was that when the moment for final decision came, al Wazzan would back down and thus in fact veto a Lebanese acceptance. To their great surprise, relief, and encouragement this did not happen. The Sunni Moslem prime minister joined the final meeting and even proceeded to endorse the outcome in public.⁴⁹ Moreover, a week later, three days before the signing of the agreement, Karamah, Franjiyeh, Jumblatt, Hawi, and Kanso met in Zogharta and issued a warning to Amin Gemayel not to sign the agreement. Yet within twenty-four hours at least two of them informed the president of Lebanon that they were not seriously opposed to it.⁵⁰

The same kind of logic that turned such acts into encouraging signs could also induce optimism because of the absence of negative reactions in the Arab world. The clear signs of opposition to an agreement with Israel—the seeming unity of all Arab states which had attended the Egyptian-Israeli peace process—were almost utterly absent this time. Qaddafi, to be sure, was adamantly opposed and at once broke off diplomatic relations with Lebanon. But, then, his opposition was both predictable and of no perceived consequence. On the other hand, Egypt and Jordan were clearly supportive whereas the rest, in particular, Algeria, Morocco, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and the rest of the Gulf states, repeatedly expressed support for anything that would remove "foreign forces" (implying not just the Israelis) from Lebanon's territory.⁵¹ Given the fact that, owing to the war with Iran, Iraq—which in 1977–79 had led the campaign against the Egyptian-Israeli peace accord—had become dependent on the goodwill of Egypt, Jordan, and the United States, there was reason to assume that its position could be bent further to a positive endorsement of an Israeli-Lebanese accord. Indeed, since Iraq seemed ready to support reflexively anything Syria did not want, the chances for Iraqi affirmation seemed very good. As for the Saudis, no similar assurance existed with regard to this important, or perhaps only seemingly important, pivot of Arab politics. But talks held between Secretary of State Shultz and Secretary of Defense Weinberger in Riyadh, and some public utterances by

Saudi officials, seemed to suggest that the Saudis were merely being cautious, as is always their way, and that ultimately they would throw their weight behind the accord.⁵²

American officials rationalized that in such an event, Syria would have little choice but to follow suit. The Saudis had been assisting Syria to the tune of more than half a billion dollars annually. Without this aid Syria would have to cut deeply into economic development or into its post-1982 war military buildup, or become even more dependent on the Soviets, or, indeed, allow all three unwelcome changes.⁵³ Differently stated, to any American official who chose to believe that the Saudis were in America's pocket, it seemed logical to assume that ultimately Syria would be too.

That U.S. policy rested on such "logical" deductions rather than on hard facts seems to be strongly suggested by the content of a talk between Itzhak Rabin and George Shultz in the course of the latter's shuttle. "I asked the Secretary," Rabin later recalled, "what made him think the Syrians would accept an American-Israeli-Lebanese agreement. He relied on information that the Syrians were ready to do so in principle. I nearly fell off my chair when I heard what American policy was based on and I am still worried by their conception," the former Israeli prime minister concluded.⁵⁴

Rabin's story suggests that such a perception of the Saudis and the Syrians would instinctively not be endorsed by either the Israelis or the Lebanese. Their reading of the Middle East tends to be far less impressed by the power of the Saudi purse and far more impressed by the power of the Syrian gun. But in this particular case both parties had their own reasons for going along with these seemingly convincing delusions in Washington. For the Lebanese the agreement with Israel was a tax worth paying for obtaining a solid protective embrace by the United States, and thus it offset the undesirable Syrian and Israeli intervention in their affairs. Therefore on the eve of signing the accords, Amin Gemayel was prone to exude an air of optimism which could not have but reinforced the confidence of U.S. officials in the validity of their unrealistic thesis.

The Israeli government, as reconstituted after the departure of Sharon, also had good reasons for falling in with the U.S. approach. By May 1983 the involvement in Lebanon had been going on for almost a year. The economic burden of this involvement was close to a million dollars a day and, against the background of a severe economic crisis at home, three-digit inflation, bankruptcies, upheavals in the stock market and the banking system, falling foreign currency reserves, and growing unemployment, this was a heavy burden. So was the burden of mounting casualties. Such a situation increased the tendency to embrace solutions that would facilitate an early withdrawal. The U.S.-sponsored agreement with Lebanon was not, as has been seen, Israel's chosen strategy. But if it succeeded it would be acceptable.

In addition the Begin-Shamir-Arens team was constantly taken to task by Sharon for heeding American advice too readily⁵⁵ and by its opposition critics for not moving fast enough.⁵⁶ This too acted as a reinforcement for their growing inclination to pin hopes on the Khaldeh-Kiryat Shemonah talks. Moreover, from such a disposition it was not too difficult to embrace a number of seemingly convincing strategic arguments about why the Syrians should ultimately give their blessing to a Lebanese-Israeli accord to which they had not been a party. The Syrians reckoned, in the Israeli perception, that if they would not permit the agreement to be implemented Israel would proceed to act unilaterally. This would mean a de facto partition of Lebanon, leaving the IDF on Jebel (Mount) Barouq from which Damascus could be easily shelled. Hence, the Israelis assumed, the Syrians had a major incentive for approving the agreement, and the hostile noises they were making already constituted part of the bargaining.⁵⁷

This kind of rationalization could and did draw inspiration from previous experiences with the Syrians. In 1949 Syria was the last Arab confrontation state to join the Armistice negotiations. It drove a hard bargain but ultimately signed an agreement. In 1973–75, under quite a different regime, it acted in much the same way. At first it rebuked Egypt for entering into negotiations with Israel, then it joined the negotiations, once again drove an extremely hard bargain, but accepted an agreement. Therefore Israelis, Americans, and Lebanese were not entirely irrational in assuming that in 1983 Syria would act in much the same way.⁵⁸

In the final analysis, however, all these hypotheses and rationalizations were proved to have been misleading. Realizing that Lebanon and Israel were heading toward an agreement, Syrian President Hafez al Assad tried a last-minute delaying tactic which also embodied a longer term threat. On May 15, he met a delegation of his Lebanese supporters including Karameh, Jumblatt, Franjiyeh, Hawi, and others and, having heard their avowed objections to Gemayel's policy, offered his own backing. "The President," announced Radio Damascus, "confirmed Syria's full support for Lebanese personalities and parties in their national stand against the Israeli control of Lebanon's territory, waters and airspace." Syria, Assad was quoted as telling the Lebanese delegation, considered Gemayel's agreement with Israel as a "contract that recognizes Israel's permanent political and military control of Lebanon." Hence, if Amin Gemayel went along with this agreement, warned the Syrian president, there will be a renewal of "civil strife" in Lebanon.⁵⁹

Despite Assad's overt threat to engineer a civil war in Lebanon through his surrogates, Amin Gemayel, trusting in solid U.S. and Israeli backing, pushed ahead with the accord. On May 16 no less than eighty of the members of the ninety-nine-seat Lebanese National Assembly voted in favor of the agreement that Lebanon would sign with Israel the following day. In response, the Syrians launched a well-orchestrated public campaign against the agreement. Leading it was an interview with Syrian Foreign Minister Abdul Khallim Khaddam in the Lebanese newspaper *al Saphir*. "We have told the Lebanese," Khaddam said, "that the stay of Syrian forces in Lebanon will be as long as Israel maintains any advantage or gain in that country. . . . If we withdrew from Lebanon, then the whole of Lebanon would fall under Israeli domination. That is totally impossible and unacceptable." Hence, the Syrian foreign minister concluded, the Syrian Army would not leave Lebanon. It would rather offer all its support to those in Lebanon who were willing to use force against the Israelis. On the same day the Syrian official news agency, SANA, quoted President Assad as saying that the proposed agreement would turn Lebanon into an "Israeli satellite." Therefore he too offered help to all Lebanese factions willing to fight the Israeli forces. So did the editorials in two leading Syrian newspapers, *al Ba'ath* and *al Thawra*.⁶⁰ Furthermore, when the Lebanese government moved ahead and signed the agreement the next day, the Syrians stepped up the campaign. On May 18 they closed the border to Lebanon at Sofar. The next day, having received word from the U.S. government that Philip Habib wished to pay a visit to Damascus, the Syrians denounced him as the most anti-Arab Western diplomat⁶¹ and announced that they would not allow him into the country since in any case there was nothing to talk about.

The Syrian reaction to the signing of the Lebanese-Israeli accord raises two questions. First, if Syria had been so adamantly opposed to this agreement, why had it not fought more ferociously before it was signed? Second, why should Syria have opposed the agreement at all? Given the paucity of information on Syrian decision making, it is very difficult to offer an entirely reliable answer to either question. Nevertheless, a number of plausible explanations do seem to be suggested by the available data.

Before the signing of the Israel-Lebanese accord, Syria did not miss an opportunity to make clear to whomever was concerned that it was not in favor. But for most of the time the negotiations appeared to have been hopelessly slow and there was therefore no urgent reason for the Syrians to fight it tooth and nail in the open. Moreover, during this phase of the negotiations, that is, before Shultz's shuttle, Syria could have helped to thwart the American-Israeli purpose by relying on the forces inside Lebanon, in particular Karameh's Sunnis, Jumblatt's Druzes, Franjijeh's oppositionary Maronites, and even the slowly awakening Shi'ites, that had their own reasons for denying success to Amin Gemayel. Finally, steady pressure from Damascus and through these Syrian surrogates in Lebanon might conceivably have led to an outcome with which Syria could live in peace. After all, the Syrians were not opposed to order in Lebanon. Quite the contrary, they were very much in favor of order there, provided it was consonant with their own perception of their interest. Bashir Gemayel's vision of the new Lebanon was quite incompatible with the Syrian interest. Amin Gemayel, however, had been far closer to Damascus. The Syrians therefore may have figured that Amin should be given a reasonable opportunity to establish a modicum of stability. If he failed, Syria might have to intervene again. If he succeeded on their terms, all the better. If, however, he succeeded in a manner that did not suit the Syrians, they could still thwart it then.

As to the larger question of why Syria should have opposed the Lebanese-Israeli accord, the answer seems to lie in a security dilemma perspective on Syria's policy too. Broadly speaking it seems clear that the Assad regime was concerned that its support for the agreement would be to Syria's disadvantage. Cooperation might have had its advantages in the short term but might lead to grave risks in the long run. Conversely, an assertive behavior leading to conflict in the short run might have seemed to Assad less risky in the long run. Such a presentation of Syrian behavior assumes pragmatism and rationality. Indeed, all the evidence on Assad's Syria suggests that these are the most conspicuous attributes of its international conduct.⁶²

In more specific terms, the Syrian calculus at the end of May 1983 seems to have been based on at least some of the following considerations. A Syrian support for the Lebanese-Israeli accord would certainly have had its advantages. Syria could drive a hard bargain and, as in the past, succeed in reducing Israel's payoff by manipulating the United States as the main lever for that purpose. This could include a Syrian demand to link a settlement in Lebanon with a settlement in the Israeli-held Golan as well as U.S. financial support. Above all, if Syria did not play an "empty chair" policy vis-à-vis the accord it would gain a major say in the implementation of the accord for years to come.

These were the possible Syrian payoffs from supporting the accord, but the costs would be greater. In the first place, from the Syrian point of view, accommodation with Israel, even indirectly, would merely make the Jewish state more dangerous than it already was. Seen from Damascus, according to a reliable source, Israel had "got from the Lebanon war what it wanted—a political deal with the Beirut government, an enfeebled PLO and a broad band of Arab territory on its northern border under its direct control." The Syrians feared that Israel, a dynamic and expansionist power by its nature (in their perception), would merely be encouraged by Syrian acquiescence to fresh aggressions in the future. "Immoveable on the West Bank, king-maker in Lebanon and thereby profoundly affecting the countries beyond its extended periphery," Israel had "become deeply influential in the affairs of the Levant as a whole."⁶³ Hence the only way to check its further rise to regional hegemony, the Syrians were prone to conclude, was through a clear demonstration of the Assad regime's ability to undo the May 17 agreement.

Second, if Syria accepted the Israeli-Lebanese-American *faits accomplis*, the United States would be free to pursue the Reagan plan. The Syrians were opposed to the plan because going along with it would mean a *pax Americana* or rather a *pax Egyptiana*, whereas if the plan were pursued without them they would be left out on a limb. Moreover, the Reagan plan would turn Jordan into the main custodian of the Palestinian issue and Syria claimed that status for itself.⁶⁴

Third, a Syrian endorsement of the May 17 agreement would imply that it would have to remove its forces from the Beqa'a Valley. This may have been acceptable to Assad's numerous domestic foes before the 1982 war, but it had become quite unacceptable after the war. The Syrian Army had succeeded in holding its own against a superior Israeli force. Since then, with Soviet help, it had doubled its strength in Lebanon to something like 50,000 troops. Syria's airspace had become effectively sealed by a system of SAM 2, 3, 5, 7, and 8 missiles, supervised and managed by a Soviet contingent of 4,000 to 5,000 advisers. Simultaneously Syria was rapidly building up a thick line of defenses facing Lebanon in much the same way that its Golan defenses face Israel directly. This rendered the Israeli threat to the Syrian homeland from the direction of Lebanon quite tolerable. Indeed, the signs of plummeting resolve in Israel may well have suggested to Assad that the Israeli presence in Jebel Barouq was hardly a threat at all. It may have improved Israel's defenses against Syria. But this is not at all the same as saying that it had dangerously depreciated Syria's defenses against Israel.

Against such a background, for a Syrian president to order his army out of Lebanon could be very dangerous in domestic political terms, since his rivals could charge that he was compromising through a poor diplomacy what the Syrian Army had gained by its valor and sacrifice on the battlefield. Nor would the long-term political losses to Syria in terms of its position in the Arab world be any smaller. If Assad gave his blessing to the Israeli-Lebanese accord he would be adding critical impetus to the regional process which had been triggered by Sadat's peace initiative. The Egyptian peace initiative had neutralized much of Egypt's regional influence, thereby greatly helping Syria's regional ascendance. If Syria were to allow the Israeli-Lebanese accords to take off it would be enhancing precisely those conditions Egypt needed in order to effect a comeback. Once reestablished as a regional pivot, Egypt would most likely come to overshadow Syria again as it had in the decades before the Sadat peace initiative.

Moreover, by supporting the Israeli-Lebanese accords Syria could conceivably complicate her relations with the Soviet Union. The Soviets could not force Syria to do anything the *Ba'ath* Republic did not wish to do any more than they had been capable of controlling Egypt. But they could become far less forthcoming on economic and military aid which Syria needed in order to enhance its domestic growth and to underscore its regional position. Conversely, by resisting the Israeli-Lebanese agreement Syria would not be risking its other major source of aid, Saudi Arabia. The Saudis seemed to have been inclined to view their generous support to Syria as a kind of "protection" payment. It was more a form of appeasement than an attempt to gain strings with which to affect the course of Syrian policy. The Saudis could for this reason be more or less taken for granted. If, however, a Syrian attempt to ruin the Lebanese-Israeli understanding were to lead to an unacceptable backlash in the Arab world, particularly with Saudi Arabia, a change of course in midstream would always be feasible.⁶⁵

The bottom line of such calculations appears quite clear: from the point of view of the Assad regime, challenging the accords seemed a more promising course of action than acquiescing to them. Therefore, in the second half of May, Syria launched a dynamic war

of words against the accord. In turn the Lebanese, the Israelis, and the Americans faced a difficult problem. Should they blast back at the Syrians and risk an aggravation of the already difficult situation? Or should they perhaps attempt to keep their composure even at the risk of looking weak? As it happened all three governments basically preferred a controlled to a spirited response.

The position of the Lebanese government in this exchange consisted of a number of simultaneous activities. On the one hand it continued to emphasize optimism. Syria, the Lebanese government argued, was only trying to raise the price of its acceptance of the accord. Shortly it would change course and lend its support. At the same time the Lebanese launched a diplomatic campaign in the Arab world and in Europe with a view to mobilizing support for the accord. But this was done carefully in an attempt not to antagonize the Syrians further. Not only did the Lebanese avoid the type of rude accusations and recriminations that are common in inter-Arab quarrels but they were also at pains to offer Syria some positive inducements. They hinted that they might be ready to consider further modifications in the already-signed treaty with Israel; they indicated that they would be willing to consider a formal recognition of Syria's security interests in the Beqa'a Valley; they offered credit facilities with Lebanese banks; and they suggested that a Syrian demand for special rights in the Beirut harbor would be treated favorably. Meanwhile, as Amin Gemayel was conscious of the possibility of failure with regard to the accord with Israel, he was at pains to convince the Reagan administration to play a more active part in the effort to prevail upon Syria while, somewhat disingenuously, suggesting that the Soviets be invited to play a role as well.⁶⁶

Gemayel's appeals to Washington to become more actively involved in the attempt to convince Assad of the merits of America's own brainchild met an evasive response. Having seen Philip Habib refused entry into Syria and conscious of the need to avoid putting itself even more in Assad's hands, the administration decided to adopt a low-keyed diplomacy. Amin Gemayel was thus left at this critical stage in the process to take Syria on alone. As one frustrated Lebanese official put it, this was a hopeless task, "worse than Monaco trying to bargain with France."⁶⁷ Such comments, however, left the Reagan administration unperturbed. Its policy remained that of patient and cautious wooing of Assad, entirely devoid of the hyperactivism that had characterized it throughout the previous year. The president went out of his way to appeal to Assad. Officials were apparently instructed to brief the media in a spirit of praise for Assad's statesmanship and for Syria's importance. The typical comment in Washington in the second half of May 1983 was that Assad needed time but that he would ultimately come around and lend his support to the Lebanese-Israeli accords in one way or another. Above all Secretary of State Shultz, normally a careful, composed, and shrewd negotiator, was often quoted as referring to Syria as "a proud country." He "has gone out of his way," declared the *Washington Post*, to "stress that Syria has legitimate security concerns and interests in Lebanon that must be addressed in withdrawal talks," and he noted that the "security zone planned by the Lebanese and Israelis in south Lebanon" would extend to the Syrian border and create a need for guarantees that Israel "would not be afforded special strategic advantages in any conflict with Syria."⁶⁸

Israel watched this with a mixture of disbelief and consternation. Sharon, who had predicted such an outcome all along, was now taking every opportunity to lash out at the "naïveté" of the United States and at the lack of wisdom of his colleagues in the cabinet for allowing themselves to be dragged by the United States into this impasse in which Syria held all the cards and the United States and Israel had none.⁶⁹ To the Begin

government's great discomfiture Sharon's criticism was echoed forcefully by the Labor opposition. "In August of last year" Rabin said in a radio interview,

Syria was still stunned by the defeat and there had not been sufficient time for Soviet action. The Americans should have started talking to Syria then, either directly or through intermediaries in the Arab world. American illusions about renewed influence in the Middle East (which spurred the Reagan initiative) and Israeli dreams of a formal peace with Lebanon have wasted valuable time. . . . Meanwhile the Syrians have had time to recover and the Soviets have had time to make decisions.⁷⁰

Faced with such formidable criticism Foreign Minister Shamir and Defense Minister Arens (Begin was already receding into the background) were inclined to avoid drastic action. Shamir stated that the IDF could stay in south Lebanon as long as necessary. Arens issued reassurances that the Syrians would ultimately join the game. Foreign ministry legal aides were quoted as implying that Israel would implement the accord unilaterally by the terms of the document itself. Uri Lubrani, a senior and experienced official who had been Israel's last Ambassador to Iran before the fall of the Shah (and had warned the United States six months earlier that the collapse of the Shah was pending), was appointed head of an interministerial committee in charge of relations with Lebanon under the terms of the unratified accord. In short, the Israeli government decided to proceed with the implementation of the accord (and thus with its ratification) as though there were no problem with Syria at all.⁷¹

This courteous, cool, polite, and optimistic response of the United States, Lebanon, and Israel, however, nearly backfired. From the Syrian point of view perhaps the worst aspect of the accord was that it seemed to have ignored the *Ba'ath* Republic in a matter of the highest importance from its point of view. Syria, it seems, had to impress on the region as well as on the superpowers that the *Ba'ath* Republic was there and that nothing of consequence could be done with regard to Lebanon, its own backyard, without its consent. Syria, therefore, needed precisely that type of noisy and acrimonious confrontation that the policies of the United States, Lebanon, and Israel were intended (probably misguidedly) to avoid.

With such intentions in mind the Syrians moved to heat up the atmosphere. Responding to President Reagan's decision to lift the ban on the delivery of seventy-five F-16 planes, imposed at the time of the Israeli invasion a year earlier, the Syrians charged that "through a new aggressive stand, the U.S. has removed from the hands of its friends any prospect of preaching a role of mediation or arbitration for the U.S."⁷² On the same day, Syrian Foreign Minister Abdul Khalim Khaddam told the Lebanese newspaper *al Nahar* that "if Syria shared common borders with Egypt, a war would have erupted" between the two countries at the time of the Sadat peace initiative. "Much more links us to Lebanon," he added ominously, and "we will use all that is in our capacity to thwart this agreement—an accord more dangerous than Camp David."⁷³ As if to underline his warnings, the Syrian army began major maneuvers in the Golan.

The Israelis picked up the signal and quietly rushed reinforcements to both the Lebanon and Golan fronts while, in an effort to prevent escalation, dismissing, in the words of Begin to the Knesset Foreign Relations and Security Committee, all "talk of an Israeli-Syrian clash or confrontation" as mere "Russian propaganda." "We want," the prime minister emphasized, "no confrontation."⁷⁴ But Assad clearly wanted a visible crisis. Thus, two days after Begin's statement the Syrian Air Force fired at Israeli planes on reconnaissance in the Beirut area and, on the same day, Syrian ground-to-air missiles

fired at two Israeli helicopters in the Beqa'a. The Israeli planes were not hit in either case, but since this was the first time in nearly a year that the Syrians had opened fire, the tension was bound to rise.⁷⁵ Israel let it be widely reported in the media that it had put the IDF on a state of alert,⁷⁶ while Syria spread rumors that Amin Gemayel might be assassinated and issued a warning through the Ba'ath party newspaper that those "who are laboring under the illusion that they can find a way out of the impasse through military aggression must understand that this aggression will not be a picnic or a limited battle. It will be an all-out conflict that will cost the aggressors very dearly."⁷⁷

The Israeli response was to send three mechanized brigades to the Beqa'a Valley⁷⁸ while at the same time stating repeatedly that Israel would "not be dragged into provocations" and that it hoped that the "dangerous" Syrian game would not "force" the IDF "to react."⁷⁹ In addition Prime Minister Begin wrote to President Reagan to make him aware of the mounting tension and Israel's position in it, and Defense Minister Arens issued a stern warning to the Syrians not to try even a limited war of attrition. "We will not put up with a war of attrition," he said in a radio interview, "so if the Syrians entertain any illusions that it will be easy for them to harass us locally, constantly and continuously, that is an illusion and not true. If they start violent action, we will be the ones to dictate the scope of those actions."⁸⁰

In the face of such a firm reaction and not interested in a real confrontation, the Syrians hastened to back down. On May 27 Syrian Defense Minister Mustafa Tlass commented that the Syrian measures had been purely defensive. His Israeli counterpart, Arens, was quick to pick up this new tone and reciprocate in kind. "I hope," he said, that the report about Tlass's words were "correct," and "if it is correct, this is good news." Meanwhile, he added for good measure, "we will not be dragged into any hostilities. We can sit quietly, watch events and reach a correct assessment. We cannot be provoked."⁸¹ This emphasis on restraint and firmness was followed by the Reagan administration as well as apparently the Soviets. Hence the Syrians took further steps to defuse tensions. On May 29 the Syrian official news agency, SANA, issued a statement to the effect that the Syrian armed forces had completed their "spring exercises" and "returned to their normal situation and status."⁸² Assad had his crisis and managed it well.

Whether the Syrian president had it well planned in advance is a moot point. But in retrospect it seems clear that regardless of what he had hoped to achieve from this crisis, he emerged from it the ultimate winner. Syria may have engineered the tension and then been forced to back down. From this perspective Assad had risked a great deal and won nothing. Yet more broadly, given the wider context of the situation, Assad emerged the winner because the crisis served to underscore the degree to which U.S. policy, which Israel had also unenthusiastically adopted, had turned both the United States and Israel, not to mention Lebanon, into prisoners of their own game. Syria was ill advisedly ignored at the outset. But when all was said and done, the success or failure of the policy embodied in the May 17 agreement depended on Assad's goodwill, and he, for very good reasons, had none.

The Calculus of Disengagement

On June 1, 1983, as the crisis was subsiding, Assad called on Libyan President Muámmar Qaddafi and, with an exceptional sense of timing and occasion, declared that as far as he was concerned the May accords had become moribund.⁸³ Aware of the possible effects of

an admission by the United States and Israel that Assad had a point, the Lebanese government hastened to prop up the optimism of the former. A London-based American journalist with close contacts in Maronistan published an article in which, quoting Lebanese sources, he argued that the Syrians were ready to talk. Their precondition, he declared, was a Lebanese consent to cede to Syria long-term control over the sources of the Orontes River.⁸⁴ A few days later one of the committees of the Lebanese parliament was elbowed into approving the accords with Israel, 28 to 1. Perhaps next week, "well-informed Lebanese sources" hastened to indicate, the accords would be tabled for final ratification.⁸⁵

But the Israelis would not be convinced and, apart from a spate of (quickly denied) rumors from Jerusalem that the government was seriously considering the possibility of a unilateral withdrawal to the Awali River,⁸⁶ they sent Deputy Foreign Minister Yehuda Ben-Me'ir to Washington to take up in an exploratory fashion the topic of such an important policy shift. Ben-Me'ir, a sharp-tongued American-born politician, exuded optimism. Dismissing Assad's claim that the agreement was in its "death throes," Ben-Me'ir argued that Israel would "continue to stand behind" the agreement "until the Syrians realize that they have no choice" but to agree to a mutual withdrawal from Lebanon.⁸⁷

This appears to have been a little more than a smoke screen behind which the Begin government was agonizingly studying the question of a unilateral withdrawal and trying to convince the United States that there was no other way. This, to be sure, was not the first Israeli experience of withdrawal. In 1948 Israel yielded to American and British pressures and withdrew the IDF from the northern Sinai. In 1949 Israel withdrew again from a small part of Lebanon. Seven years later Prime Minister and Defense Minister David Ben Gurion yielded to formidable pressure from the Eisenhower administration and, three months after yet another victorious military campaign, left the Sinai peninsula in exchange for the flimsiest kind of guarantee, an unpublished letter from the president of the United States to the prime minister of Israel. In 1973–74, the Israelis experienced the pangs of withdrawal once again when, under the terms of the U.S.-mediated disengagement accord with Egypt and Syria, Israel withdrew from parts of the Golan, the West Bank of the Suez Canal, and, subsequently, a chunk of the East Bank of the canal too. Still reeling from the war "earthquake" that had led to this, the Israelis were less prone this time to be agonized by the experience of withdrawal. But there was nevertheless a hollow feeling that a lot of blood had once again been spilled in vain.

This feeling was dramatically offset by the Sadat peace initiative which opened the way to Israel's first "normal" peace agreement ever with a major Arab country. The excitement at the prospect of peace was followed by yet another withdrawal experience. By the terms of the Camp David accords of 1978, Israel undertook to return the whole of the Sinai to Egypt. Most Israelis had no qualms about such an act in the abstract. Nevertheless, the atmosphere in the Jewish state toward the completion of this withdrawal in the spring of 1982 was somewhat despondent. Many Israelis had developed a fond attachment to the Sinai desert, to the splendor of its mountain peaks, and wadis (ravines), and the spectacular beauty of its magnificent beaches. This attachment had no political connotations at all. In fact it was shared by many supporters of Peace Now. But, perhaps because of that, the final return of the Sinai to Egypt turned into yet another scar in Israel's withdrawal syndrome.

Against such a background another withdrawal was bound to be traumatic even without added complications—all the more so when the withdrawal from Lebanon was to

be carried out in the most inauspicious circumstances imaginable. The war that had preceded it had been a traumatic, costly, and divisive experience. Since termination of full-scale hostilities, the Israelis had increasingly found themselves fighting a costly war of attrition. The divisions that attended and, as has been seen, affected the conduct of the war had if anything grown deeper. As long as the focus of attention had been the negotiations in Kiryat Shemonah and Khaldeh, there was still some hope, which many Israelis were prone to share despite their better judgment, that once the talks were over a fresh start could be made. The Lebanon that Arik Sharon had tried to foster may not have been a sleeping beauty nor, indeed, a little red riding hood. The Syrian wolf may have emerged stronger than the fairy tales would have it. But, buttressed by the United States (which was cast in the role of a gentle giant), Israel might after all pull it off.

In the wake of the May crisis with Syria, however, it dawned on many Israelis that this was too good to be true. The May accord with Lebanon increasingly appeared to have been stillborn and the Jewish state was faced with something worse than an ordinary security dilemma: a forced game of cooperation with one's foes combined with an assertive policy vis-à-vis one's allies. Specifically, this meant that Israel was unable to muster the energy and resolve for an assertive policy vis-à-vis Syria, and had to cut its losses; this implied the need to effect a unilateral withdrawal. It could be construed as an accommodative posture, but in fact it amounted to a one-sided capitulation. The Syrians were riding the crest of their victory in the May crisis. An Israeli withdrawal would only add momentum to this victory. The only policy that could have conceivably undercut the Syrians' victorious momentum would have been a policy of firm resolve.

By the summer of 1983, however, Israel was psychologically running out of steam. Although the government understood very well that resolve would be more logical strategically, politically it could not heed its own best judgment. The implication was that disengagement and a gradually lowered profile would quite soon be inescapable. The problem was enormously complicated by the need to choose among three alternatives: withdrawal from the Beirut area and the troubled Shouf Mountains, withdrawal from the Beqa'a Valley where the IDF faced the Syrians, or withdrawal from both places simultaneously. A withdrawal from the Beirut area would extricate Israel from the maze of Lebanese politics and from the area where heavy casualties were suffered. On the other hand it would undercut the U.S. position and would most probably doom the May 17 accord, the most tangible consequence of the war so far. If this would be construed (justifiably) by Syria as a victory, it would at least leave Israel in an advantageous strategic position vis-à-vis the Syrian Army in the Beqa'a. But following the May crisis some Israelis argued that by staying, the IDF was inviting a war of attrition with Syria sooner or later. They made a strong case for disengagement from the Syrians in the Beqa'a while staying in the Beirut area in order not to undercut the U.S. position and the accord with Lebanon. Yet staying in Beirut and the Shouf while giving Syria an occasion to celebrate a victory on account of an Israeli disengagement in the Beqa'a made no sense. Indeed, the political stakes for Syria would remain as high as ever while its strategic position would be greatly improved. Thus, between staying in Beirut and the Shouf or staying in the Beqa'a, the latter alternative appeared far more logical.

But what about a complete withdrawal? Such a move would have been greatly welcomed by the Israeli left, including segments of the Labor party. For this reason alone such a move was totally unacceptable for a government led by Menachem Begin which had taken the country into this war in the first place. At the same time the temptation to overstate this factor should be resisted since strategic logic alone, without any political or

personal considerations, also advised strongly against a hasty unilateral pullout. Anyone with even the most rudimentary military training and certainly any military historian would readily confirm that a retreat is the single most exacting military exercise. A retreat boosts the morale of the adversary while undercutting that of the retreating party. Whereas casualties and other costs in an advance may make some sense, casualties suffered in the course of a retreat inevitably appear as unforgivable waste. Nobody wishes, as the saying goes, to be the last casualty in a war (not that being the first is a great privilege). But the choice of retreat has a shattering effect on morale, initiative, and therefore performance. In fact it creates nothing less than a built-in danger of collapse, even if the retreat is tactical and certainly if it is strategic. The art of retreat is thus the art of preventing a stampede. This is true at the squad level, and even more so in the case of a government ordering a retreat against the background of a complex political system.⁸⁸

Seen from this perspective a complete, abrupt, and unilateral Israeli withdrawal would make no sense even if ultimately there was no alternative and even if it was taken for granted that an orderly and phased-out withdrawal would entail heavy casualties. An abrupt, unilateral retreat could be assumed to lead to a dangerous vacuum in the areas to be vacated and subsequently to a return there of precisely those forces that Israel had attempted to drive away. This could not be proven, but it was plausible to assume that it would happen. As the notion of security dilemma implies, most leaders in similar circumstances would take such a worst case for granted. Thus, while political, ideological, dispositional, and personal considerations may have reinforced the Begin government's aversion to the idea of pulling out, they appear to have been secondary, even tertiary, rather than primary determinants of its behavior.

By a simple process of elimination, then, the most attractive (or rather the least unattractive) alternative was a pullout from Beirut and the Shouf Mountains while maintaining the line in the Beqa'a. But this does not in itself exhaust the complications that were involved in carrying such a decision into effect. First, there was a critical question not so much of the location of the new line but of the type of line on which to fall back. Specifically, the question involved three cardinal criteria: how to minimize casualties after the redeployment beyond the new line; how much money should be spent on building the new line; and how permanent, or rather temporary, the new line should be.

If the main motivation for redeployment was lowering the profile and reducing casualties, the new line should offer the best possible defense against both "low" and "high" level attacks, while at the same time leaving Israel in control of the least populated area. This was easier said than done. A line along the Awali River extending northward toward Jebel Barouq would be very effective against both a full-scale Syrian attack and low-level terrorist attacks by the PLO or other Lebanese organizations. Yet such a line would leave behind IDF positions a population of more than 900,000 Lebanese and Palestinians who could be a source of immeasurable problems. In other words, there was no escape from a choice between a good defensive line facing north and a tenable line in terms of maintaining a security belt in the south. An optimal line minimizing both risks did not exist.

The related problems of costs and permanence were no easier to solve. In fact on these issues the requisites of good strategy were basically incompatible with the requisites of sound economic policy. Ostensibly the intention was to stay in Lebanon for as short a time as possible. This implied the need for an inexpensive line. Yet from the strategic-political point of view a visibly temporary line would undercut the political posture that attempted to project a determination to stay there for as long as would be

required. The very decision to withdraw from Beirut and the Shouf Mountains, it could be reasoned, would in itself severely undercut Israel's bargaining posture vis-à-vis the Syrians. The only way to offset this loss somewhat would be through the unequivocal projection of a determination not to make yet another pullout shortly afterward without tangible political payoffs. Such a projection could be partly effected through political rhetoric. But this tactic has its severe limits, especially when the government operates in a political milieu in which a noisy and articulate opposition is strongly against staying, whatever the costs. Hence the construction of a formidable line would be beneficial not only from the point of view of enhancing Israel's bargaining position. It was therefore logical to opt for an expensive line, even if the ultimate intention was to pull out as soon as possible.

A second cluster of difficult choices beyond the decision to withdraw from Beirut and the Shouf concerned the impact of the U.S. and the Lebanese positions. The Syrian opposition to the May 17 accord had caused, at first inadvertently, a fundamental change in the perceived role of the multinational force (MNF). "Initially," said Major General Bernard E. Trainer, Director of Plans for the U.S. Marine Corps, on May 18, "our mission . . . was to be a diplomatic presence. That is not a military mission and we had difficulties trying to make military sense of what was asked of us so that the Marine on patrol, for example, knew the do's and don'ts and limits of his job." As soon as the Reagan administration made the decision to pursue a policy of propping up Amin Gemayel's regime, however, the Marines were increasingly asked to perform a new task, namely, to equip and train the Lebanese Army. Reagan set the tone for that policy when he stated, during the week the accord with Israel was signed, that the "MNF went there to help the new Government of Lebanon maintain order until it can organize its military and its police and assume control of its own borders and its own internal security." Assuming, somewhat naively, that what Lebanon lacked was an army equipped and trained in the use of modern weapons, the Americans set out to perform their new role with a great deal of enthusiasm. Yet the signing of the Israeli-Lebanese accord quickly made them aware that not only would no amount of training in technical matters solve the problem of internal cohesion of the Lebanese Army (which previously had only survived intact when it was kept in its barracks) but also that the Marines were becoming the shield of a regime that neither Syria, nor Druzes, Sunnies, Shi'ites, or even many Maronites were prepared to endorse. This change had rendered the Marines suddenly dependent on the IDF. If Israel were to withdraw from the Shouf, the vulnerable force of 1,200 Marines would at once become the mainstay of Amin Gemayel's regime, along with the Lebanese forces, but for internal Lebanese reasons even more than the latter.

The proud and gallant Marine General quoted above added the comment that it would take about a year to train some 10,000 Lebanese so that they could then move into southern Lebanon and thus facilitate an Israeli withdrawal. This task, he thought, "has hastened the change in attitude toward us among Lebanese and . . . among Arab people more broadly. They don't think of us as being in the backpockets of the Israelis anymore."⁸⁹ But what the misguided General failed to see even at this late stage was that in a matter of weeks the Marines would become targets for attacks by Arabs and suffer from great vulnerability precisely because the Israelis were no longer around.

The Israeli government at any rate was conscious of the political implications of a withdrawal from this point of view, if not initially, then from their contacts with the U.S. government throughout the three-month period in which an IDF withdrawal was debated. Indeed, they were in a difficult situation for both general and specific reasons. In general

Israel was placed in an embarrassing situation because of its own long-standing anxiety to impress on successive administrations in Washington that it was a strategic asset to the U.S. national interest. No Israeli government had ever emphasized this theme more than Begin's.⁹⁰ But how would this thesis appear if the IDF suddenly abandoned 1,200 beleaguered GIs to their fate?

This general issue was further underlined by specific considerations related to the Lebanese context. The deployment of the Marines in Beirut could be directly blamed on Israel, as could the fact that Amin Gemayel had become president of Lebanon. Hence there was a great deal of weight, in the Israeli consideration of a pullout, to the persistent American request that Israel not leave the U.S. government "holding the Lebanese baby." And the fiercer the conflict with Syria on account of the May 17 accord, the greater the weight of the American requests in Israel's decision making concerning even a limited withdrawal.

In the final analysis the Israelis were looking out for their own short-term interests, and the maximum they would do was to play for time and offer the U.S. government their advice. What they basically argued was that the misguided policy of leaving Syria out of the picture had been an American brainchild, and therefore the United States had better think in terms of either abandoning Gemayel or reinforcing the MNF to enable it to seize the areas Israel proposed to leave. This, the Israelis could add in order to score another debating point, would be only for another year or so, pending (as the Marine General promised) the reconstruction of the Lebanese Army.

Another related problem the Israeli government had to attend to within the framework of bracing for a redeployment concerned not the Americans but rather the Lebanese whom the former sought to protect. One of the greatest errors Israel had committed in the summer of 1982 was to allow the Lebanese Forces to send advance parties both to south Lebanon and to the Shouf. That was a logical follow-up to a policy that envisioned Bashir Gemayel as a would-be Lebanese Assad and the Phalange as the Lebanese equivalent of the Alawites. But the results were catastrophic. The Lebanese forces moved in under Israel's protective canopy and proceeded to forcibly eject Druzes in the Shouf and mainly Sunnies and Shi'ites in the south from homes and villages which, the Phalange argued, were rightfully theirs. The result was internecine fighting between the Phalange and the militias of the other denominations, especially in the Shouf.⁹¹

An important by-product of this was a great deal of agitation among Israel's own Druze community, primarily concentrated in the vicinity of Haifa and in the Galilee. These Israeli Druzes, unlike Israel's other minorities, have as a community accepted the Israeli conscription law since 1957 and have been serving in the IDF where a number of them have reached significant ranks and responsibilities. But since the late 1970s the Druze community in Israel has been torn by a great deal of division over the Jewish state. One cause for this relates directly to Sharon who, as minister of defense, had attempted to force the Druzes of the Golan to accept Israeli identification cards after the passing of the Golan annexation law in December 1981. This led to a great deal of strife which spilled over into the previously quite content Druze community in Israel.⁹²

The events in the Shouf from the point of view of Israel's Druzes appeared as an ill-advised and perhaps ill-intentioned attempt by the IDF to lay bare the Druzes of the Shouf to vicious Phalange attacks. Taking a cue from the Jewish antiwar movement in Israel, the Israeli Druzes staged demonstrations and petitions, and there were even a few cases of Israeli Druzes deserting from the IDF and volunteering for service with Walid Jumblatt's militias in the Shouf.⁹³ What made matters worse was the fact that Jumblatt,

owing to his stronghold's proximity to the Syrian-PLO lines in the Beqa'a and probably also to the fact that his own father had been assassinated by Syrian agents, often collaborated with both Syrians and the PLO. From his point of view this was logical, especially when he faced seemingly superior Phalange forces. But from the Israeli point of view this was, of course, quite unacceptable.

To Jumblatt's credit, from an Israeli point of view, one should add that he had never allowed the PLO to establish bases in his own territory and that as soon as the IDF drove into the Shouf he expressed a willingness to work with the Israelis. But under Sharon Israel was not at all interested in Jumblatt's support and trusted the Phalange blindly. The events of Sabra and Shatilla had made the Druzes really nervous. Fearing that this was the kind of treatment all minorities in Lebanon should expect from the Phalange, the Druzes, a fierce and organized warrior community (they made excellent soldiers both in Israel and in Syria), prepared for a showdown. Taking advantage of the disintegration of the Phalange after Bashir's death and (well informed through their relatives in Israel) increasingly acting on the assumption that the IDF would not remain in central Lebanon for long, they began to inch the Phalange step by step out of the Shouf. Their methods were vicious but effective. By the time of the May 1983 accord they were engaged in large-scale abductions, roadblocking, and wild shooting and killing of Maronites throughout the Shouf.⁹⁴

As long as Israel acted on the assumptions of the American policy, with its emphasis on Gemayel, the IDF had great difficulty dealing with the results of these Druze actions. There were pressures from Beirut and Junieh—that is, Maronistan—and there were counterpressures of Israeli Druzes. Israeli soldiers found themselves in the unenviable role of mediator between Maronites and Druzes. Some soldiers even lost their lives. Moreover, the Druzes were being helped by the Syrians because their actions (irrespective of their motives) served the Syrian interest of undermining the Israeli-U.S. backing of the Gemayels.

Once Israel began to plan a withdrawal, its perspective on the Druzes in the Shouf rapidly changed. For one thing, the very act of disengagement from Beirut implied a tacit disengagement from the policy of support for the Gemayel regime. Beyond this general change in disposition there were, however, some very good strategic reasons for changing the attitude toward the Druzes. The latter held an area in the Shouf whose strategic significance cannot be overrated. Fierce and independent as they are (often under the guise of obedience to a superior force), they would provide an excellent barrier against a PLO return. Under certain circumstances they might even be allowed to expand their domain in the direction of the Mediterranean in the west and Hasbaya and Rashaya (both of which are Druze towns) in the southernmost part of the Beqa'a. This was an idea Yigal Allon had toyed with in the 1970s. Allon died before the 1982 invasion, but something resembling his views on this matter reentered strategic discussion in Israel as a result of the inclination to disengage from Beirut and the Shouf.

If the Jumblattis (as the tribe is often referred to, in order to distinguish it from the Arslanis, its historic rivals) had been in control of the area along Israel's border with Lebanon, they would have in all probability prevented the PLO from ever approaching the border. The entire Israeli dilemma concerning Lebanon would then have never arisen. But the fact that they were concentrated on the Shouf was a source of yet another problem the Israelis had to consider before the redeployment of 1983. If Gemayel's regime were to become dependent solely on the United States while Israel shifted its allegiance to the Jumblattis at a time when the Druzes and the Maronites were engaged in a virtual war, the

IDF would find itself supporting an element that was tacitly in cahoots with the Syrians and which was fighting America's own protégé in the area from Damour to Beirut.

The problem, to be sure, was not beyond solution in the long run. Sooner or later the United States would withdraw from Lebanon and Israel's interest would be confined to a security zone astride the border. But in the short term the problem was acute. The clearer it became that Israel wished to withdraw, the more intense became the race between the Lebanese Forces and the Druze militia, and the prolonged U.S.-Israeli dialogue on redeployment thus in a sense aggravated the problem. Before the actual departure of the IDF from the Beirut and the Shouf, Amin Gemayel's forces were coming under severe attacks by the Druzes. And since U.S. policy was to shape up the Gemayel regime, the time when U.S. soldiers would have to offer direct support to the Lebanese Army and the Phalange in their struggle with the Druzes was fast approaching. Once the IDF took its leave, it was assumed that all hell would break loose as the Druzes would attempt to reverse the results of Sharon's decision to allow the Lebanese Forces into the Shouf. If the Phalange failed to hold its own, the Druzes might be tempted to take advantage of the situation in order to gain new ground at the expense of the Maronites, perhaps even ground that for decades had been under Maronite control. If it ever came to that, Israel's position would become uncomfortable not only vis-à-vis the Phalange, or the Israeli Druze community but also, and above all, vis-à-vis the United States.

Broadly speaking, such were the Israeli considerations during the period from May 17 to September 3, 1983. In operational terms, they boiled down to three overlapping balancing acts: (1) moving out of the Beirut/Shouf nexus to a line more or less along the Awali, Bisri, and Barouq rivers and constructing a stable line at the lowest possible cost; (2) obtaining U.S. support, or at least acquiescence, for such a move while wrestling with a variety of domestic oppositions; (3) shifting allegiances from Amin Gemayel to Walid Jumblatt without causing conflict with the United States or losing control over Gemayel's activities. Given the complexity of the problem, the question is not why it took three months to carry out the disengagement but how Israel succeeded in doing it in only three months.

The Decision to Disengage

In its overall modalities the Israeli decision to disengage (or "redeploy," as it was officially referred to) was not unlike the decision to go to war that was made exactly a year earlier. Once again it involved a protracted process of bargaining and consultation. Once again it was made in a piecemeal fashion. Once again it consisted of a search for an equilibrium between the interests and the advocacies of five principal political components: the Knesset, public opinion, the IDF, Begin's cabinet, and the United States. But, and here lies the main substantive difference between these two parallel processes, the roles played by these various corporate bodies were somewhat reversed. Whereas in the decision to launch the war, the inner core of the cabinet was trying to prevail upon the advocacy of inaction by the rest of the cabinet as well as by the other actors, in the decision to redeploy, the inner core of the cabinet preferred inaction but was gradually made to yield to the demands of the others to order a disengagement. At the same time the IDF was once again a relatively passive participant, while the United States turned out to be the most important advocate of inaction. Given this characteristic of the process, it would therefore seem most appropriate to begin the analysis with a brief

survey of the scene in the Knesset and move from there to a discussion of public opinion, the position of the IDF, the position of the cabinet, and finally to the role played by the United States.

The Knesset

The surface reflections of the mood of the Knesset as documented by the press present a rather coherent picture. Having launched a campaign to stop the war in midstream, the Labor party and other components of the parliamentary opposition maintained a consistent and rather sustained pressure on the government to have the IDF withdrawn from Lebanon as soon as technicalities would permit. The Sabra and Shatilla massacres and the publication of the final report of the Kahan Commission only added impetus to this position. It was therefore to be expected that the Labor party, Shinui, the Civil Rights Movement, and, of course, the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (the mainly Arab Communist party) would dismiss the May 17 agreement as either undesirable or unimplementable and vote against it. In reality, however, the leaderships of these parties, with the exception of the DFPE, faced a complicated problem. The accord was presented by the government as a framework facilitating the return home of the boys. Would Labor, which supported the withdrawal of the IDF all along, vote against an agreement opening the way to the fulfillment of its own overarching wishes? Facing such a dilemma, which had nothing to do with the political and strategic merits of the issue, a Labor caucus meeting on May 9 decided to reserve judgment. It was either going to abstain or to vote against the agreement, depending on its implementability rather than on any fundamental question of principle.⁹⁵

The vote on the agreement was taken on May 16, passing it by a majority of 57 to 6 with 45 abstentions, all of them Labor. Although they did not vote against the document, Labor speakers in the debate attacked it rather forcefully, especially Yossi Sarid of the Labor left who had vehemently criticized the war from the very beginning. "A bad war," he thundered in a deep voice and an uncommonly clear diction, "necessarily leads to a bad agreement. The agreement holds a lot of blood. IT DOES NOT HOLD WATER. It leaves us with the same problems we had before the war, only now they are sharper." Rabin, who delivered the keynote opposition speech, employed a more sober language but argued essentially in the same vein. The Labor party decided to abstain because it thought abstention the lesser evil, preferable to continuing the status quo without an agreement. But beyond this tactical predisposition Labor, in Rabin's presentation, was convinced that Israel could not coerce Lebanon into accepting an agreement. A formal treaty of normalization without a corresponding Lebanese ability to carry it into effect, he added, would be worthless. All in all the agreement merely underlined the Labor contention that the government's entire policy had been based on misconceptions.⁹⁶

The fact that the Labor party's abstention was tactical rather than a manifestation of its real position, namely, criticism of the agreement, was soon to be reflected in a growing acrimony in the Knesset. A most illuminating example was offered by the Knesset session of June 1, in the wake of the May crisis and merely four days before the first anniversary of the war. The session opened with a motion for the agenda by Labor member Michael Bar Zohar entitled "A year of the war in Lebanon." Bar Zohar evoked, according to an eyewitness, "confusion, commotion and resentment" when, before getting into his speech, he called on the House to rise and observe a moment of silence to honor the

memory of "the 492 Israeli men who have fallen in the war so far." Some members rose immediately but most looked around to see what the others were doing. Speaker Menachem Savidor, after a second's hesitation, said, "I request the members of the House to rise." Geulah Cohen of the right-wing *Tehiya* party called out, "Profiteers, profiteers, you'll cause us more victims." Another (Likud) member objected that there was "a limit to this trading in matters of life and death." But the significant thing was that "even some of Bar Zohar's Labor Alignment colleagues were discomfited by his action." They remained silent but a member of the Shinui party, which had also been opposed to the government all along, was outraged by Bar Zohar's gesture. "Never," he shouted emotionally, "have I been so ashamed as I just have been."⁹⁷

A day later the Labor party political bureau approved, for the first time, a detailed document calling on the government to withdraw from Lebanon within three months. The document called for a two-phased pullout. First, the IDF would pull back from the Shouf Mountains and the Beirut area. The MNF would be asked to take over the vacated areas and thus become a buffer between the IDF and the Syrian forces. The IDF would then regroup in the area designated by Israel (in the May 17 accord) as a security zone in south Lebanon. Until the IDF's final withdrawal Major Saad Haddad's forces would be entrusted with preventing attacks on the Galilee, and the MNF would be given the task of protecting the area's refugee camps. Once these arrangements were complete, the final stage of the Labor plan would come into effect: the IDF's return to Israel. Such a policy, its authors argued, would prevent war with Syria, ensure the speedy return of Israeli soldiers from Lebanon, and safeguard the Galilee. Presenting the paper to members of the press, Labor Chairman Shimon Peres said that his recent visit to Lebanon convinced him that neither the IDF nor any other foreign force would resolve the intercommunal strife in Lebanon. He ended his statement, however, with a somewhat pious hope that a "pullback by the IDF might induce the Lebanese to put their own house in order."⁹⁸

The Labor party's proposal was submitted for a vote in the Knesset within a week, but was defeated by a majority of 8 (55 to 47). During the debate Minister of Defense Arens argued against adoption of the Labor motion on the grounds that any area to be vacated by the IDF would instantly be occupied by the Syrians. Peres, speaking on behalf of Labor, retorted that Israel should therefore designate the boundaries of the areas to be vacated as red lines, meaning that their occupation by others would constitute a *casus belli*. But Peres did not make this explicit. Noticing this omission a Likud member asked him, "And if the Syrians move, would you go to war?" But, significantly, Peres would not answer this tricky question. If he were to answer affirmatively his thesis would appear fraught with risks, whereas if he answered negatively it would appear disingenuous. He therefore phrased his answer as a question: "And if the Syrians move today will there be war?" But Peres, an experienced parliamentary hand, sensed that this would not suffice. He therefore hastened to add that "experience [had] . . . shown that the Syrians respect red lines. If the U.S. stands up to those lines and the Lebanese Government stands up for its land, there will be no need for Israel to threaten war."⁹⁹

Peres's idea of a red-line policy as a means of facilitating an early withdrawal turned out not to be supported by all his Labor colleagues. After several repetitions of the idea in speeches across the country, he suddenly found himself attacked on this issue by no other than Rabin. In an article published in *Ha'Aretz* the former chief of staff and prime minister argued that the red-line idea was a "guaranteed formula for a full-scale military confrontation between Israel and Syria in Lebanon," and that Peres's ideas "proved he has lost his direction. . . . Compared with his proposals," concluded this prominent Labor

leader, "I prefer the Likud Government's position."¹⁰⁰ Amid widespread concern in the Labor party that the Peres-Rabin feud which had torn the party asunder in the past might be revived, Peres not only published a rebuttal, reminding Rabin of his own red-line policy in 1976, but also proceeded to put the idea to a vote in the party's Leadership Bureau. To Rabin's visible dismay, Peres won hands down. Out of fifty-one participants in the vote, forty-nine raised their hands in support of the party chairman's ideas, including the document that had been previously supported by the party's Political Bureau. There were two abstentions. Rabin was one of them. The Labor party, the mainstay of Israeli parliamentary opposition, was at last united behind a coherent program.¹⁰¹

One need not doubt the sincerity of Peres and his party colleagues to assume that they were influenced by political considerations that had nothing to do with the merit of the grave issue at hand. As a political party they were impelled by their very nature to act on every issue in a manner that would maximize their electoral potential. In the summer of 1983 they had been out of power for six years. Within a year or two they would face another election campaign. If they failed again in the struggle the majority of the party leadership would have to go. The urge, particularly in the case of party chairman Peres, who had never been a prime minister, to exploit the Likud's evident failure was virtually irresistible. Such a consideration must have affected their conduct indirectly, but they also had more direct reasons for acting as they did. As in the course of the war so in the course of the debate on withdrawal, their own constituency, or at least parts of it, was at the forefront of the public campaign for withdrawal. Labor could not ignore this. It had to ride the wave or be drowned by it.

Public Opinion

Having experienced a great upsurge in the course of the siege of Beirut, in the wake of the Sabra and Shatilla massacres, and following the publication of the Kahan Commission report, the whole panoply of spontaneous antiwar groups suffered a certain eclipse during the period from February to May 1983. The negotiations in Khaldeh and Kiryat Shemonah were widely expected to lead to tangible results facilitating a withdrawal. Hence these groups lacked a dramatic issue around which to focus their activities and rally support. Once the Lebanese-Israeli accords were signed, however, all these groups came back into their own.

In part this was the result of a widespread disappointment at the details of the accord. Another reason may have been the crisis with Syria which developed a few days after the signing ceremony and which was widely seen as a prelude to yet another bloody round of hostilities. What added fuel to the fire was Syria's adamant refusal to support the accord and, as a consequence, the fear that the IDF would be doomed to remain in Lebanon indefinitely. But the main reasons for the new upsurge of protests were the upheavals in the Shouf, the record number of IDF casualties in May (eight dead and more than twenty injured, double the total of the previous month) and, above all, the sad commemoration on June 5 of the war's first anniversary. The impact of this last factor cannot be precisely gauged, but it can be plausibly assumed to have been significant. Most of the organs of the Israeli media were inundated around this date with reports, interviews, and analyses that seemed to suggest beyond the shadow of a doubt that Sharon had led the country up the garden path.

The effect of this "proof" that the casualties had been in vain on a public that had

already suspected so and that could find no consolation in the new accord was predictably electrifying. "Tears turned into angry howls," reported the *Jerusalem Post* on a demonstration of Parents Against Silence, "for some 20 minutes outside the Knesset yesterday, when some 2,000 demonstrators—many of them parents of sons who are now serving or have died in Lebanon—ended a quiet protest rally with a spontaneous march toward the building. . . . The chanting of 'Bring the boys home' turned into 'Send Begin home' as the demonstrators cried out their sorrow and their anger over the continued Israeli presence in Lebanon." One woman, identifying herself only as "a mother of twins," told protestors: "We are not hysterical parents, defeatists or members of any political party. We are people who want to restore the army's good name. The war in Lebanon is not our war."¹⁰²

On the same day the Peace Now movement launched a six-day march from Rosh HaNikra on the Lebanon border to Tel Aviv, some 120 miles down the coastal highway. In a short ceremony before the march began, the 200 participants were told by Lieutenant Colonel (res.) Dov Irmiya, the author of a widely read and vehemently critical "War Diary,"¹⁰³ that the IDF in Lebanon could be compared to Napoleon's army, bogged down in Russia. He said that the "imaginary peace" gained by the north of the country had not been worth the casualties. Another speaker, Lieutenant Colonel (res.) Ran Hakim, said the march should have started in Beirut and called on the government to resign. When the march set out, the national leadership of Peace Now sent a telegram to the prime minister telling him that "Israel should not give the Syrians or the PLO the right to dictate when Israel should begin implementing its agreement with Lebanon." Rather, the Jewish state should implement the accord unilaterally, and then the IDF would be out of Lebanon "within a few weeks."¹⁰⁴

The Peace Now march did not attract as much public attention as its organizers had hoped, but it culminated in an impressive show of strength. An estimated 150,000 demonstrators participated in a rally in Tel Aviv's municipal square on the eve of the war's first anniversary. Participants in the rally carried placards such as "500 soldiers dead, thousands of wounded, hundreds of bereaved families—in the name of what?"; "Superfluous War—Superfluous Government"; "Out of the Mud in Lebanon"; "Return Israel to its Natural Size"; "The War with Its Head in Lebanon and Its Feet in the Green Line." Most of the marchers were young, many from left-wing youth movements and kibbutzim, as well as from cities and towns all over the country.¹⁰⁵

Meanwhile another ingenious publicity stunt was taking place opposite the prime minister's residence in Jerusalem. Initiated by reserve soldiers just back from Lebanon, it consisted of a round-the-clock vigil. The participants carried many banners, the most outstanding of which was a constantly updated count of the casualties. Thus, whenever Prime Minister Menachem Begin emerged from his home or returned to it he was faced by a small number of protestors chanting antiwar slogans and waving the most recent figure of the dead. The stunt attracted journalists and passersby, who either joined the demonstrators or engaged in arguments with them. The noise sometimes became so great that neighbors complained to the police and some members of Begin's cabinet began to consider ways of removing the vigil. But it was legal and therefore nothing could be done to stop it.¹⁰⁶

On June 25 the vigil was reinforced for a while by a great number of reserve paratroopers who were due to go into Lebanon within a few days. A spokesman for these paratroopers denied any political affiliation and stressed: "We came to use our basic rights as citizens to protest against [the government's] policies." While they had no

intention of refusing to serve in Lebanon, they wished to emphasize their objections to the policy in the name of which they were ordered to go there. The wife of one of them told a journalist: "With the rise in casualties, we can no longer remain silent. Ours is a spontaneous reaction. If, God forbid, I have to tell my two daughters that they have been orphaned, I have no explanation to give them. I can't justify the fact that their father may fall in vain on foreign soil and not in defense of his country."¹⁰⁷

Such protests received a great deal of press attention. Before long there were protests of the same kind, and by the same segment of the population, in the Galilee "finger," the area in which the suffering from the PLO had caused one of the main reasons for the war. An examination of the composition of the protest group that marched in Kiryat Shemonah on June 30, however, reveals very clearly the limited social and political basis of the entire protest movement. The demonstrators in Kiryat Shemonah, like the marchers from Rosh HaNikra, like the bulk of the participants in the rally in Tel Aviv municipal square, like most of the protesting paratroopers opposite Begin's home, all came from a social, cultural, ethnic, and therefore political background that had not supported Begin before the war and would not have supported him even if there had been no war. They were primarily Ashkenazim, with at least high-school education and a solid middle-class economic status. They had been doves all along, although many of them had served in crack combat units. They were articulate, friendly, optimistic, self-assured members of a *minority*.

Some of the reactions to their vigils and marches revealed this indirectly. In Kiryat Shemonah, where the population is primarily of Moroccan origin and is less educated, less articulate, less well traveled, and has a lower standard of living, the demonstration of the kibbutznik supporters of Peace Now was not at all popular. It met with some heckling, even abuse, as did all other antiwar demonstrations. Indeed, in one case, a Sephardi member of Knesset for the Likud, Me'ir Cohen-Avidov, originally from Syria, staged his own countervigil and hunger strike opposite the prime minister's office in order not to abdicate the "floor" to the Ashkenazi, Laborite, "peaceniks."¹⁰⁸

Judging by opinion polls Cohen-Avidov represented a larger group in society than did the antiwar demonstrators against whom he staged his one-man counterdemonstration. The demonstrators may have been a majority on the site, but he clearly represented a majority in the country. Table 2 underscores this impression as well as the stability over time of the support for Begin's government in the country. It shows very clearly that anywhere from 40 to 50 percent of the population—a very high percentage in Israel—continued to support Begin through thick and thin, that if he were to go to the country he would return to power without much difficulty, and that, surprisingly, despite the war in Lebanon and the deteriorating economic situation, even the public's perception of the government's efficacy did not undergo any major fluctuation.

Moreover, as Table 3 suggests, empathy for the government's policy in Lebanon was as widespread as support for the government in general. In October 1982, 44.7 percent of the respondents thought that Israel should not leave Lebanon unless and until Syria agreed to leave too. In the same poll 34.9 percent of the respondents felt that the government should not order the IDF to leave unless and until appropriate security arrangements were made. Thus, in all, 79.6 percent of the population seems to have been supportive to different degrees of the IDF's role in Lebanon.

By August 1983 this insistence that Israel should not quit unilaterally showed signs of declining. The figures revealed that only 38.9 and 29.3 percent of the respondents supported these two positions respectively. Yet a closer look reveals that at least 4 percent of those who changed their minds about Syrian withdrawal had moved to support the

Table 2. Public Rating of Begin's Governments, September 1982 to September 1983

| <i>Month</i> | <i>Begin's popularity</i> | <i>Likud's projected seats</i> | <i>Government's performance</i> |
|--------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| September | | | |
| poll 1 | 49.8 | | |
| poll 2 | | 64 | 56.6 |
| poll 3 | 42.9 | | |
| October | | | |
| poll 1 | | 55 | |
| poll 2 | 44.8 | 60 | 49.4 |
| poll 3 | | | 45.7 |
| November | 44.8 | | |
| December | 45.9 | 52 | |
| January | | 57 | 44.4 |
| February | 44.7 | 58 | |
| March | 45.6 | 58 | 41.9 |
| April | | | |
| May | | 54 | |
| June | | 47 | 39.3 |
| July | | 50 | |
| August | 42.1 | | |

Source: *Jerusalem Post*, Modi'in Ezrachi Research Institute Surveys.

notion that the IDF should not withdraw unless and until proper security arrangements had been made. Moreover, the total support for a dogged determination in Lebanon remained very high—67.9 percent—and the bulk of those who changed their minds had moved to the “undecided” category. Against this background it is not at all surprising that the poll results taken in August 1983 were not very different than those of October. The implications of this survey of public opinion seem clear enough. The Israeli public was deeply divided on the war issue, and the lines of division corresponded very closely to the Labor/Likud breakdown of the electorate. Begin's natural constituency lent him full support. His natural opposition raised a great deal of hue and cry.

The IDF

The removal of Sharon and Eitan and the advent of Arens and Levi had an immediate impact on the upper echelons of the IDF. Sharon had succeeded in generating around him an uncommon degree of autocratic centralization and mistrust, a palpably vexatious and byzantine climate, alienation, and insecurity. Arens, by contrast, was uniquely adept at restoring confidence and delegating authority as well as fostering an ethos of honesty, open discussion, hard work, and a matter-of-fact attitude to problems. He was collegial, attentive, respectful, entirely lacking in the common tendency of political appointees to play the system entrusted to them for personal political goals. Moreover, unlike Sharon, a formidable military leader in his own right, Arens was the epitome of a civilian manager of national security. He had no military record, therefore, rather than treating military professionals with disdain and condescension as Sharon often did, he listened attentively

Table 3. Israeli Attitude to Lebanon Pullout, October 1982 to August 1983

| Q: "In light of what you know now, are you for an IDF withdrawal from Lebanon?" | October 1982 | January 1983 | August 1983 |
|---|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| Yes, unconditionally. | 13.0 | 21.5 | 15.5 |
| Yes, but on condition of security arrangements. | 34.9 | 37.0 | 38.9 |
| Yes, but on condition that the Syrian army quits too. | 44.7 | 32.4 | 29.3 |
| Yes, on other conditions. | 2.2 | 1.9 | 2.9 |
| No, against any pullout. | 3.5 | 5.0 | — |
| Undecided. | 1.7 | 2.2 | 11.9 |

Source: *Jerusalem Post*, Modi'in Ezrachi Research Institute Surveys. Published on 15 October 1982, 30 January 1983, and 24 June 1983, respectively.

and tended to judge matters on merit. The IDF officer corps was thus allowed to come back into its own and made to feel worthy, capable, and influential.

Arens and Levi together constituted an excellent working team. Lieutenant General Moshe Levi ("Moshe VaHetzi"—Moshe and a half—as he is known because of his towering figure) had also risen in rank through the paratroopers, much like Sharon and Eitan. But whereas the latter were highly controversial figures both professionally and politically, Levi was an entirely uncontroversial professional soldier. There were doubts about his ability to lead the army in war as a commander in chief, but his professionalism, modesty, excellent ability to manage staff, and outstanding stamina were never in doubt. He may have not been the most imaginative chief of staff in the IDF's history—certainly far less impressive than predecessors such as Yadin, Dayan, Laskov, Rabin, Bar Lev, Elazar, and Gur or other candidates for the job, such as the dashing Dan Shomron and Ehud Barak. But his ability to restore a congenial working atmosphere and to manage the task of maintenance and disengagement was never challenged. Indeed, having had a rich experience in constructing the Jordan Valley line during 1968–69 and having been among the IDF's leading experts in antiterrorist activities, he seemed an excellent choice for the task that faced the IDF at the time of his appointment.¹⁰⁹

One of Arens's first moves after taking office was to dissolve the National Security Unit (Yehida LeBitahon Leumi, or YALAL), the planning staff that Sharon had set up in the ministry of defense under Major General Avraham ("Abrasha") Tamir. The latter has a reputation for imaginative strategic vision. Prior to the 1973 war he had been totally unknown, then, at a rather late stage in his career, he began to flourish. The first boost to his career was the result of a policy paper he had prepared before the 1973 war in which he more or less predicted when and in what form the war would take place. His broad strategic vision thus dramatically confirmed, he was promoted and given his own general staff division which specialized in all facets of planning, from the technical to the strategic-political. In this capacity he authored the IDF's first comprehensive statement of doctrine, an eight-volume study which, for obvious reasons, was never published.

But Tamir was not an academic in uniform. He was an ingenious and tough bureaucratic fighter. Having foreseen the peace process with Egypt, too, he recruited a great number of specialists and set out to prepare all the staff work for the negotiations that followed. Under ministers of defense Peres and Weizman he had thus turned himself into

an indispensable partner in the peace process. In Weizman's appreciation, Tamir, as Chief of Planning,

was the right man in the right place. . . . Tamir was one of the very few who had not been caught unprepared by Sadat's initiative. From the moment the wheels of peace began to roll he moved with them in the right rhythm. . . . Abrasha Tamir stormed peace the way a commander storms [an enemy] position. Tamir, one of the most brilliant strategic-military minds I have ever come across, was revealed in his full capacity even in a field which seemingly had nothing to do with war. Military men like him know best what is the price of war. He is one of the very few officers who has never been caught [by the camera] in a military pose, against the background of tanks with a binocular hanging on his chest.¹¹⁰

Tamir, however, was also a controversial figure. While still in uniform he was increasingly at odds with Chief of Staff Gur and most of the general staff, who resented his dual position in the IDF and the (civilian) ministry of defense. As an indispensable confidant of Minister of Defense Peres and his successor, Weizman, he was in a sense imposed by the civilians on the general staff which the latter resented for obvious reasons. When Sharon became minister of defense he seemingly solved the problem by moving "Abrasha" with his staff from the IDF into the ministry (in physical terms it meant only a move to the other end of the same corridor in the same building). But the move turned out to be a source of new tensions. Tamir remained in uniform. With Sharon's backing he not only enlarged his unit but also brought under its responsibility a great deal of policy making, and even command, functions which in a sense turned it into a second (mini) general staff. This was consonant with Sharon's perception of himself as a commander in chief which constitutionally he was not. It was also consonant with Sharon's planning of the war since much of the groundwork was done under Tamir's skillful management. Finally, this entire anomaly also had a clear personal background. Tamir and Sharon had been close friends since the early 1950s. Tamir had also been chief of staff of Sharon's armored division in the 1973 war. Thus, even if Tamir had not been resented by the IDF because of his anomalous position between the army and the ministry (and he definitely was) his association with Sharon would have made him as unpopular with the IDF as was Sharon.

Arens sent Tamir into retirement (which did not last very long: in the next elections he would be Weizman's campaign manager and then become Director General of the Prime Minister's office). The new minister of defense also dismantled the YALAL and proceeded to make only two important appointments of his own: director general of the ministry of defense and a spokesman. The fact that the YALAL was dismantled and Tamir forced to retire, coupled with the fact that Arens did not rock the boat with major personal changes did a great deal to clear the atmosphere. His own appointees were excellently chosen, at least from this intangible but critical point of view. The new Director General, Major General (ret.) Menachem Meron ("Mendi") had been an experienced commander in the armored corps, and as such knew the IDF inside out, as well as military attaché in Washington (under Arens), and as such had significant diplomatic experience. A sturdy, firm, but personable type, he would make an excellent manager of the ministry, adviser to the minister on military affairs, and colleague to IDF personnel whose pride, self-confidence, and self-respect had been so badly shaken during the Sharon phase.

These qualities of the new team in the apex of Israel's vast national security

machinery were unquestionably of the highest significance. The longer the IDF stayed in Lebanon, the greater the objective difference between the minister's perspective and that of the army. Although not directly involved in planning the war, Arens apparently supported its aims and steadfastly held on to the conviction that the military fruits of the campaign should not be wasted by a weak political posture. Whereas many of his colleagues in the cabinet were quick to press for a unilateral withdrawal, he was one of the last, along with Foreign Minister Shamir, to accept this advocacy.

This position put him in a contradictory position vis-à-vis his subordinates. The IDF was not built for long and complicated occupation duties and certainly not for the kind of "peacekeeping" duties that its presence in the Shouf forced upon it. It was loath to squander its budget on current security duties rather than spend it on exercises and training in preparation for a general war. It did not particularly like the idea of having to spend so much of its meager resources on the building, dismantling, and rebuilding of lines. It watched with concern as its soldiers became chance targets for marauders. Finally, while morale was not really deteriorating and may even have improved with the removal of the troublesome Sharon, IDF officers faced problems with the impact of domestic criticism of the government's policy toward the soldiers in the field. "It's the same people who are arguing [in Israel]," said Brigadier General Amnon Shahak (Lipkin) to a journalist, "who are coming here to the reserves. And in the regular army they are thinking. They are reading newspapers. They are listening to the radio. They are watching TV. . . . For sure," he ended in a mixture of hope and assurance, "we didn't come here to stay."¹¹¹

This spillover of the noisy criticism back at home to the IDF in Lebanon became worse as a result of the protracted debate over disengagement. The fact that it seemed increasingly certain that the IDF would pull out, that the question was "how soon" rather than "if," made the life of Israeli soldiers more difficult with every passing day. Earlier, when it had seemed that the IDF would stay for a prolonged period, the Lebanese tended to be hospitable or at least respectful. But the possibility of an Israeli retreat created a fear of later punishment for "collaboration" with the Israelis. The result was not only a severe decline in cooperation but, indeed, a corresponding increase in hit-and-run attacks against Israeli soldiers. For many Lebanese, this had simply become a method of absolving themselves of the charge of collaboration. For the Israelis, it made a tour of duty in Lebanon increasingly hazardous while the incentives for sacrifice were rapidly declining. The atmosphere this "withdrawal syndrome" created in the IDF was vividly depicted in the following monologue by an anonymous Israeli soldier on June 30, 1983:

Things are different from the last time . . . [we] were here. I don't care what the politicians call it, we're in a war of attrition. Last month was the worst in terms of IDF casualties since the siege ended in Beirut. So, it's not like last year. In fact we do no unnecessary movement on the roads. No vehicle ever travels by itself. You don't go into any shops to buy anything, not even a pack of cigarettes. Outside the base you keep your weapon cocked at all times, and with the safety off [*sic*]. You'll wear your flak jackets. You'll get leaves only once [in a month-long tour in Lebanon] and on the bus you'll keep your weapon pointing out the window every moment. . . . Everyone's talking of a pullback [the commander of these men summed up the talk] but until that becomes a reality our assignment is to hold the position here. Above all, that means watching out for your own welfare.¹¹²

Such a predisposition was new in the IDF. According to some accounts it had been typical of the army that emerged from the 1948 war. Moshe Dayan, using Arik Sharon's

Detachment 101 as an instrument, had changed this spirit in the course of the 1950s and injected into the IDF a singularly aggressive spirit (in terms of *modus operandi* rather than political intent).¹¹³ Suddenly, this frame of mind was settling in again as a result of the experience of the war, occupation duty, domestic division, and uncertainty about how long and for what purpose the IDF would remain in Lebanon. The IDF command took these issues very seriously, and Arens came under increasing pressure to do his utmost to lead the cabinet toward a clear resolution. Yet Arens, as has been said, was convinced that the IDF should stay on for as long as was necessary to force the Syrians to accept the notion of a reciprocal withdrawal of “foreign” forces.¹¹⁴ Thus it seems that only because of the correct, businesslike, and trusting atmosphere that Arens and his team succeeded in injecting into the post-Sharon IDF was he able to prevent this fundamental difference between his preferred policy and the IDF’s from surfacing. Under Sharon the tensions had sometimes led to a dangerous spirit of defiance on the part of a great number of officers.¹¹⁵ But “Misha,” as the new minister of defense was fondly referred to, was almost entirely successful in dealing with such problems effectively without pulling rank or resorting to disciplinary action. The only reported incident of friction between Arens and the military on this issue took place just a few days before the actual disengagement, that is, long after the decision in favor of it and the choice of the new line had been made. Arens reportedly toured the troops in order to explain a cabinet decision to postpone the withdrawal for a short while. He was “confronted by some terse responses by the men at the front.”¹¹⁶ In this single incident reflecting some vexation in the IDF, however, Arens was not at fault. The reason for the delay was not his own preference but rather the difficulties the Begin government faced in prevailing upon the United States.

The Cabinet

Arens’s threats, which Robert Bazil had conveyed to Amin Gemayel during the latter’s first visit to the United States as president of Lebanon in mid-October 1982,¹¹⁷ were not a gimmick. They truly represented Israel’s fallback position if, as many Israeli officials suspected, the American strategy were to lead to nought. Having such a fallback plan was in itself a sensible political action, but the fact that it was omnipresent in Israeli thinking turned out to be a liability. It uneasily corresponded to the proposals of the Labor opposition. It reinforced the doubts of many members of the cabinet. It offered a focus of controversy in the cabinet and, since in the Israeli setting cabinet disputes always leak to the press, it enveloped the Israeli position in a thicket of ambiguity after the signing of the May accord. The result was a clear projection of lack of resolve to back up the accord. In turn the Syrians could not but be further encouraged to be intransigent, and the prospects that the accord would be given a real chance very rapidly diminished.

Even before the signing of the accord, when Secretary of State Shultz was still in the Middle East, the proposed accord had been attacked in public not just by members of the parliamentary opposition but by at least two prominent members of the cabinet. One was Sharon who, still smarting from his ouster following the Kahan Commission report, was out to discredit Arens personally, the policy the cabinet pursued, and, of course, the United States. His colleagues saw this attitude in entirely personal terms. Sharon “is desperate,” explained one minister. “His head is on the block, and he knows that he has nothing to lose. When a man like Sharon is desperate we can expect anything.” Another minister went so far as to explain what was meant here by “anything”: “The message which Sharon is sending us is clear—support me or we all go. He has declared open war.”¹¹⁸

Facing this peculiar situation in which Sharon, the architect of the war, was reinforcing the criticism of the opposition, Begin was impaled on the horns of a dilemma. If he were to force Sharon out of the cabinet (which he avoided doing despite public pressure back in February), Sharon's desperation might increase. He would then have nothing to lose and would most certainly become more vicious. To argue with him in public would be both contrary to the prime minister's style and politically intolerable. Begin therefore said nothing but let the press know that he was "furious" and that there was a limit to his patience. "The old man is going to teach Sharon a lesson," one minister told the press. "He is going to finish Sharon off politically if he goes [on]. Begin is a wily old fox with decades of political experience. Sharon may be a gifted General but he is a Boy Scout in politics."¹¹⁹

Sharon must have taken these threats seriously, because he ultimately toned down his campaign against his colleagues. But meanwhile his conduct had had an adverse effect on the already shaky fortunes of the forthcoming agreement with Lebanon. It not only made the government look divided but also forced it to reply to some of Sharon's substantive criticism concerning the agreement. Curiously enough the person who had to do this was none other than Sharon's own intimate, Abrasha Tamir. Having been Sharon's chief adviser in the planning stage preceding the war, he had managed to keep afloat even after Arens's advent to the ministry of defense. Although the YALAL had been dismantled, Tamir was indispensable to the Israeli team that had negotiated the accord with the Lebanese. Thus, by a bizarre twist of political fortunes, Tamir became the main architect of the agreement that Sharon was now debunking. Never a public figure, always the typical *eminence grise*, he gave no press interviews. But he had to defend the accord in the Knesset Foreign Relations and Security Committee, some of whose members were bound to rush to the press as soon as the closed meeting was over (or even before it concluded). Thus, a day after the committee discussion on the agreement, May 11, the press was carrying stories about Tamir insisting that the proposed accord was "even better" than Sharon's own "breakthrough" agreement with Sammi Maroon.¹²⁰

This testimony may have helped the Begin government internally, but it was not very helpful externally. The Lebanese government had every reason to play down the agreement and present it as nothing more than a new version of the Armistice Agreements of 1949. The Syrians by contrast insisted—as did General Tamir and the Israeli government—that the agreement represented a new departure and therefore (from the Syrian point of view) was totally unacceptable. Tamir's testimony was bound to backfire. It would make the Begin government's domestic position stronger for a few days and would facilitate the endorsement of the agreement by a reluctant Knesset, but it would decrease the prospects that the Syrians would offer their blessing for the accord.

Sharon was not the only member of the cabinet to undermine the prospects of the accord. On May 7, ten days before the signing of the accord, it was depicted as quite unsatisfactory by Itzhak Moda'i, a leading member of the cabinet on behalf of the Liberal faction of the Likud. "Had I known," before the Khaldeh-Kiryat Shemonah negotiations, he said, that the Israeli demands of October 10, 1982,¹²¹ "would be whittled down to what we have now, and that we could have avoided the dreadful winter in Lebanon with all the casualties, I would have been ready to accept less." As the agreements stand, Moda'i emphasized, they are "not good."¹²²

Having been forcefully criticized by his colleagues for making such unhelpful remarks, Moda'i hastened to add that he thought the war as a whole had "resulted in definite achievements," that he had supported all the cabinet's decisions before and during the war,

and that he thought that ultimately the accord would be put into effect. It "should be approved despite its shortcomings. As I told my colleagues, if we fail to approve it, the current unstable situation in Lebanon might deteriorate further. If the Syrians refuse to accept . . . then we're covered with the U.S. I think they'll accept it eventually, though."¹²³

The extent to which Sharon, Moda'i, and, at the other end of the political spectrum, the Labor party, were conscious of the fact that what they were doing amounted to a self-fulfilling prophecy is impossible to judge. It seems quite plausible that such old political hands were fully conscious of the implications. One or two among them were probably callous enough to have been more worried about their political careers than about the effects of their actions. The rest should be given the benefit of the doubt. They may have honestly assumed that the accord would not lead anywhere and so logically pressed for a quick change in policy. Whatever the motives of the individual players in this complex game, it cannot be doubted that such exchanges did act as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Conscious of this notion, the government's chief spokesmen, Prime Minister Menachem Begin, Foreign Minister Itzhak Shamir, and Minister of Defense Moshe Arens, did their utmost to contain the tide of criticism and steer the draft accord through the Israeli political process toward implementation. Foreign Minister Shamir seems to have set the tone when he declared in a Knesset speech on May 11 that, while the accord did not constitute a "peace treaty," it could lead to "a new era of free and complete coexistence . . . relations of good neighborliness and mutual security." To facilitate such an era, three Israeli conditions would have to be met: the withdrawal of the PLO from Lebanon, the withdrawal of the Syrians from Lebanon, and the return of all Israeli prisoners of war in Syrian and/or PLO hands as well as bodies of some fallen Israeli soldiers. If these conditions were not met, Shamir threatened, the agreement would be viewed as suspended and Israel would act as it saw fit.¹²⁴

Shamir's statement was evidently an attempt to return to the initial Israeli position, which had implied a clear choice from the point of view of both Syria and Lebanon: either they facilitate an Israeli withdrawal on the basis of an agreement, or Israel would effect something amounting to a partition of Lebanon through the unilateral implementation of security arrangements in the south of the country, a vaguely defined area that could extend as far north as the Awali River.

But the foreign minister's implicit plea for discipline and greater sensitivity to the strategic implications of a noisy domestic debate had little impact. The Knesset was, indeed, so deeply divided that a few days before the signing of the agreement the government was so uncertain whether it could mobilize sufficient Knesset support that it was, reportedly, pondering the possibility of not submitting the accord to a legislative approval at all. Legally speaking the government was not obliged to have the agreement approved by the Knesset. Cabinet approval alone would be legally and constitutionally sufficient to put the agreement into effect. But the custom in the past had been that such documents were submitted for Knesset approval.¹²⁵ Moreover, a failure to see the agreement through the House would weaken its status even more than approval by an unimpressive majority. Hence Begin's government was assiduously trying to mobilize legislative support by indirectly threatening not to submit the document for approval. This might have little impact on the parliamentary opposition. But it might work with the cabinet's own recalcitrant members. Specifically, it was a form of pressure on Moda'i, Sharon, and the *Tehiya* faction—none of them would want to be in a position to be blamed for a Knesset rejection of the accord. It was therefore necessary from the government's

point of view to put the onus on them to promise their parliamentary support for the accord, which could be done only if the government avoided a clear decision not to submit the document to the Knesset at all.

Whether or not this was Begin's tactic on the issue of parliamentary approval when it came to the vote on May 16, the government failed to obtain the clear and supportive mandate it so badly needed. Labor decided to abstain. Sharon simply did not show up for the vote. Yuval Ne'eman, a *Tehiya* member of the cabinet, did not appear either. Two other *Tehiya* members, Geula Cohen and Hannan Porat, who were members of the cabinet's parliamentary base, voted against the agreement. The final count was thus very disappointing: 57 for the accord, 6 against, and 45 abstentions.¹²⁶

Such poor results tend to have a momentum of their own. They must have clearly indicated to the Syrians that they could not only reject the accord but also engage in brinkmanship as a means of hastening the collapse of the American-Israeli-Lebanese edifice. Thus on the same day that the Knesset took the vote, Syria began the campaign that led to the crisis in the following two weeks. In turn the Israeli opponents of the accord were merely reinforced in their convictions and stepped up their criticism, thus further undermining the Begin government's already weak position. Begin attempted to pull his own weight. On June 1 he issued a passionate call for unity "in these tense days." Replying to Labor's mention of the casualties, he reminded them in the form of a rhetorical question: "Wasn't there a war of attrition that lasted three years [in 1968-71]? Didn't our boys fall then? Did any of us [the then opposition Likud] gouge out eyes?"¹²⁷

That the Labor opposition would not be mollified by such appeals to their sense of responsibility could have been guessed. But, while the prime minister's ultimate message was that Israel should doggedly face the Syrians because this was perhaps the only way of inducing Syria to accept the accord, his own colleagues and subordinates were going around the country making speeches with almost the opposite message. Speaking at a conference at Tel Aviv University a day after the Knesset speech of the prime minister, Minister of Communications Zippori argued that "Lebanon is not a state and I doubt that it will ever be a state" and that in his opinion there was "nothing to induce . . . [the Syrians] to come to an agreement with Israel."¹²⁸ Five days later, during a radio interview, chief of military intelligence Major General Ehud Barak made much the same point. The Syrians in his view "act as if they feel they have room for maneuver and ample time. [They are] liable to take further actions if their current efforts to frustrate the Israeli-Lebanese agreement do not bear fruits."¹²⁹

Barak was speaking in an interpretative and professional capacity and not attempting to dip into the ongoing political struggle concerning the agreement. Even so, his publicly expressed views were bound to add impetus to Israel's weakening position simply by providing domestic opponents with reliable ammunition for their arguments. Indeed, his interview coincided with Labor's endorsement of the document calling for a two-phased withdrawal, and it aired a day before a Labor-initiated debate in the Knesset on the unilateral pullout idea. Sensitive to this momentum Minister of Defense Arens, speaking on behalf of the government, made yet another plea for responsibility. "Doesn't the Knesset agree," he asked, "that Israel should support the Lebanese Government's efforts to get the Syrian and the PLO forces to leave? Isn't it clear that an announcement that we are going to withdraw unilaterally will reduce the prospect that the Syrian and PLO forces will leave? Doesn't the House know that Damascus is paying close attention to what is being said in the Knesset on Peres' motion?" Even if the opponents of the agreement are

not convinced by any of these arguments, the minister of defense poignantly concluded, "doesn't the House think it important that Israel coordinate any change in the deployment of the IDF in Lebanon with the Lebanese Government and the USA?"¹³⁰

Arens typically avoided party political polemics, let alone personal recrimination. What he presented made strategic sense. Yet his pleas, like those of his colleagues before him, failed to produce any real result. The reason was not deliberate malice or stupidity. Rather it was the consequence of a basic incompatibility at this sensitive juncture between domestic politics and externally directed strategy. A sound national strategy requires unity of purpose, discretion, and flexibility—precisely what Arens advocated. Domestic political processes have, however, their own, often contradictory logic. Labor was genuinely convinced that Likud's policy was leading the country into an abyss. This conviction was reinforced by an inevitable realization that Likud failure increased the probability of a Labor success. Impelled by this dual logic, Labor had already gone too far in criticizing the government to be able to heed Arens's request. Its public position acted as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Labor realized that. But wasn't the most logical operational conclusion that it should increase the pressure in order to enhance the outcome its own action had helped make inevitable? Arens was logical. But so was most of the opposition. At the same time they were working at cross purposes.

To add to the confusion the press began to quote unidentified sources in government announcing a virtual ultimatum to Syria, an idea that Labor party chairman Peres had previously proposed and Prime Minister Begin had rejected outright. The government, according to this source, had so far "taken no decision on a unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon." But it "has made it clear to Lebanon and the United States that it cannot wait indefinitely for Syria to clarify its intentions." Moreover, "if within the next three weeks there is no significant change in the Syrian attitude" Israel "will have to reconsider its position in Lebanon."¹³¹

The contradiction between the statement by the minister of defense in the Knesset on June 8 and this leak from government sources three days later is so glaring that it is difficult to explain except in one way: the mounting domestic opposition to a prolonged stay in the Shouf and Beirut began to have its impact on the cabinet members who had been torn by doubts about the policy all along. Having failed to change Begin's view or that of Arens or Shamir, these wavering members inspired the leak as a means of forcing the cabinet's hand. This speculation is reinforced by the announcement, twenty-four hours after the "ultimatum," of a government decision to begin a study of the question of "redeployment." The minister of defense did not propose such a study to the government. In fact he urged the cabinet once again to realize that it "must stand firm in the face of foreign pressures as well as domestic pressure" if it wished "to attain its aims in Lebanon." Arens also reassured the cabinet that he had just toured the IDF units in Lebanon and found that morale was high. But all these arguments led nowhere. Five ministers insisted that the minister of defense submit to the Cabinet Security Affairs Committee proposals for redeployment with the utmost dispatch. The five were, it seems, an odd combination: Zevulun Hammer, Minister of Education and a leading skeptic about the whole war; Minister of Communications Mordechai Zippori, another leading opponent of the war; Eliezer Shostak, minister of health, whose previous views on the topic had never been known to the general public; Yuval Ne'eman, the ultra-hawkish professor of physics who acted as minister of science and technology and had voted against the May 17 accord; and, to defy any coherence to this assortment, none other than minister-without-portfolio Ariel Sharon.¹³²

This formidable pressure on the minister of defense (and indirectly on the prime minister and the minister of foreign affairs, who also felt that Israel should hold firm) was partly motivated by genuine concern. The previous week the IDF had suffered its five hundredth casualty, and public emotion on the issue, at least among the attentive and articulate public, was running high, not the least as a result of the evocative impact of the number 500 in itself. But the five ministers could not have overlooked a certain advantage to their respective political positions as a result of the public knowledge that they were pressing for a policy reappraisal.

That this was on the mind of at least one, and possibly more, of them is suggested by the simple fact that their demand for a reappraisal became public once again as a result of a leak to the press. At the close of the meeting the cabinet secretary, Dan Meridor, read to the press a statement containing no hint of any demand for a reappraisal. Indeed, it emphasized once again the need for resolve. The government, said Meridor, is concerned about the rising casualties. "We want to do everything we can to see that there are no casualties. . . . I would not like to put . . . [the issue of casualties] on a scale; it's very heavy for a small country where everybody knows everybody. But it is clear that it is not the only consideration." Hence, he concluded, "Israel will not bring home its troops until it has made certain that its northern towns and villages can be kept safe from PLO attacks." Although Meridor's statement to the press was backed up on the same day by another statement in the same vein by Minister of Defense Arens, it was severely undercut by the leak of the five ministers' demand for a reappraisal. If this was not enough, yet another prominent pillar of the Likud, Chairman of the Knesset Foreign Relations and Security Committee Eliyahu Ben-Elisar, hastened to volunteer his view that "if this situation lasts too long we will have to redeploy our troops in Lebanon, and we'll have to do so with the agreement of the United States and Lebanon—or, if worse comes to worst, even without their agreement."¹³³

Meanwhile, the Syrians were avidly following this evidence of Israeli lack of resolve. Within three days of this wave of demands in Israel for a reappraisal, the Syrian newspaper *al Thawra* issued a call on the Lebanese "national resistance movement" to step up its activities against Israel. The "movement must not be satisfied with dealing painful blows to the Israeli occupiers but must also expand the circle of its operations to reach those collaborating with Israel at all levels."¹³⁴ That this call sent ripples through the ranks of the Lebanese government can be taken for granted, since it implicitly encouraged terrorism against Lebanon too. But the message to Israel was also unambiguous: the Israeli public reacts strongly to IDF casualties and presses the government to withdraw; therefore the pressure on Israel in Lebanon should be stepped up. But since a direct military threat by Syria—as the crisis two weeks earlier had shown—would meet a determined Israel, the indirect approach based on surrogates inside Lebanon was a cheap and tremendously effective method.

The inner circle of ministers in the Israeli cabinet who advocated a dogged resolve in order to preserve whatever positive results had been obtained by the war was thus rapidly cornered. The Syrians were increasing pressure as a means of stimulating further domestic unrest in Israel. As long as it was only Peace Now and the Labor party, Begin, Shamir, and Arens did not have to be particularly perturbed. But when the cabinet's own hawks as well as an outstanding disciple of Begin such as former ambassador to Egypt Ben-Elisar added their weight to the side of those who demanded a unilateral pullout, such a decision began to appear unavoidable.

The strain under which the inner circle operated in these days showed very clearly

during a stormy debate in the Knesset Foreign Relations and Security Committee on June 14. Speaking for the government was Foreign Minister Shamir, one of the toughest and most composed individuals in Israeli politics. Yet on this occasion he seems to have lost his legendary self-composure. The "smears hurled by the Alignment [Labor] against the Government are weakening Israel's ability to stand firm against pressure," he lashed out at the Labor party members in this important committee. "Your mudslinging is intolerable. We know what they are saying in Syria and the other Arab states about your criticism. They believe that Israel will soon crumble and collapse. They believe that we will soon evacuate our troops from Lebanon without waiting for an agreement to be negotiated. So they ask themselves whether there is any point in discussing an agreement." What could Labor members answer to such rational charges? They were sufficiently experienced in affairs of state to realize that, whatever the circumstances in which Israel had begun the war, in mid-June 1983 Shamir's charges were justified. The issue was not ideological, since the government too had time and again clarified the absence of any intention to stay in Lebanon one more day than would be absolutely necessary. Nor was the government, in its present composition, acting irresponsibly. Clearly, the Labor members had only one effective response: reminding Shamir that his own cabinet colleagues were engaged in the same kind of criticism. "Three of your coalition ministers," retorted a leading Labor member of the committee, "demanded a unilateral withdrawal in Lebanon, not just the Alignment. Social Affairs Minister Aharon Uzan, and Ministers Without Portfolio Ariel Sharon and Mordechai Ben-Porat have all gone on record as demanding the same withdrawal. Are you suggesting that the Syrians are not listening to those ministers' statements?"¹³⁵

This heated exchange revealed not only that the government, or more accurately its security policy leaders, was in difficult straits but also that no less than seven members of the cabinet had swung over to support for a unilateral withdrawal. Within less than one month the policy of firm resolve in favor of the May 17 agreement was unraveling. This was not primarily due to public opinion in general or to the pressure of the Labor opposition in particular. The main reason for the change, the same main reason for the disastrous slowdown of the military campaign during June 1982, was division within the cabinet itself. And in the same way that Begin and Sharon had to yield in the summer of 1982, so did Arens, Begin, and Shamir have to yield again in the summer of 1983.

The first sign that their determination was weakening was a declaration by Arens on June 16, two days after the Knesset exchange with Shamir, that he favored a redeployment in Lebanon. Arens, however, added a qualification: the Lebanese and U.S. governments would have to agree.¹³⁶ Two weeks later this statement was reaffirmed without any reservations by Prime Minister Begin himself. On June 28 he went in person to brief the Knesset Foreign Relations and Security Committee on this critical change in the government's policy. Begin told the committee that the IDF had already studied the question of withdrawal and that the conclusion was that the withdrawal should not be "very deep," so as not to affect the security of the Galilee. The main reason for the change in policy, he added, was that the government had become more or less convinced that Syria would not withdraw.¹³⁷

Within two more weeks the IDF completed its own policy review. Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Moshe Levi was authorized to appear in a prime-time television program in which he announced that the "redployment" would be to a line on the Awali River. He was at pains to explain that the move was not "unilateral." It would be coordinated with the Lebanese and U.S. governments and the former would assume

control over the whole of the territory to be evacuated by the IDF. In this, Levi added, the Lebanese would be assisted by the multinational force (MNF). Thus, at least in theory, the Israeli redeployment was going to take place soon and within the framework of the May 17 agreement.¹³⁸ As events in the next six weeks showed very clearly, this was more of a pious hope than a reliable statement of fact. General Levi may have wished it to happen in such an orderly manner, and so may have his superiors in Begin's government. But, by an Israeli decision, the feasibility of this plan was made at least as dependent on the Lebanese and the Americans as it was on the Israelis themselves.

The United States

In Washington Israel's drift toward a decision to disengage was watched with grave concern. Initially, it will be recalled, the United States committed the Marines to Beirut as a means of ensuring a speedy Israeli withdrawal. But in the eight or nine months that had passed since the massacres at Sabra and Shatilla, American policy had almost reversed. Having given Amin Gemayel assurances that this government would be protected from Syria after the signing of the May accord, the United States developed a policy in Lebanon that was unwittingly dependent on the continued presence of the IDF in the vicinity of Beirut. If the IDF were to withdraw from the Lebanese capital and the Shouf a struggle between the Gemayel government and its Lebanese foes, especially the Druzes of the Shouf, would become inevitable as both sides would attempt to fill the vacuum the Israeli departure would create. Formally speaking the Druzes were insurgents whereas Amin Gemayel was the legitimate authority of Lebanon as a corporate, legal, and political entity. But in reality the struggle would be between two rival ethnic groups. The Marines would then become the protectors of the Gemayel regime against the Druzes, which would be the exact opposite of their original role as peacekeepers. Moreover, Walid Jumblatt would be supported by Syria. In turn the Marines would be entrusted with the unpleasant role of supporting Gemayel in a direct struggle with Jumblatt and an indirect struggle with Syria. In theory there was no question that the 1,200 Marines were stronger than the Syrian Army. The Marines represented the mightiest military, political, and economic power in the world, whereas Syria is no more than an emerging regional power. But in practice Syria had local supremacy. Operating on the rim of its own homeland, enjoying conveniently short lines of supply, thoroughly familiar with the terrain, the weather, the local customs and language, and having had not only an impressive numerical superiority on the spot but also a tremendous combat experience, the Syrians and the Druzes were overwhelmingly more capable of dealing with the Marines than vice versa. Moreover, Syria was backed by the Soviets who could ill afford not to underwrite the *Ba'ath* Republic's security against the United States. The Soviets were clearly not very keen to engage in warfare and had been very cautious not to become involved in any direct confrontation with Israel. But if the Syrians were in trouble with the Soviets' own main antagonist, the United States, the Soviets would simply not be able to step aside and leave the Syrians to their own devices. Finally, the Marines had not been stationed in Lebanon on a combat mission. For such a task the President needed congressional approval which he would probably not succeed in obtaining even if he were seething with determination to engage GIs in battle—which he most definitely was not. Ipso facto the president was also unable to commit a larger contingent to the Beirut mission. In a word, if Gemayel was dependent on the United States, the latter had become dependent on the protective backing of the Israelis. If the IDF were to withdraw, the

United States would be unable to make good on its promises to Gemayel. Sooner or later the Marines would have to withdraw and the credibility of the United States in the Middle East and elsewhere would suffer greatly.

To avoid such a scenario the United States needed time. In time, it was solemnly hoped in Washington, the Syrians would give their consent to the May 17 accord. Meanwhile Amin Gemayel's shaky regime would be consolidated and his army would become capable of taking over the areas that Israel was to vacate. It was such a hope that made Secretary of State Shultz give Gemayel a promise of U.S. protection. But Shultz was acting on the assumption—which Israeli leaders did not try too hard to dispel—that the IDF would remain in place. Accordingly, in June 1983 the only realistic course of action for the United States to follow was to try in any possible way—requests, threats, tactical gimmickry, and renewed diplomatic activity—to delay the Israeli withdrawal. This, in a nutshell, was the essence of U.S.-Israeli contacts from the moment of Begin's decision to "redeploy" (around June 14–15) to the day when the redeployment was carried into effect (September 3–4).

The opening move in the exchange was an unpublicized visit to Washington of David Kimche, formerly among the chief architects of Israel's relations with the Phalange (on behalf of the Mossad) and now Director General of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. According to all available accounts Kimche had never really changed his mind about the whole Lebanese experience. He had believed beforehand and has continued to believe ever since that the Israeli-Lebanese escapade could, perhaps even should, have worked. Indeed, shortly after this visit to Washington he gave a number of interviews to leading American dailies in which he exuded confidence and an enduring faith in the Israeli-Lebanese bond.¹³⁹ Yet on this mission to Washington in mid-June, Kimche's orders were evidently to present quite a different picture to his American interlocutors. "The usually unflappable Kimche," according to one source, "appeared shaken over the deteriorating Israeli military position in the Chouf [*sic*] mountains and the almost daily incidents resulting in Israeli casualties." Was Kimche really personally "shaken"? There is no doubt that like any other Israeli he was pained by the news about Israeli casualties, but on this occasion he may have been playacting as a means of delivering a message to his American hosts that Israel was planning to effect a disengagement. Voicing personal pain over the casualties was merely a dramatic method with which to impress on the United States that Israel saw no alternative but to withdraw. If that was the purpose Kimche was highly successful. "I think he panicked Shultz," said one official in Washington about Kimche's visit. "We are not used to being tougher than the Israelis."¹⁴⁰

Whether Shultz, an unusually composed individual, really panicked is immaterial. But there is little doubt that the U.S. government was immediately prompted into action. While Kimche was still in Washington the president phoned the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith at its seventieth anniversary meeting and, as though it were a casual matter, addressed himself to the Israeli plan to redeploy. He was pleased, the president said, with secretary of state Shultz's efforts to work out an Israeli-Lebanese peace. "This bold initiative by Israel and Lebanon is one more step towards a more stable Mideast. Our ultimate goal remains peace between Israel and all her Arab neighbors. Only through peace can Israel achieve real security. But Israel cannot make peace alone. Other Arab states must formally recognize that Israel does exist and that she has a right to exist. We will continue diplomatic efforts to seek a withdrawal from Lebanon of all foreign forces, Syrian and PLO as well as Israeli."¹⁴¹ The last sentence in particular invoked a formula whose author had been Israel and not the United States. Its origins can be traced back to

the fall of 1982 when the United States was still vigorously pursuing the Reagan initiative and the Philip Habib formula. In an obvious attempt to thwart the U.S. effort to get the IDF out of the Beirut area and the Beqa'a Valley, the Israeli government had insisted on tying together the withdrawal of the IDF and the withdrawal of the Syrians and the PLO, the Israeli assumption being of course that Syria was in no hurry to make a departure. Now, in the summer of 1983, when Israel was anxious to withdraw and the United States was anxious to avoid withdrawal, the Israelis' own formula was being ingeniously turned against them by the president of the United States.

The B'nai Brith leader with whom the president spoke on the telephone was quick to detect the catch in Reagan's statement. He therefore hastened to inquire how the president assessed the chances of Syria's withdrawal. Reagan's answer exuded unbounded optimism: "I can't believe," he answered, that "at this point, having crossed one hurdle prior to real peace negotiations, that it is going to end here. We've been working with the other Arab states. And almost to the last one, they are with us in wanting a solution to the problem—wanting Syria out of Lebanon."¹⁴²

That the president was expressing more of a solemn hope than a realistic evaluation of the situation was underlined a few days later when his Secretary of State, George Shultz, told a news conference in Washington that the Syrians had once again refused to admit Ambassador Habib whom the administration wished to send to Damascus for further talks. "We will find other people we hope are acceptable to them," Shultz added stoically. Yet the Syrians seemed in no mood to accept any American envoy or, certainly, to engage in serious discussion concerning the May 17 accord. On June 23, just a day or two after Shultz's statement, Hafez al Assad, Syria's president, offered his unequivocal reply to the secretary's humble plea. "Those predicting a Syrian consent to get out of Lebanon," he said to a Hungarian broadcast whose transcript was widely publicized by SANA, the official Syrian Press Agency, "must be thinking of cancelling . . . [the May 17] agreement, at least we hope so."¹⁴³

With the gates of Damascus thus closed to any fresh negotiations with the United States on this issue, the only other policy the administration could offer was to send Philip Habib once again to a tour of Arab capitals in the vain hope that he might succeed in building up effective Arab pressure on Damascus. It seems, however, that this new move was also designed to ward off Israel's urgent request for approval of an IDF withdrawal. If Habib succeeded in building up Arab pressure on Syria, all the better; if, however, he were to fail in the mission, he could at least turn to Israel and say that the United States was urgently trying to do something about this. The structure of Habib's itinerary suggests that this too was on his mind. He started the tour in Jerusalem, where he met several officials and had a long talk with Prime Minister Begin, who told him once again what he already knew. Israel could not tolerate the heavy toll that the prolonged stay in the Shouf and the Beirut areas was taking. The IDF was planning to start a phased process of redeployment. Technically the process could start any day. But Begin was prepared to defer the beginning of the redeployment until after his visit to Washington, which had been planned for around July 20. After the visit to Washington, however, the United States must be prepared to shoulder the responsibility for Gemayel and the dealings with Syria by itself or at least without IDF presence in the vicinity of Beirut. All this was conveyed to Habib in a friendly and correct manner. Nevertheless, the American envoy was left with no doubt whatsoever about the firmness of the Israeli resolve to effect the unilateral withdrawal.

In his reply Habib was very guarded. He said he fully understood that Israel must act

in accordance with its own interest as it perceived it. He expressed no outright opposition to the Israeli decision, but, according to Israeli sources,

there was plainly no great enthusiasm. The envoy was particularly unenthusiastic over the idea [which Begin presumably mentioned as a solution to the American problem as a result of Israeli withdrawal] of the Reagan Administration asking Congress to increase the U.S. Marines detachment in the Multinational Force and to send the American troops into areas vacated by the IDF. . . . [Habib] was markedly more pessimistic than in the past about the prospect of Syria eventually cooperating in an overall withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon. He spoke of the time factor as an element militating against Syrian moderation.¹⁴⁴

Habib was evidently in an embarrassing situation vis-à-vis his Israeli hosts. They had been the ones to tell him as early as June of the previous year what he was now telling them. He was the one to have confidently advocated a different approach which was now, by his own admission, in total ruin. Yet, as an official American envoy, it was his job to press the Israelis to defer their own decision to start the redeployment. He was evidently not blamed directly. But he must have realized that the Israelis were seething with rage toward him personally, blaming him, as they must have indirectly, for undercutting the results of a war that had been waged by them and for which their own people were paying a heavy price in blood.

If that was the reason for Habib's atypically low-keyed posture during this visit to Israel, the ambassador must have been very grateful to Henry Kissinger who, on a visit to Israel on the same day, said a number of things that made Habib's blunders appear logical again. Kissinger told reporters that in the past (that is, during his tenure as secretary of state and national security adviser), the Syrians had put forward "strong positions" only to moderate them in subsequent negotiations. His own past experience with Assad, Kissinger said, might no longer be relevant. But he "would not exclude" the possibility of a softening of the Syrian stance once again. Echoing what Habib told Begin on the same day, however, Kissinger too was pessimistic about the possibility of the president's obtaining congressional support for an expansion of the size and role of the multinational force in Beirut.¹⁴⁵

Having talked to the Israelis, Habib set out for a tour in a number of Arab capitals from which he was due to return to Israel in four days. Meanwhile, however, the administration began what seemed at the time, and does so even more in retrospect, as a grand decoy tactic. All of a sudden there was a lot of talk in Washington about one of two partly overlapping "new ideas." Either Israel would have to produce a clear timetable for its phased withdrawal or, indeed, agree to offer a "date certain" (sic) assurance of a unilateral total withdrawal from Lebanese territory. Ostensibly the idea was logical. In the first place, the Lebanese government told the U.S. government that if Israel were to effect a partial withdrawal unilaterally, it would amount to the effective partition of Lebanon. Therefore, the Gemayel government threatened, it would retaliate by abrogating the May 17 accord. Secondly, Secretary of State Shultz was leaving for a tour of South Asia and was ready to proceed from there to Damascus if the Syrians would have him. But for the Syrians to receive Shultz, they needed an inducement in the form of a new idea. Hence, if Israel were to announce a timetable for a phased-out redeployment or, alternatively, a "date certain" for complete withdrawal, there might be enough in it for the Syrians and the secretary could then proceed to Damascus to work out the details of how Syria would reciprocate by withdrawing its troops.

But, as the secretary of state and the president were advised by their aides that there was no likelihood whatsoever of Israel accepting either idea, they must have had an additional reason for allowing these strange thoughts to be freely circulated in the Washington press. What that could be is impossible to say with any certainty. The most likely explanation seems to be that announcing such plans would at the same time offer an inducement for the Syrians to engage in a dialogue and a sop to the (understandably) anxious Lebanese. Israel might reject it flatly. Yet if the Syrians were to engage in a dialogue, the Israeli withdrawal would be presumably postponed pending the conclusion of the new round of diplomacy.¹⁴⁶

Evidently this plan was too clever for its own good. It elicited from Syria a reiteration of the same adamant position, namely, that, as Syrian Minister of Defense Mustafa Tlass told a German newspaper and Syrian Foreign Minister Khaddam told an American newspaper, Syria felt strong enough to resist any Israeli pressures; that it did not fear another military confrontation; that the Soviets were behind Syria without flinching; and that Syria's precondition to any talks concerning Lebanon was a total Israeli withdrawal and the abrogation of the May 17 accord.¹⁴⁷ At the same time, while failing to bring any change in the Syrian position, except for an almost rude and condescending consent to see Shultz if he wished to stop in Damascus for talks, this latest American gimmick caused a great deal of unnecessary consternation in Israel. It appeared to have been disingenuously close to some of the ideas propounded by the Labor opposition which, the Begin government felt, merely served to undermine further Israel's shrinking bargaining power.¹⁴⁸

The incident also damaged the greatly improved atmosphere in U.S.-Israeli relations since Sharon's replacement by Arens. Forever suspicious of pending American pressures, the Israeli cabinet hastened to take a number of moves with a view to foreclosing any possibility of further delay in the planned redeployment. In the first place, Israeli officials began to work actively (and report it widely) on the possibility of an expansion of the role of the multinational force to the areas which the IDF planned to vacate. The French were receptive and had good relations with many Lebanese, and therefore the idea sounded as if it were worth exploring.¹⁴⁹ Second, the Israeli government began to air the idea of moving UNIFIL (the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon) from the south of Lebanon, where it had no role to play under Israeli occupation, farther north into an area lying between Israeli and Syrian forces in the Beqa'a Valley. Requiring UN approval, such an idea would be more difficult to put into effect than the expansion of the French role in the MNF. If it were accepted by Syria, however, it could facilitate a UN role in the Beqa'a Valley comparable to UNDOF's role in the Golan since 1974. Much like the idea of bringing in the French, the UNIFIL plan also offered a tactical advantage. It would make Israel look responsible—since it not only planned to withdraw but also sought to help find a solution—and, above all, it would undermine the American idea of a declared timetable or, worse still, a "date certain" complete withdrawal. The Begin government, in other words, decided to beat the Reagan administration at its own game.¹⁵⁰

Third, and perhaps of greater importance, Begin decided to lead the cabinet to a final and formal decision on the "redeployment" issue. Apparently wishing to avoid the impression of *faits accomplis*, he had so far deferred this in the hope that it could be postponed without causing any real damage until after his visit to Washington on July 27. Yet the U.S. talk about timetables and "date certain" arrangements, and the way Shultz had gone to Damascus "cap in hand" on July 7, suggested to Begin that the secretary might have some unacceptable news in store or, at the very least, an insistent request for

a further delay in the redeployment. Hence, the prime minister called a special cabinet meeting on the eve of Shultz's visit. The topic on the agenda was a decision on redeployment. The cabinet was presented with four alternative plans for withdrawal of the IDF. The details of the plans are not known, but it appears that the critical decisions were whether or not to withdraw from the Beqa'a Valley (the Syrian sector) or only from Beirut and the Shouf and whether or not Sidon, the largest town in the south, should also be evacuated. If Israel were to withdraw in the Beqa'a it would lose control of the strategic Jebel (Mount) Barouq, from which Damascus could be seen (and if necessary, shelled). The Israeli government, or so it seemed then, would give up an important lever with which to bargain with the Syrians in the future. On the other hand, such a withdrawal would create a no-man's-land between Syrian and Israeli forces and thus reduce the likelihood of a surprise attack or a war of attrition, two dangers that had always haunted Israeli military planners. In addition, a withdrawal from Jebel Barouq would substantially shorten Israel's supply lines in Lebanon and thus expose fewer Israeli vehicles to the danger of ambushes.

The temptation to withdraw from the town of Sidon was equally great. Mainly a Sunni center, Sidon had been among the worst focal points of resistance to the occupation. This resulted in a great number of Israeli casualties and burdened the IDF with complicated administrative and law and order problems. Yet, although that was a good reason for evacuating it, there was concern among Israeli planners that owing to its Sunni complexion and large poverty-stricken refugee camps the town would again fall under PLO control. In that event, there could be artillery fire from Sidon to a small part of the Galilee even while the IDF was still occupying large parts of south Lebanon.¹⁵¹

The decision in the cabinet meeting of July 6, a day before the arrival of Secretary of State Shultz from Damascus, was to withdraw neither from Sidon nor from Jebel Barouq. The secretary was told merely that the IDF would withdraw soon after Prime Minister Begin's planned visit to Washington, some time in August.¹⁵² Schultz therefore had no choice but to return to Washington empty-handed amid criticism in the capital that his trip to Damascus had been ill advised, had compromised the national dignity of the United States, and had further underlined Assad's ascendance and thus undermined the position of moderate Arab regimes in the region.¹⁵³

For a few more days this frustrating negotiation process was held in suspense. Then, suddenly, Begin announced his decision to cancel the visit to Washington. He gave no reasons but it seemed clear that the cancellation was at least as connected to his approaching decision to retire from public life as to Israel's tactics in the negotiations with the United States. In retrospect it seems, indeed, that Begin had decided to retire as soon as the IDF redeployed. He thus had an added personal incentive for seeing the redeployment through without delay. Meanwhile, an important reshuffle took place in Washington among the main American participants in the process. Philip Habib, whose advice had been the basis of the American position since the previous summer, had evidently led his government to a humiliating dead end. Personally unacceptable from the Syrian point of view, far from admired by the Israelis, and, by now, incapable of offering any way out of the dead end, he was at first "reinforced" by Richard Fairbanks and then replaced altogether by Robert C. McFarlane, a tough ex-Marine officer who had served on the National Security Council with Kissinger and Scowcroft but had no special experience in Middle East politics.

While Washington and Jerusalem were preoccupied with these events, the areas that the IDF was planning to leave in the southeast edges of Beirut and in the Shouf became

the scene of escalating violence. In a general sense this was the epitome of chaos in Rousseau's classical formulation of the security dilemma. The Israeli departure would create a vacuum. In the long term it was in the interest of all the various Lebanese groups to cooperate in the aftermath of the Israeli withdrawal. But every one of these groups suspected that an accommodative conduct on its part would be interpreted as weakness and exploited by members of some or all of the other groups. Hence, they were impelled to maximize their short-term advantages by a variety of assertive and preemptive moves, even while the IDF was still there. The inevitable result was, of course, maximized suffering for them all. The point to emphasize is that the carnage was not the result of hotheadedness, ambition, or lunacy alone (although these existed in no small quantity); rather, they all—Druzes, Shi'ites, Maronites—acted with a good deal of coldblooded rationality. The areas of Lebanon that the IDF was evacuating (for Israel's own rational reasons) were thereby turned instantly into the closest imaginable approximation to the state of nature, a microcosmic reflection of a cosmic predicament.

More specifically, what was taking place was roughly as follows. Preparing to leave, the Israelis made themselves less and less visible. Their two main concerns were to minimize their own casualties and to effect a gradual *renversement des alliances* among Lebanon's warring factions. A unilateral disengagement in the military sense also led quite naturally to a political dealignment. The Lebanese Forces and Amin Gemayel's regime had lost the importance they had had in the Israeli perception as long as elements of Sharon's plan were still to an extent guidelines of policy. Even more important was the fact that the Phalange and Gemayel's fledgling army were in conflict with both Shi'ites and Druzes. In the new Israeli orientation, which followed logically from the decision to redeploy, the Druzes would offer a critical buffer between Israel, Syria, and the PLO. In the same perception the Shi'ites, who constituted the majority in the area under Israel's control, also had to be cultivated or, at the very least, not unnecessarily antagonized. From this point of view the Maronite connection had become not just superfluous but in a sense a positive liability.

The new Israeli orientation was not immediately embraced by all. The majority in Begin's government remained either detached or still somewhat committed to the old approach in which, from the Israeli point of view, the only "historic" allies were the Maronites. Quite naturally the main proponent of this view was Ariel Sharon. Quite naturally, too, the main advocate of the "Druzes First" thesis was the new Minister of Defense Arens. The reason is simple enough. He was in charge of the strategic reappraisal and he was in daily contact with the IDF. Therefore he would be the first in the cabinet not only to appreciate the strategic imperative of changing the attitude toward the Druzes but also to become familiar with the power relations and orientations of Lebanon's various groups.

The IDF in the field increasingly projected an implicit preference for the Druzes, and their political chief's opinion at the cabinet level reflected this too. The Druzes for their part were also quick to perceive the change and might even have been alerted and guided by their Israeli co-religionists, including uniformed ones. Thus, as the Israelis were decreasing their own presence in the Shouf and southeast Beirut, the Druzes were gradually building up pressure on the Christians in this area. Simultaneously, the Gemayel regime, in anticipation of the Israeli withdrawal, also attempted to establish its presence in some of the areas bordering on or even actually within Israeli-held domain. In doing so they immediately encountered the opposition of both the Shi'ites in southeast Beirut and the

Druzes in the Shouf. The result was an escalating reign of terror which intensified as the Israeli departure neared. Indeed, none of these forces needed to be fully informed about the details of the U.S.-Israeli negotiations. They could witness how the IDF was rapidly dismantling installations, moving supplies and munitions to the new line which was being built along the Awali River, and reducing its profile in the area. From a highly visible presence manifested by police action against anyone who opened fire on anyone, the IDF rapidly became a bystander. As long as its own installations and personnel were not subject to attack it would not make a move, even if everything about it was smoldering.¹⁵⁴

What made matters worse was the combined impact of the dragging Israeli-American negotiations and the absence of consensus in the Israeli government on the optimal choice of allies on the Lebanese scene. Because of U.S. pressures, or at least anticipation of them, the Israeli government could not fully clarify how soon the IDF would withdraw from the Beirut-Shouf nexus. Because of differences of opinion among Israeli ministers and bureaucrats, there was never a clear choice between the Druzes and Shi'ites on the one hand and the Maronites on the other hand. Two especially salient incidents illustrate the extent of this confusion. On July 28, the IDF ordered the Lebanese Forces to close their barracks in Kafr Falous, near Sidon. The camp had been established by the latter at the time of the Bashir-Sharon honeymoon when all ethnic groups in Lebanon except for the Maronites were largely disregarded. Now that the IDF was preparing for a long sojourn in the area south of the Awali, the Lebanese Forces were simply ordered out of this largely Sunni Moslem area. They protested and demonstrated but left after a few days. Needless to say the incident did little to improve the rapidly deteriorating relations between the Israelis and their erstwhile allies.¹⁵⁵

Rather than use this incident as an opportunity to make a clear break with the Lebanese Forces and forge a new bond with the Druzes, Israel succeeded in stepping on the toes of the Druzes too. As the IDF withdrawal from the Shouf drew near, Druzes from the area lobbied the Israeli government to help them evict the Christians from the area, or at least the armed elements among the Christians of the Shouf. The lobbying was greatly assisted by well-connected Israeli Druzes. One of the most important and frequent visitors from the Shouf was Atef Saloum, who was often presented as Walid Jumblatt's Foreign Minister. On July 31 he had an appointment with Deputy Prime Minister David Levi. At the last minute, the interview was canceled without explanation. Consternation among the Druzes was rife for this and other reasons, evidenced the following day when Druzes from the Shouf and from the Golan joined their co-religionists for the festival of Nebi Shueib (the biblical Jetro) in the Galilee. The festival quickly became an emotional political gathering in which sharp words were hurled at the Israeli government.¹⁵⁶

This was the background against which the new American envoy, Robert McFarlane, had to resume the negotiations with Israel on the timing and the nature of the Israeli redeployment. McFarlane traveled to the Middle East on June 27, 1983, and stayed there until the day of Israel's redeployment, September 3. Throughout this period he focused his attention on the one and only remaining alternative to total chaos, namely, a U.S.-Israeli-sponsored compromise between Gemayel and Jumblatt. If such a compromise could be worked out, he reckoned correctly (and the Israelis readily concurred), the transition from IDF occupation to Lebanese control could pass successfully. In such a case the position of the multinational force (MNF) would remain reasonably tenable. If these efforts failed there would not only be carnage but the Gemayel government could collapse

and the multinational force would be in no position to do anything about it, let alone to save the Israeli-Lebanese accord. A special presidential envoy thus found himself engaged in a diplomatic shuttle not between Damascus and Jerusalem but between the Maronite village of Biqfaya and the Druze village of Mukhtara.

The problem appeared to be simple: the legitimate government of Lebanon was merely trying to extend its authority over a larger part of the sovereign territory of Lebanon. This should have been ostensibly encouraged, since the whole purpose of the MNF was to facilitate a gradual reintegration of the fractured country under the aegis of the legitimate government. But a closer examination of the issue suggests that the real problem was far more complex. Gemayel, for one thing, was not even properly the president of Maronistan—the area between Damour and Junieh—since his control over the Lebanese Forces was limited. At the same time, from the Druze point of view he represented not the legitimate government but the Maronites' quest for hegemony over other communities in the country. Therefore the Druzes were prepared to forgo an armed conflict only if the Lebanese Forces (which were based mainly on the Phalange) and the Lebanese Army were removed from the Shouf and the constitution were amended to allow for a more equitable (in Druze eyes at least) distribution of power and authority. If the constitution were amended according to the expectations of the Druzes, it would mean not only more Druze deputies in the ninety-nine-member parliament but also a far greater representation of Druzes in the Lebanese armed forces. Thereafter the Druzes would presumably permit Lebanese Army units manned primarily by Druzes to enter the Shouf as symbols of the presence of a central governmental authority.¹⁵⁷

Under the pressure of the Lebanese Forces, Amin Gemayel could not accept any of these demands. The maximum he would agree to was the deployment in the Shouf of 5,000 soldiers of whom 40 percent would be Druze. On August 16, 1983, the Israeli minister of defense attempted to nudge Gemayel closer to the position of the Druzes. Arens in fact flew to Beirut and met Amin Gemayel in an attempt to convince him to show more flexibility. The main reason for the visit was, it seems, not so much a sudden upsurge of Israeli optimism about the prospects of an agreement as, essentially, a technical ploy addressed toward the United States. The Israeli unpublished deadline for redeployment had been set at August 30, or September 1, at the latest. Arens presumably wished to convey the impression that up until the very last minute, Israel was doing its utmost to facilitate a Druze-Maronite *modus vivendi* and thus to avert chaos.¹⁵⁸

When this hopeless plea to Amin Gemayel led to nought, the IDF was ready to leave. McFarlane turned to Israel with a request to "give him a few more days since an agreement between Gemayel and Jumblatt was near." Israel agreed¹⁵⁹ and McFarlane did succeed in working out a compromise between the two Lebanese leaders. At this point another critical factor in the picture made itself noticed. Syria's opposition to the May 17 accord, in fact to the entire situation in which an Israeli-backed or even American-backed government would be ruling over a unified Lebanon, implied very simply that Jumblatt could not be allowed to legitimize Amin Gemayel's regime by striking a historic compromise with him. Accordingly, as soon as the Syrians got word of the Jumblatt understanding with Gemayel, Jumblatt was called for "consultation" with Abdul Khalim Khaddam, the Syrian foreign minister. What Khaddam told Jumblatt (whose father had been assassinated by the Syrians in 1977 because he rebelled against

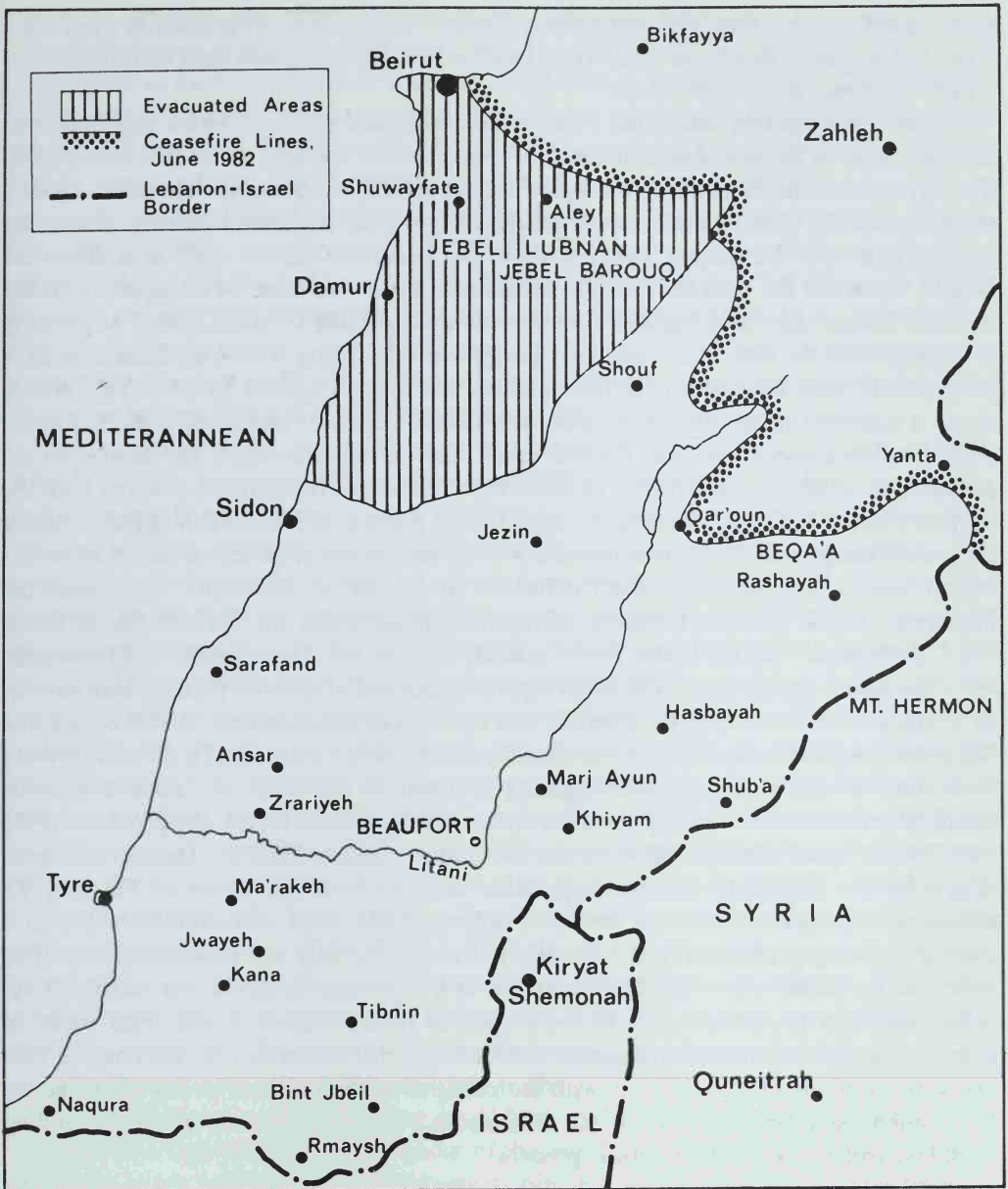
Syrian predominance in Lebanon) has not been published. But Jumblatt suddenly came back with fresh demands and then disappeared altogether for a few days.¹⁶⁰ McFarlane turned to Israel with another request for "just a few more days." But by then the government had become publicly committed to effect the withdrawal before the Jewish New Year, September 8. The American envoy's request was therefore cordially turned down and, by the morning of September 4, after a quick, clean, and casualty-free move during the night, the IDF was already deployed in its new lines along the Awali, Bisri, and Barouq rivers.¹⁶¹

5

Collapse

The IDF's new line of deployment stretched sixty miles along the Awali River in the west, the Bisri River in the center, and the Barouq River in the east. It was made up of a chain of static forts of various sizes and of observation posts, dug in along the steep cliffs and rocky mountains that line the three rivers. The static positions were knitted into an overall defense system that included constant mobile patrols by specialized infantry along the riverbed, round-the-clock roadblocks where all traffic in both directions was checked, and a sophisticated communication system. Very few of these elements were new to the IDF. Its engineers in fact drew heavily on their experience with the Bar Lev line along the Suez Canal as well as with the Jordan valley defense system. But the problem in their perception was going to be roughly a combination of these two experiences. The line would have to be effective against a massive Syrian attack and at the same time against small-scale guerrilla operations. It appeared to be superb at both. With a good defensive system and out of the mess of the Shouf and Beirut, the IDF felt confident that it could ensure the safety of the Galilee, which lay roughly 28 miles to the south, for as long as would be required. As a senior official told a reporter shortly after the September 1983 redeployment, "the Awali River defense line is a very compact one. We can hold it without sustaining too many casualties. We are away from the outskirts of Beirut which was a pain in the neck. Public opinion can accept the present rate of casualties. There will be a consolidation of these positions as a negotiating card to play against the Syrians and the PLO. In order to play that card, we will have to be well established."¹

Here and there, to be sure, one could hear a skeptical comment. During a television interview shortly before the redeployment, Israel's Chief of Staff, General Moshe Levi, was somewhat ambiguous in his reply to a question about whether the new line would guarantee a significant decline in IDF casualties.² Some experienced Israelis, as well as a study made at the Pentagon, pointed out that in fact the bulk of the casualties had been sustained in the area that lay south of the new line.³ The *Jerusalem Post*, which had been against the war all along, admitted candidly that the "new line in Lebanon was the result of political pressure, not military logic. The Government had to do something in the face of domestic criticism, growing louder with each new casualty, each new incident in Lebanon."⁴ Yet, such cautionary notes notwithstanding, the prevailing feeling in Israel on the eve of the Jewish New Year of 1983 was that an important respite in the sustained and nerve-racking tension of the previous year had been bought. The IDF had, it seemed,



IDF Redeployment, September 1983 (Adapted from *Britannica Atlas*, Encyclopaedia Britannica)

withdrawn not only from the Shouf but also from that part of the war in which divisions were the deepest. The Awali line was not seen merely as a strategic asset but also, and perhaps primarily, as a line of national consensus. It corresponded to the originally declared aims of the war with which an overwhelming part of the nation had no quarrel.

The rude awakening came on November 4, exactly two months after the redeployment. A truck loaded with explosives crashed through the entrance to an Israeli headquarters compound in Tyre and detonated near the main building, killing sixty people, twenty-nine of them Israelis, and injuring scores of others. It caused the collapse not only of the building near which it exploded but also of the confidence of the Israelis that they had succeeded in extricating themselves from the Beirut-Shouf quagmire.

Coming in the wake of no less than seventy "small" incidents in the preceding weeks, the Tyre disaster drove home one cruel truth: Israel was in for a long and dark nightmare from which there was no simple escape.

The initial reaction was to fall back on old established reflexes, which suggested that the root cause of the new situation could be found outside the area under IDF occupation. The Syrians and the PLO were once again seen as directly responsible. Therefore Israel's response took the form of a series of air attacks against PLO positions within the area under Syrian control, in the Beqa'a Valley north of the Beirut-Damascus road. In addition the Israelis tightened the internal security precautions inside the zone of occupation. Many Israelis, Arabs, and others began to describe this area as Israel's "north bank," suggesting an analogy with the West Bank. But the analogy was misleading. The West Bank may have occasionally been the scene of demonstrations and attacks against Israelis. Yet, *grosso modo* it had been quite easily kept under the Israelis' control. Not so in south Lebanon. There, within a very short time, the IDF came close to losing control. The sources of the problem, it rapidly dawned on the Israelis, were not so much external (although both the Syrians and the PLO were obviously supportive of the anti-IDF terrorism in the south) as they were indigenous. The main menace was no longer the presence of the PLO in this region, which had previously been perceived as a kind of "vacuum," but rather the insurgency of the southern Lebanese themselves, in particular the Shi'ites among them. The "north bank" (of the Litani River) quickly became the "wild south" (of Lebanon).

The result was yet another pained reappraisal not just of specific policies but, indeed, of a whole universe of long-held beliefs and operational assumptions. To the extent that this mind-boggling complexity can be dissected into distinct issue areas it seems that there were three arenas of debate: the lingering problem of the north of Lebanon with its ramifications in terms of policy vis-à-vis Syria and the United States; the problem of the "wild south" itself; and last but not least, the domestic debate in Israel. Despite strenuous efforts by the Israelis to salvage respectable remains from the wreck of the May 17 agreement, the policy vis-à-vis the north inherited the wind and ultimately led to a complete disengagement not just militarily but also politically and psychologically. The policy in the south led to similar results but at a high cost in blood and money. Both calamities were rooted as much in these spheres themselves as in the third focus of attention, Israel's own domestic scene. Accordingly the discussion in this chapter falls into three sections. The first deals with the collapse of the northern policy. The second shifts attention to the collapse in the wild south. The last takes up again the vexing complexity of the domestic political process.

The Collapse in the North

The disintegration of the shaky structure of agreements and power balances created by the Israeli invasion developed in stages. The first, which lasted about a month, was marked by violence. As was widely anticipated, the Israeli withdrawal from the Shouf-Beirut nexus was instantly followed by a massive attempt by the Druzes to eject the Lebanese Army and the Lebanese Forces from their positions in the Kharoub region, the western slopes of the Shouf. The Druzes were numerically inferior, but they exhibited an astounding esprit de corps and had little problem achieving their objectives. Consequently their goals were quickly redefined and before long they were pushing with gusto (and with Syrian backing) toward the Mediterranean coast. Increasingly it became clear that their evolving purpose was to establish something amounting to a Druze "canton" stretching between the Beqa'a

Valley in the east, the Mediterranean in the west, the Beirut-Damascus road in the Alley-Behamdoun-Dahar al Baider area, and a line from Sidon through Jezin in the south reaching out to the Druze towns of Rashaya and Hasbayah south of the Beqa'a. Of course, their southern "border" could not be extended that far at once because of the Israeli presence on the Awali. So they settled for the time being for the Israeli line of deployment as their southern limit. But the longer-term intent seemed quite clear.

In the struggle the Lebanese Army did as poorly as expected, at least by the Israelis. The only exception was the siege of the Christian town of Souq al Gharb. Here the Lebanese Army was backed by a solidly Christian population and, not having to muster the valor and skill that are required for an offensive, managed to hold its ground. This gave the Lebanese Army a short-lived boost. But ultimately it had no alternative to a negotiated agreement on Walid Jumblatt's terms. Although the population did not have to leave their homes, Souq al Gharb became part of the emerging Druze canton.⁵

Israeli policy in the course of this month-long war in an area immediately adjacent to the IDF's new lines was, on the whole, both skillful and restrained. Amid the familiar (and often highly exaggerated) stories of atrocities, the government was subject to some criticism alleging an indirect responsibility for the collapse of Christian resistance. The main voice of this critique was, as could have been expected, Ariel Sharon.⁶ His successor as Minister of Defense, Moshe Arens, remained, however, on the whole unperturbed, even calm. In his perception the Jewish state had a basic interest in the emerging Druze canton since it would create an ideal buffer insulating Israel from the Syrians as well as from the hopeless intercommunal mess in the Beirut area.⁷

Arens and his colleagues, to be sure, were also in favor of maintaining support for Amin Gemayel's government and for the existing structure of signed but unratified agreements with it. Consequently, the policy that the minister of defense advocated and the government pursued was a cautious combination of force, diplomacy, deterrence, and balance. The Syrians were warned time and again to stay out of the Shouf. As long as they supported Jumblatt only from a distance Israel signaled no particular opposition, but the eastern and northern rims of the Shouf were designated by the Israelis as a red line (as in Peres's proposals the previous June) which Syrian forces were not to cross. If they did, Israel hinted ambiguously that the IDF would intervene to stop them. This would inevitably mean war. Therefore the Syrians abided by this deterrent threat.⁸

The Israelis also had to pay attention to the problem of the PLO. Ever since the Palestine National Congress meeting in Algiers in February, Yasser Arafat had been entangled in a fight for survival as leader of the organization. Through a combination of opposition to his leadership from militants within and outside pressures on him from the Syrians, the veteran Palestinian leader was visibly losing ground. His policy of restraint as a means of ultimately obtaining open dialogue with the United States seemed to have failed. The militants in the organization called ferociously for a return to the armed struggle as the only means. This suited Syria too. It would undermine the PLO's independence, underline its dependence on Syria, prevent an Arab-Israeli settlement that would exclude Syria, and, in short, return the PLO to its pre-1967 phase in which it had been primarily an instrument in the hands of a variety of Arab regimes, especially Egypt and Syria.

To Arafat's great discomfort the Israeli invasion of Lebanon pushed him from the only independent base he had had close to historic Palestine. The closest he could keep to the Israelis was in the northern Beqa'a Valley and in the vicinity of Tripoli, in northern Lebanon. Both areas were, however, under the direct control of the Syrian Army, which had turned them into little more (from Arafat's point of view) than Syrian sovereign

territory proper. Arafat struggled and maneuvered to retain a modicum of autonomy. But the noose was tightening around his neck and during the summer and fall of 1983, he suddenly faced an open rebellion against his leadership.⁹

The Israelis watched this sequence of events with unconcealed delight. At least from this point of view the blood and money Israel had invested in the war in Lebanon seemed to be yielding the expected dividends. At the same time, however, the rebels against Arafat proved quite eager to assist Jumblatt's onslaught against the Lebanese Forces and the Lebanese Army. They surely knew that Jumblatt would not allow them to establish themselves within his own stronghold in the Shouf, as he had not allowed it before the Israeli invasion. But the weakening of the Lebanese Forces and the expansion of the Druze canton seemed to offer opportunities for a gradual return of the PLO, or so they believed, to the coastal plane and the Beirut area. They also wished to prove that, unlike Arafat's loyalists, they were fighters. But, above all, they were apparently encouraged by Syria to operate as surrogates. The Syrians themselves neither could nor, perhaps, would intervene directly since they did not wish to confront Israel head-on. It was therefore helpful from the Syrian point of view to assist these willing proxies.

This alarmed the Israeli government. Not entirely certain which faction of the PLO was the mainstay of this coalition with Jumblatt and suspecting a Syrian hand in the background, the last thing they wanted to see was a return of the PLO in force to the area that lay between the refugee camps of southwest Beirut and the Awali River. Their concern led to a certain ambiguity in Israel's attitude to the Jumblattis. While generally supportive of what Jumblatt was doing for reasons explained earlier, the Israeli government constantly issued warnings that he should under no circumstances allow a return of the PLO. Israel, it was implied, would not mind if he used the PLO to advance his own purposes, but there should be no renewal of an autonomous Palestinian presence astride the Israeli lines.¹⁰

Implicitly these threats to the Druzes served at least two additional Israeli purposes. First, in the final analysis the Israeli government still believed that Amin Gemayel's regime had to be protected. If he collapsed the whole effort that had been invested in propping him up (including the lives of many Israelis) would have been wasted. A Syria-supported Jumblatt should not be allowed to grow too big. There was still a lingering perception, the origins of which can be, in a way, traced back to Rabin's first decision to offer support to the Christians, that the Maronite domain, by its very existence, served Israel's interests. It was thus ultimately essential to check Jumblatt's advance, especially west of the Beirut-Sidon highway, and the threat directed at him to ease his alliance with the PLO could serve this purpose.¹¹

Second, and of even greater importance, Jumblatt was fighting Gemayel, who in turn was backed by the United States. The American Marines in Beirut were beginning to come under fire from the Druzes, and it was essential from the Israeli point of view to avoid the embarrassment of openly supporting a force that threatened the lives of U.S. Marines. The Israeli government of course needed no reminders on this score, but they received them from the Americans themselves.¹² By issuing threats toward Jumblatt while adding promises not to allow any massacres of Christians,¹³ Israel was drawing a line between itself and those who increasingly appeared to be America's foes. Moreover, at one point Amin Gemayel actually approached the United States with a request to convey to Israel a plea for military intervention against the Druzes¹⁴ mainly through the use of artillery. Israel had no intention of doing so, not only because of its relations with Jumblatt or because of the domestic Israeli-Druze implications, but above all because the

Israeli government was loath to initiate any military action. The maximum the IDF would be allowed to do was to carry out forays of armored task forces north of the Awali.¹⁵ This was primarily a way of demonstrating continued interest while running a very low risk of sustaining any casualties. But since the Israelis would not go beyond this measure, the threats to Jumblatt served the Israeli interest without risking the vital Druze connection.

This policy may have been successful from the Israeli point of view, since within a month it resulted in an expanded Druze domain without leading to an Israeli-Syrian conflagration, a significant return of the PLO into the area, a collapse of the Gemayel regime, undue strains in Israeli relations with either the Druzes or the United States, or, above all, Israeli casualties. But no sooner did this new balance of forces become consolidated than attention began to shift to a new focus of crisis, this time in and around Beirut. This second phase in the process leading to the collapse in the north primarily concerned the role of the United States in backing the Gemayel regime.

The IDF withdrawal on September 4 left the Gemayel regime exposed to further pressures from Syria via the latter's Lebanese allies. Committed to the May 17 accord, which they had accepted willy-nilly in return for Secretary of State Shultz's commitment of support, the Gemayel regime was now dependent on the Phalange, on whatever was left of the Lebanese Army, and, in particular, on the multinational force. The 1,200 to 1,400 Marines in the vicinity of Beirut's international airport formed the backbone of the MNF. The Marines themselves may have still been toying with the alluring idea that they constituted an objective peacekeeping force in defense of a legitimate and peace-loving government. But the Druzes, the Shi'ites, the Sunnis, and all other mortal foes whom the Gemayels had made for themselves in the course of centuries obviously had a different definition of the situation. While attacking the Gemayel regime's forces in the course of the October fighting their fire often came close to the Marines, whose orders were clear: do not shoot unless and until you are being shot at directly. Such instructions would perhaps have made sense if the Marines had been on duty in, for example, London's Hyde Park. In Beirut they were involved in a violent conflict and were clearly committed to one side as a result of their government's policy. As small a force and as hamstrung as it was by such strict rules of engagement, in the words of former Israeli foreign minister Abba Eban, it was a "contingent large enough to be a target for Terrorists and not large enough to be a credible focus of power of deterrence."¹⁶

The inevitable direct attack that released the Marines from their obligation to avoid shooting came on October 23, 1983. A truck loaded with explosives was driven into the heart of the Marines' compound and detonated, leaving behind 241 dead servicemen. Americans were prone to interpret the carnage as the blind religious fanaticism of an entirely alien culture. It certainly was that, as far as the individual who drove the vehicle to his own death was concerned, but behind this unconventional approach lay a very conventional strategic logic. From the Syrian point of view the Marines were the vulnerable symbol of an American attempt to impose on Syria a proxy who, on top of that, had also been favored and supported by Syria's leading foe, the Jewish state. The Syrians would not have been supported by the Soviets in a conventional war against American soldiers. Such a war would be in any case costly and fraught with a host of other risks. But because Syrian interest in this regard was fully shared by the segments of Lebanese society on whom the Gemayels intended to impose themselves, with American and Israeli help, the Syrians had a readily available means with which to dislodge the United States from the shores of Lebanon and thus hasten the demise of the Gemayel regime.

The Syrians had repeatedly warned that they would not accept the status quo that had

been imposed by the May 17 accord, and they also repeatedly incited the Lebanese openly and explicitly in order to subject the Gemayel regime and all its allies to terrorism. With the IDF gone and the Druzes established in the westward slopes of the Shouf overlooking Beirut, the multinational force's turn had come. None of this needed a carefully orchestrated master plan. It was a natural and predictable course of events that American policy makers had overlooked. This fatal American oversight was exhibited in an embarrassing way when none other than the president of the United States virtually invited the Syrians to an open trial of strength. Speaking at a press conference four days before the attack on the Marines, Reagan provocatively stated that the United States would not allow Syria, "aided and abetted by 7,000 Soviet advisers and technicians," to destroy the chances for stability in Lebanon.¹⁷ This statement would have made ample sense if it were backed by real power. But, whatever the ultimate war potential of the United States, in the Middle East in general and in Lebanon more than anywhere else, the United States had little more power than Camille Chamoun's tiny *al Ahrar* militia and, knowing the area less well than this militia, the Marines, through no fault of their own, were probably even less effective. Their strength would have been immense if they had been presented as a "trip wire," capable of activating America's strategic might. But they had never been presented in such terms, and therefore the president's words constituted a foolhardy provocation to the Middle East's toughest leader, Hafez al Assad.

Despite this presidential state of mind, it was difficult to imagine what the American response could be to Assad's violent tit for tat, the car bomb attack of October 23. If the United States had been prepared to commit a really effective deterrent force to the turbulent Lebanese scene, the Syrians and their Lebanese allies might have been somewhat more careful. But the moment when the United States had made known its position on this issue had already passed, and the answer was crystal-clear: from the very beginning of this policy in August–September 1982, the United States had been out to achieve a tour de force at the lowest possible cost. The Reagan administration felt a need to demonstrate to friend and foe alike that despite the Vietnam trauma, the great American republic had lost neither nerve nor verve. When the odds were that a major military confrontation would result, such a stance made no logical sense. The administration was eager for opportunities in which muscle could be exhibited like it is in a circus, that is, without any risk of having to put it to the test.¹⁸ If this made any sense in 1982—which is open to question—it certainly made no sense a year later. The resolve either to leave the Beirut scene or to fight for it had not visibly grown in the course of this year, and so the Syrians and their Lebanese surrogates could take for granted that increased pressure on the Marines would lead them ultimately to withdraw.

To be sure, the logic of this deterrence-oriented policy suggested that the Marines should not have been withdrawn before impressing on their adversaries that they were not running away. Such logic normally leads to escalation, a further loss of life, and, ultimately, a departure that was in the cards anyway. Something like that, but against the background of an entirely different balance of forces, impelled the Israelis to withdraw from Lebanon in a protracted—and costly—process. Now, between October 1983 and February 1984, the United States was doing it too.

What undoubtedly added fuel to this process was, paradoxically, the fact that on October 31 President Amin Gemayel and eight leaders of the various Lebanese factions gathered in Geneva for a reconciliation conference. The fact that the Lebanese leaders could not find an agreed venue on Lebanese soil is, in itself, a telling comment on the state of the Lebanese body politic. Beyond this symbolism there was, however, an important

factor contributing to the escalation in U.S. involvement in the fighting. American negotiators are prone to assume that in international disputes, as in labor disputes, the best technique is to stop shooting and start talking. As Henry Kissinger had no doubt discovered in the course of both the Vietnam and the Middle East talks in which he was America's principal negotiator, in international disputes the logic is often precisely the reverse. Negotiations lead to escalation in violence as each party attempts to exert the utmost pressure on the battlefield as a means of improving its position at the conference table. Such logic certainly operated in the Lebanese case and might have even been directly responsible not only for the escalating exchange of fire with the U.S. force but for the very initiation of the tragic bomb attack of October 23.

From the available evidence it is difficult to judge how astute the Reagan administration was in perceiving this logic. Retrospectively it appears that the decision to return fire was issued by special envoy Robert McFarlane himself without any prior policy process in Washington. Whatever the origin of the U.S. decision to unleash the Marines and the impressive flotilla of U.S. Navy in the Mediterranean right behind them, the escalatory logic of the episode was very simple. Subject to fire from the Shouf, the U.S. force returned fire, escalating it, in terms of weaponry, in the hope of achieving de-escalation. The Druzes were thus outgunned and turned to Syria for help. The Syrians, assuming that under pressure the Americans would leave, offered their own backup to the fire of Jumblatt's militia. With the ball hurled back into the American court, so to speak, the United States had to decide whether to back off and suffer humiliation and further military pressure, or to keep escalating. Informed by the logic that had led them not to succumb after the car bomb attack, the choice was, logically, clear: further escalation.

At this point, however, some people in Washington were becoming genuinely nervous. Chairman of the JCS General John Vessey, in particular, was reportedly haunted by a fear that a massive U.S. air strike relying, for instance, on available F-14s, would be followed by ugly press reports showing civilian casualties. Determined to avoid this possibility, he gave instructions to rely on a far more surgical, but also far more vulnerable, type of plane, the A-6.¹⁹ On December 4, 1983, such a counterstrike was carried out against Syrian positions in the Beqa'a Valley. But the Syrians had not only numerical superiority but also an edge in the type of planes they could send to combat the Americans. They also had the latest Soviet air-defense systems. The result was that two U.S. Navy planes were shot down and one pilot, Lieutenant Robert Goodman, was taken prisoner.

At this point the Syrians decided to back off. Although there were some more exchanges of fire between the Americans and the Druzes (with the Syrians behind them) in December, by the end of the month Syria, through the dramatic release of Lieutenant Goodman (who was handed over to Reverend Jesse Jackson), evidently signaled a call for reciprocal reduction in tensions. This was the moment President Reagan had been waiting for, not in order to declare a victory but quite the reverse—disengage the Marines from this no-win situation. Only two months earlier Reagan had asked in a news conference in the wake of the car bomb attack on the Marines: "If America were to walk away from Lebanon, what chance would there be for negotiated settlement producing the unified, democratic Lebanon? If we turned our backs on Lebanon now, what would be the future of Israel? At stake is the fate of the second Arab country to negotiate a major agreement with Israel. That's another accomplishment this year, the May 17 accord signed by Lebanon and Israel."²⁰ By January, two months after this declaration, nothing of any consequence had changed in the overall picture, except of course for the process of escalation. The Lebanese leaders were still shuttling back and forth to Geneva in

search of reconciliation, and the prospects of the May 17 accord were still as dim as ever. This was realized in Washington, giving rise to a bitter dispute. Secretary of Defense Weinberger advocated a quick withdrawal since, oddly enough, his main concern was not to allow U.S. personnel to be employed anywhere. Secretary of State Shultz, on the other hand, advocated a forceful U.S. response. To him American power was a critical tool of foreign policy. An escape from Lebanon would greatly undermine American credibility and negotiating power vis-à-vis the Soviets, not only in the Middle East but in every single theatre of U.S.-USSR rivalry. McFarlane and the NSC offered a third alternative, essentially a mixture of the opposing views of the state and defense departments. The United States should adopt, the NSC thought, a flexible posture, should "speak softly and carry a big stick." In the Lebanon theater this implied a double signal: a willingness to employ force in a devastating but surgical manner, along with a willingness to depart from the scene if certain "rules" were tacitly endorsed by the adversary (the Druzes, Syrians, and Soviets). But this NSC view was entirely academic because of the rigid standoff between the state and defense departments. Therefore the NSC reluctantly endorsed the operational proposals of the department of defense. Throughout January, there were rumors of an imminent withdrawal of the Marines. They were confirmed on February 6.²¹

Israel watched from the sideline, maintaining a kind of unofficial embassy in the northern outskirts of Beirut.²² It continued the policy of armored, one-day incursions north of the Awali River especially along the Beirut-Sidon highway. It followed the Lebanese "reconciliation" talks very closely, with David Kimche, Director General of the Foreign Ministry, staying in Geneva and constantly keeping pressure on Gemayel not to yield to Syria's demands, which were being transmitted by Abdul Khalim Khaddam, the Syrian Foreign Minister, in much the same way (that is, from a hotel in Geneva).²³ In addition the Israeli government repeatedly issued calls on Lebanon not to accept any modifications in the May 17 accord, sometimes adding barely veiled threats that this would mean, in effect, a partition of Lebanon since the IDF would then stay south of the Awali indefinitely.²⁴ Finally, the Israeli involvement in the U.S. struggle to preserve Amin Gemayel and the May 17 accord took the form of an offer to treat U.S. servicemen injured in Lebanon in Israeli hospitals. The secretary of defense would not hear of such a move and, in a peculiar attempt to maintain the long-lost image of being at arm's length from the Israelis, sent injured GIs to West Germany, a four-hour flight away.²⁵ While indignant at Weinberger's attitude on this issue, the Israeli government would not become more involved in order to assist the United States. Israel had made the decision to disengage from a leading role in the affairs of the Lebanese polity during the previous summer. It would not reenter the quagmire, even to help out the United States or the May 17 accord.

Meanwhile, however, the Israelis experienced yet another crisis in their relations with Syria. The car bomb attack on the IDF military compound in Tyre on November 4, was followed by a complicated situation. Israel's normal reflex had always been to identify a clear culprit in the wake of an incident causing an Israeli loss of life, followed by some kind of reprisal. In most cases the reprisal would be deliberately far worse than the provocation, since an underlying Israeli assumption, first articulated by Moshe Dayan in 1955, was that a simple tit for tat leaves the Arabs with an advantage. Owing to Israel's smaller size and fundamental inferiority (in terms of overall war potential rather than battlefield performance on a one-to-one basis), a tit for tat would lead the Arabs to continue their attacks. In the Israeli perception, the Arabs' main advantage is in their *staying* power, that is, their ability to sustain endless little battles and even sizable defeats,

whereas Israel's only advantage is in its *moving* power, its ability to win decisively short but ferocious campaigns.²⁶

The problem with the car bomb attack on November 4 was, first, that it was difficult to find out who had carried it out, and second, that even if it could be established that Syria was vicariously responsible, Israel was in no position to enter into a head-on confrontation with the Ba'ath Republic. But something had to be done, if only to satisfy domestic opinion. It was difficult to establish whether there was a domestic demand for some kind of retribution, but Shamir's government, like most Israeli governments in the past, assumed that avoiding action would be seen by Arabs and Jews alike as an admission of helplessness. Therefore they proceeded, in a series of statements by authoritative government spokesmen, to put the blame on Syria. Yet, evidently loath to provoke the Syrians into a trial of strength, all these spokesmen hastened to add that Syria need not fear an Israeli attack.²⁷

It was clear that Israel was in no mood for a war, but the Syrians could not take that for granted. Even assuming that Israel would not initiate a war, the Syrians could not assume that there would not be some kind of massive Israeli retaliation. It made perfect sense from the Syrian point of view to issue counterdeterrent threats.²⁸ Now Israel faced the same dilemmas as those with which its own announcements had confronted Syria. Once the Syrians were on the alert, they might be tempted to take advantage of the situation and launch some kind of military action. The Israelis, to be sure, did not assume a high probability of such an act, but they would not take chances. Inevitably, the two most formidable armies in the Middle East were suddenly confronting one another in a high state of alert. This was what is normally referred to as an international crisis.²⁹

Fully aware of what the repercussions could be, the Shamir government hastened to reassure the Syrians through third parties that it had no warlike intentions. But the tension did not wither away for a number of days, and this entirely unnecessary mobilization had cost the Israeli taxpayers \$20 million.³⁰ Nor was this the only cost of the ill-conceived fingering of Syria. For one thing, having alerted the Syrians, the Israelis made themselves unable to carry out any kind of retaliation, not even against PLO or Shi'ite bases within Syrian-controlled parts of Lebanon. Second, by raising the tension and later backing off, they had exposed their own diminishing resolve. From the Syrian point of view this implied a lower risk of confrontation with Israel if and when they would engage the Marines, and, above all, a greatly diminished risk of confrontation with Israel if and when Syria were to bring Amin Gemayel to change the May 17 accord.

As if tempted to test this hypothesis, the Syrians made a threatening move as soon as the Israeli reserves were discharged. On November 19, the Syrian Minister of Defense, Mustafa Tlass, gave an interview to the Beirut-based journal *al kifah al Arabi*. Evidently in a belligerent mood, he threatened the United States with suicide attacks by Syrian pilots on American warships off the coast of Beirut should American planes attack Syrian targets, and he threatened Israel with some new 300-mile-range missiles which could reach, he said, almost any target, including "Israel's nuclear reactor in the Negev" should "Israel attack Damascus." You will see, he added, what will then "happen to Tel Aviv." But the most ominous note in the interview was unquestionably the Syrian Minister of Defense's expressed support for the car bomb attack on the U.S. Marines the previous month. Evidently he was convinced that the United States and Israel were in no position to challenge Syria's view on that.³¹

Tlass's belligerent mood may have been spurred not only by the evidence of Israeli and American weakness but also by the fact that Syria was simultaneously dealing a major

blow to Yasser Arafat's PLO and getting away with it as far as the Arab world was concerned. Having split the *Fateh*, the PLO's mainstay, the Syrians encouraged Arafat's opponents, under a certain Abu Moussa, to besiege his loyalists in the Beqa'a Valley. The siege ended with the flight of the PLO chairman and his supporters to Nahar al Bared refugee camp, near the town of Tripoli inside Lebanon but close to the Syrian border. The rebels proceeded to put Arafat under another siege and toward the end of November 1983, with massive Syrian Army help, they braced for a final showdown. Realizing this, Arafat and 4000 of his supporters deserted their besieged stronghold and left on board a Greek flotilla escorted by French warships. Another phase of their endless exile had begun. Arafat was thus jettisoned from the vicinity of Israel through the bizarre cooperation of Israel and Syria.

This had happened under the surveillance of Israeli navy vessels. Apparently the Israeli government had decided not to attempt either to capture Arafat or to kill him for fear that he might become a Palestinian martyr and thus reinvigorate Palestinian nationalism. In addition, the Shamir government came under U.S. pressure to leave Arafat alone. Secretary of State Shultz may have abandoned Habib's ideas about a solution in Lebanon, but he had not abandoned the concept that a disarmed *Fateh* under Yasser Arafat would greatly enhance the prospects of the Reagan initiative. King Hussein had backed off almost a year earlier from his talks with Arafat, but this was at a time when Arafat was still trying to avoid an open rift with Syria. Now, in December 1983, he was in a virtual war with Syria. He had nothing to lose—or so it seemed in Washington—and much to gain from a move toward Hussein leading to a joint negotiating position within the framework of the Reagan plan. Assuming that, the United States pressed Israel to let Arafat escape from Tripoli and goaded Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak to embrace Arafat a few days later when the latter's boat docked in Egypt on its way to an exile in South Yemen. The Israelis were naturally outraged by both U.S. pressures and Mubarak's gesture (which contradicted the Camp David agreements). But they had other, more pressing concerns. Within days of Arafat's departure, there were signs of a pending American decision to withdraw from Lebanon. This was followed by the resignation of Lebanese Prime Minister Shafiq al Wazzan who, sensing the imminence of the American departure, ducked for political cover through an attempt to force President Amin Gemayel to abandon the May 17 agreement.³²

The pending departure of the multinational force left Amin Gemayel high and dry. His entire policy since his accession to power following the assassination of his brother, Bashir, on September 14, 1982, had rested on the assumption of Israeli support against his Lebanese rivals and American backing vis-à-vis Syria. Now that not only Israel but also the United States had withdrawn, he was left, theoretically, with only two alternatives. He could turn to Israeli for help or he would have to go to his own Kanossa, namely, Damascus. It seems highly unlikely that he either expected Israel to step into America's role or, indeed, thought that he could survive Israeli backing. Nevertheless, in a last-minute gesture he sent an emissary to Jerusalem with an urgent request for IDF intervention against the Druzes, the Shi'ites, the Sunnis, the Franjijeh Maronites—in fact against all the rest of Lebanon as well as, of course, Syria. The Israelis (as he may have anticipated) turned him down.³³ The only thing he could do now was to go to Damascus, plead for Syrian mercy, and agree to revert to the same ignoble status that his predecessor, Elias Sarkis, had had before the Israeli invasion. The inevitable prelude to such a trip was a suggestion that he might agree to the abrogation of the hapless May 17 accord. This he did on February 17, eight days after the announcement of the American decision to withdraw the Marines. He was then invited for an audience with President Hafez al Assad

of Syria on February 28.³⁴ According to one report the Syrians openly threatened him. "When he balked on one point the Syrians told him that they were not having a discussion and that if he did not agree to Syrian demands the Syrian army would be in Souq al Gharb and other Shouf mountain towns in an hour or two." Syrian officials, according to this report, also told Gemayel whom to appoint to what ministerial position in his administration, and offered to train one-third of the Lebanese Army.³⁵ The Maronite attempt to play Israel off against Syria had come full circle.

The official Israeli response to the scrapping of the May 17 agreement was "shock and dismay." A government announcement stated that it signaled "a death sentence for Lebanese independence and sovereignty," and proposed that Israel put the accord into effect unilaterally in the hope that "Lebanon will succeed in restoring her sovereignty and in liberating herself from Syrian domination."³⁶ But the Shamir government knew full well that this was a highly unrealistic assessment of the situation. Israel simply had no cards to play. The most it could do was to raise the possibility of "revision" in the treaty, to permit the Lebanese Forces to open a kind of unofficial legation in Jerusalem,³⁷ to continue to maintain Israel's own legation in Beirut,³⁸ and to signal to Syria a readiness to enter into some negotiations.³⁹ Thus began the third and last phase in the disintegration of the Jewish state's northern Lebanese policy. It was manifested by a lingering hope that some elements of the previous policy could be salvaged. As this phase unfolded, however, it became increasingly clear that the Syrians were calling the shots and that they were fully aware of the weakness of the Israeli position and determined to take every advantage of it.

On July 19 the Lebanese government formally demanded that Israel close its legation in the Beirut suburb of Dbeyeh. Israel tried to resist the demand but could not run the risk of the personnel in the legation being harmed or imprisoned. After a week's haggling Israel gave in and the mission was closed.⁴⁰ Under pressure from Syria and sensing the weakness of the Israeli position, the Lebanese government then proceeded to add insult to injury. On August 18 it announced that Israel's "repressive" policies in south Lebanon might bring Lebanon to lodge a complaint to the United Nations Security Council.⁴¹ This announcement was followed by a bizarre situation reflecting the internal strains in the Lebanese government. On August 22, Israel was accused by the Lebanese minister in charge of the occupied south, the Shi'ite *al Amal* leader, Nabih Berri, of severe violations of human rights and of attempting to sever the south from Lebanon altogether.⁴² Berri called on the southern Lebanese to step up the attacks against the IDF that had brought about Israel's repressive measures. Five days later another Lebanese leader, the Druze Walid Jumblatt, called for Israeli-Lebanese negotiations with a view to exchanging an Israeli withdrawal for "security guarantees" to Israel and the abolition of the 1969 Cairo Agreement (which had legitimized the presence of the PLO on Israel's northern border).⁴³

Both Lebanese leaders were at once attempting to advance their own narrower interests and echoing their master's voice. From Berri's point of view the only way to consolidate his shaky leadership over the Shi'ite community was through a militant stance toward the Israeli presence in south Lebanon. From Jumblatt's point of view an Israeli departure would open the way to a further expansion of the emerging Druze canton. The two voices were almost contradictory but they fit well with the Syrian interest in the matter. Syria was still as committed as ever to removing the IDF from south Lebanon and especially from the strategic Jebel Barouq peak. Closely watching the deliberations in Israel following the July 23 general elections, the Syrians may have felt that by coupling a threat (Berri's message) with a positive inducement (Jumblatt's message), a Labor-

based government in Jerusalem might be tempted to negotiate the IDF's withdrawal on terms that Syria could live with.

As if to support this thesis, which the Labor leadership was prone to accept anyway, the Syrians gave a similar message as soon as Peres's Government of National Unity was formed. On September 22 Israel was visited by Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations Brian Urquhart, who told his Israeli hosts, Prime Minister Peres, Foreign Minister Shamir, and Defense Minister Rabin, that "he found the Syrians ready to discuss specific security measures in southern Lebanon that would smooth the way toward an Israeli withdrawal. . . . [The] Syrians were prepared to recognize, at least tacitly," he added, that Israel has "legitimate security concerns in southern Lebanon."⁴⁴

The Israelis could barely conceal the great encouragement they took from this faint sign that the Syrians meant business. They hastened to request a U.S. mediation effort to which the United States agreed, although somewhat unenthusiastically. Two days later the Reagan administration dispatched Assistant Secretary of State Richard W. Murphy, a former ambassador to Damascus, on an exploratory mission to the Syrian capital. Peres and his colleagues were so enormously encouraged that they proceeded to reiterate their commitment to effecting a total Israeli withdrawal, and clarified that they were no longer making an Israeli withdrawal contingent upon a reciprocal Syrian withdrawal.⁴⁵ This was a seemingly prudent tactic—it reflected a willingness to take accommodative steps as a means of inducing an equally accommodative Syrian response—but in reality it was done from a posture of visible weakness which the Syrians could not fail to detect. Therefore, as the notion of security dilemma predicts, the Syrians did their utmost to exploit it to their advantage.

In the first place, it soon became clear that the Syrians had no intention of dealing with Israel directly. Syria's hostile posture toward the Jewish state had stood it in good stead. From a weak country seeking shelter from its Arab neighbors, Jordan and Iraq, in a peace treaty and a military alliance with Israel in 1949, it had grown into a massive military power, in fact into Israel's most dangerous foe. This had evidently strengthened the Assad regime domestically, and it therefore had no reason to take any risks in this regard at a time when Israel's weakness was so patently obvious and Syria's ascendance so widely recognized.⁴⁶ Hence the Syrians merely encouraged the Lebanese to act as their proxy in such negotiations.

Second, the Lebanese were allowed only a very limited leeway. What the Syrians had in mind was little more than a return to the 1949 Lebanon-Israel armistice regime, which had amounted to no more than a military agreement of nonbelligerency. This was a far cry from Israel's expectations which focused, by a clear consensus between the Likud and the Labor components of the National Unity Government, on a return in some form to a watered-down version of the now-defunct May 17 agreement. Third, and ultimately of the greatest importance from the Israeli point of view, without an agreement, whether within the framework of the armistice or within the framework of the May 17 accord, the Syrians would not go along with an Israeli security belt within Lebanon in any shape or form. If Israel wished to retain such a belt it would have to do so unilaterally and simply continue to act as an occupying power. Syria, with irreproachable logic, would simply not volunteer its own formal acquiescence to such an arrangement.

Given this vast disparity between the positions of the Syrians and of the Israelis that left no alternative but an attempt to narrow them through negotiations with the Lebanese government, the indirect exchange between Israel and Syria that began in late August 1984 ran into difficulties.⁴⁷ Anxious not to lose the initial momentum, Peres made one

more accommodative move. While on his first visit to Washington as Israel's prime minister, he offered a unilateral Israeli pullout from the Beqa'a Valley. This, he hoped, would perhaps reassure the Syrians and induce them to reciprocate.⁴⁸ Although the Syrians were anxious to see the IDF out and to cut their own costs in maintaining an expensive line of confrontation in the Beqa'a (some \$300,000 daily according to one estimate), they had no intention of reciprocating Peres's offer.⁴⁹ Moreover, the more obvious the Israeli desire to pull out, the greater became the Syrian temptation to raise the price. If they held on, they could realistically hope, Israel would sooner or later effect a unilateral withdrawal anyway.

On October 19 Peres, as the Syrians may have expected, announced yet another Israeli concession. If so far Israel had demanded that the negotiations be political (as in the May 17 accord) rather than military (as in the Armistice Agreement), it now expressed consent for purely military talks.⁵⁰ The Syrians were ready to "approve" of Israeli-Lebanese talks but once again underlined that Israel should not hope to achieve anything but, in effect, a Lebanese formal consent to the IDF's withdrawal.⁵¹ On November 8, 1984, Israeli and Lebanese military delegations began talks in the former border post between the two countries at Naqura, where the Mixed Armistice Commission used to meet. The talks raised Israel's hopes greatly but soon revealed the extent to which the Israelis had once again failed to read the Syrian position. Israel made one more concession: an agreement in principle to a token UNIFIL presence inside the security zone as envisaged in the May 17 accord. But the Israeli delegation under Brigadier General Amos Gilboa also insisted that the Israeli-sponsored South Lebanese Army (the "territorial brigade," in the May accord) remain in force and that the size and zone of responsibility of UNIFIL be expanded northward into the "upper" belt of the May accord.⁵² Backed by Syria, the Lebanese delegation under General Ahmed al Haj rejected this deal. The Israeli predisposition to withdraw had grown so clear that Syria had no reason to yield. What followed was a frustrating and protracted process in which the Lebanese made demands for Israeli war indemnities and repeatedly suspended the talks either as a means of forcing Israel to change its policy in the occupied south or in order to consult Syria.⁵³ By the beginning of 1985 Israel had at last acknowledged that the Naqura talks were leading nowhere and decided to effect yet another unilateral pullout. The reason for this was as much the stalemate in the talks as the growing anarchy in the south.

The Wild South

The quick change in the south of Lebanon from a relatively hospitable territory to an extremely hostile one was among the greatest failures of national intelligence estimates that Israel had ever known. No one, not even the most persistent opponents of the war, had ever raised this possibility. Although it developed gradually, in the final analysis it shook the Israelis no less than the entry of Egyptian forces into the Sinai in January 1960 and May 1967 or the launching of the Egyptian-Syrian surprise attack on Yom Kippur, 1973. Whereas Israel had proved quite adept in responding to these conventional challenges, it was slow and, on the whole, quite unsuccessful in dealing with the rise of resistance to its presence in the south of Lebanon. The reasons were, broadly speaking, a combination of misperceptions, errors of judgment, and a dynamic change originating in factors beyond the Jewish state's control.

The scenario on which the IDF's initial policy in the south was predicated was quite

reassuring. Demographically, the area was comprised of approximately 560,000 Shi'ites, 80,000 Palestinian refugees, 110,000 indigenous Sunni Lebanese, and 200,000 indigenous Christians. The Shi'ites were poor, ill educated, and politically disorganized. Under the leadership of Imam Sayyid Musa al Sadr they had attempted since 1959 to develop some sort of organized political community capable of backing up an effort to make themselves more effectively represented on the Lebanese national scene. This was manifested in the gradual establishment of institutes of learning, vocational schools, and community centers, as well as an overall political organization under the name *al Amal* ("the hope"). None of this was, however, sufficient to facilitate a real ascendance of the Shi'ite community. It remained weak both nationally and locally. As such it was unable to resist the virtual occupation of the south by various Palestinian organizations which established themselves primarily in the refugee camps of Tyre and Sidon but also exerted a substantial influence in the region as a whole.

The pervasively acquiescent response of the Shi'ites to the PLO was manifested in a number of ways, all of which were well known to the Israelis. In the first place, the PLO established roadblocks and levied taxes throughout the region. Second, no matter how ferociously the IDF pursued the PLO in the area, the Shi'ites did not really attempt to eject it. As has been seen, Israel had gradually escalated its attacks against the PLO during the 1970s. Most of the damage had been inflicted on the Shi'ites. Unbearable as this may have been, it never brought about a serious attempt by the Shi'ites to eject the PLO which was, the Shi'ites knew, drawing most of the Israeli fire against themselves.

To be sure, the Israelis were aware of a number of indicators suggesting that the Shi'ites resented the Palestinian presence. As the 1970s drew to an end the frequency of armed clashes between Shi'ites and Palestinians visibly increased. Moreover, the circumstances in which Imam Sayyid Musa al Sadr disappeared in 1978 suggested that he had been abducted by the Libyans on the behest of the PLO which feared that his growing influence in the south would undermine their autonomous entity there and sought to check a Shi'ite awakening by removing him. But none of these signs of a growing self-awareness of the Shi'ites really suggested that within two to three years they would become a real force. Indeed, the IDF was also aware of Shiite collaboration with the PLO. The latter had given them a military training center in the northeastern Beqa'a valley, which subsequently became the main base for a militant Shi'ite organization calling itself the "Islamic Amal."

As for the Sunni community in the south, primarily in and around Sidon, the Israelis saw it as a divided, corrupt, and essentially hostile group which would readily collaborate with the PLO. Thus, by this process of elimination, the Christians in the south, like their kith and kin in the north, appeared from the Israeli point of view prior to the invasion as the only force that was both capable and willing to cooperate for the purpose of ejecting the PLO from the area adjacent to the Israeli border. This view had led to the cultivation of Major Saad Haddad's small militia prior to the invasion. The latter succeeded in making himself quite popular with most of the Israelis who had been in touch with him. His force remained small and, on the whole, not terribly effective, but under Israeli control, the Israelis led themselves to believe, he would be able to exert effective influence over most of what Israel perceived to be its critical security belt. Given an opportunity, it was estimated, a Phalange-based government in Beirut would reach out to the south, whereas Haddad would remain the mainstay of power between the area under the control of the Beirut government and Israel's border. If such a situation were created

the Shi'ites would acquiesce in the same way they had acquiesced in the control of the PLO. After all, Haddad's total constituency in the area that lies between the Israeli border and the Awali River was 200,000 people, whereas the PLO's basis of support, the Palestinian refugees, was not more than 80,000. Hence, if the PLO could maintain control there despite the fact that it represented a minority group, so could Haddad. Indeed, whereas the PLO was at war with Israel and consequently drew Israeli fire to the region, Haddad would be at peace with Israel and would draw Israeli support which would be politically and economically advantageous to the entire region.

This seemingly logical scenario was further reinforced by two additional factors. Following Operation Litani in March 1978, Haddad had expanded his domain from three small Christian enclaves to a contiguous belt along the Israeli border. The bulk of the additional area was inhabited by Shi'ites. Haddad thus became, with Israeli support, the minority ruler of a Shi'ite majority. The experiment seemed quite successful. There was little strife between Haddad's Christian militia and the Shi'ite villagers, and the latter even began to join his forces as regular soldiers. In turn, from the Israeli point of view, a workable model for the entire security belt up to the banks of the Awali and Bisri seemed to have been suggested. If Haddad could do it on a small scale with the help of a small force, he might succeed in doing the same thing on a larger scale when, after an Israeli invasion and the ejection of the PLO, many more Christians and Shi'ites would join the ranks of this army.

Nor was it only a question of establishing an army carrying Lebanese insignia but collaborating with Israel. Determined not to give rise to any suggestions that they were out to annex south Lebanon as they seemed bent on doing in the West Bank, the Israelis did their utmost to make themselves as invisible as possible in Haddadland. In effect the Israeli staff working with Haddad was modeled largely on the experience in the West Bank where military governors had a complete staff of professional experts, economists, educationalists, health experts, agronomists, and so on. But in the Haddad zone this staff was small and operated more in an advisory than in a command capacity. Indeed, to emphasize Haddad's sovereignty his Israeli advisers would either not wear army uniforms at all or, at least, would remove all ranks and insignia.

If this successful experience seemed to offer a model for the entire security zone which Israel planned to put into effect following the invasion, the tendency to feel confident about the south was reinforced by the "northern" orientation of the invasion plan. The *Schwerpunkt*, or point of gravity, of the whole scheme was the change that would be wrought in the north. The perceived root cause of the malaise making an invasion necessary was the weakness of the central government in Beirut. The south, it was implicitly assumed, would simply fall into place once things were worked out in the north. Consequently, the amount of conceptual and practical attention paid to the questions of running the south was minimal. Not only was there no long-term plan starting from some irresistible desire to devour more land or to acquire access to Lebanon's water resources but, in fact, there was no real plan at all. Attention was focused politically on the north and militarily on how to get there. The south was treated from the very beginning with what could be charitably described as benign neglect.

Thus the most fundamental cause of the growing troubles in the south was the unraveling of the northern plan. Instead of moving fast, capturing the whole country up to Beirut, installing Bashir Gemayel in power, and forcing him to accept Haddad's special status in the south, as the plan had originally envisaged, the war took two months, Bashir

was assassinated, and the negotiations with Amin became bogged down. Meanwhile a whole array of problems presented themselves in the south. The bulk of the population was still quite friendly, but some were not and did not hesitate to show it. They had to be disciplined but the act of punishing them gradually set in motion a vicious circle of repression and growing opposition. There were also problems with economics, problems with the Palestinian refugees, problems emanating from the fact that the Israelis had to act as the provisional government, so to speak, of the occupied area. Had there been a coherent and well-thought-out plan for what to do with the south as soon as it was occupied, there might have been more suitable solutions for some of these problems. But in the absence of such a plan the Israelis, by instinct and tradition prone to have an unbound faith in improvisation, proceeded to deal with situations as they arose, and with only rudimentary coordination among the whole panoply of government agencies that acted on the scene. The result was a series of reflexive fits drawing on Israel's previous experience with comparable problems in the Sunni Christian West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The implicit, unspoken assumption of the former West Bank/Gaza administrators who were put in charge of south Lebanon was, to put it bluntly, that all Arabs are the same—more dangerous verbally than in practical terms, cowardly, submissive, greedy, untrustworthy, emotional, bribable, and easily intimidated into collaboration with any authority, Arab or not. Such an assumption was born not of racism but of a long experience with Israel's own (mainly Sunni) Arab minority of half a million and their compatriots in the mainly Sunni West Bank and Gaza. In dealing with the Sunni Palestinian population Israel succeeded, in the words of one observer, "in beating, wearing down, buying off, confusing and controlling . . . [them] for the better part of the century." What accounts for this success, the Israelis failed to realize, was not that they were smarter but, that the Sunni Palestinians, in "spite of their talk of steadfastness, in spite of some jeering at the Jews, in spite of the blame placed on America and the other Arabs," have been unable to "purge . . . [themselves] of the secret, abiding, depressing conviction that the reason for their defeats is that they are culturally inferior" to the Israelis.⁵⁴

The Shi'ites of south Lebanon proved, however, to be quite different. Unlike the Sunni (and often Christian) Palestinians, the Lebanese Shi'ites have few poets, writers, or university graduates. But, again unlike the Palestinians, the Shi'ites draw inspiration and fortitude from their religious traditions and from a newly found sense that they are on the move, that they have at last found the way to a genuine revival as actors in Lebanese politics.

By the time the Israelis discovered this it may well have been too late. Too much antagonism had already been generated. Too many people had already been jailed, interrogated, subject to lesser forms of harassment. No matter how anxious to avoid setting up a full-fledged military government, they had already done so in fact. Moreover, there were pressures from the outside, there were the effects on the population in the south of the division inside Israel. The withdrawal syndrome had already affected the conduct of the Israelis themselves. Above all, the collapse of the May 17 agreement threw into sharp relief the question of whether Israel was going to stay in the south of Lebanon, or parts of it, more or less permanently.

Paradoxically, the result was not dissimilar to what had been the main political repercussion of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. The Jewish state's manifest intention to stay in these parts of Palestine turned out to be the single most important boost to Palestinian nationalism. By the same token, the signs that Israel

planned to stay in south Lebanon, under one guise or another, gave a boost to the already nascent Shi'ite self-awareness. In both cases the Israelis were acting rationally. In both cases theirs was a typical response to the Jewish state's genuine security dilemma. Staying in the occupied land (be it the West Bank or the south of Lebanon), namely the assertive course of action, appeared to most Israelis, irrespective of their party affiliation, to have been a better solution to Israel's security problem than an accommodative alternative such as an abrupt withdrawal. But as predicted by Rousseau and his more recent intellectual heirs, by acting assertively the Israelis precipitated by their own hands a far greater degree of insecurity for themselves in the long run: an internationally recognized Palestinian national movement (as a result of staying in the West Bank) and a ferocious Shi'ite resistance (as a result of reflecting an intention to stay in part of south Lebanon).

If the mainstay of the Palestinian nationalism were the destitute inmates of the refugee camps within the Israeli-occupied territories and in the neighboring Arab states the wellspring of Shi'ite resistance was the religious traditions of the Shia. Misery and frustration were turned by the PLO into a source of political power and made Yasser Arafat, George Habash, Naif Hawatmeh, Khalil al Wazir, Said Musa Maragha, Yasser Abu Rabbuh, Zoheir Mohsein, Ahmed Jibril, Farouk Qaddoumi, and Salah Khalaf household names throughout the Western world. Religious fervor and a tradition of martyrdom were employed in much the same way by Nabih Berri, Daoud Daoud, Muhamad al Ghazala, Khalil Jaradi, Mahmoud Fakih, and the Shi'ite *ulama* (clergy) especially imams such as Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah of Beirut, Ali Mahdi Ibrahim of Adloun, Mohammed Mehdi Shams al Din of Nabatiyeh, Rajib al Hahreb of Jibshit, Abas Hareb of Hallusiyeh, and Muhammad Hassan al Amin from Sidon.

For small groups on the fringes of the Shi'ite resistance, such as the Hizbollah or even Hussein Mussawi's Beqa'a-based Islamic Amal, the objectives of the struggle were primarily religious—the creation of a new Shi'i order in Lebanon, as in Iran. But for the mainstream in the movement—which rested simultaneously on secular and religious leaderships—the purpose was thoroughly political. They may have employed Shi'i symbols and institutions, but their aims were to put an end to Israeli occupation, to prevent the return of the PLO, and to improve the social and political standing of the Shi'ite community within an independent Lebanese state. Any attempt to account for the Shi'ite reaction to the presence of the IDF in south Lebanon therefore has to begin with a few words about the main tenets of the Shia.

To a Christian or a Jew who has been socialized in a tradition of a certain pluralism, the Shia is an Islamic equivalent of one of the main strands of Christianity or Judaism. To a Shi'ite, however, the problem is far more complex. To account for this one has to go back to the roots of the Shia in the seventh century A.D. Upon the death of the prophet Mohammed, there was a dispute among his disciples over whether or not he had chosen an heir. A majority declared that he had not done so and proceeded to elect one of their number, Abu Baqr, as their caliph. A minority headed by Mohammed's cousin and brother-in-law, Ali, challenged this view. Ali maintained that he had been designated by Mohammed as his heir and proceeded to establish his own version of Islam. From the very beginning, then, the Shi'ites (as Ali's followers soon came to be known) assumed that theirs is the true Islam and that the Suna, then and today Islam's main current, is based on a fundamental heresy.

Ali himself designated his first born Hassan as his own heir at the head of the Shi'ite movement, a role that came to be called Imam. Hassan, the second Imam, abdicated,

whereupon his brother, Ali's younger son Hussein, became the third Imam. From the Sunni point of view this succession was, of course, also a heresy. They therefore tried to quell the Shii secession by assassinating Hussein when he was visiting Qarbala in 680 A.D. This Sunni attempt to liquidate the Shia deepened the Shi'ites' sense of adversity and persecution and their ardent belief in the inherent virtue of belonging to a militant minority. Instead of liquidating the Shia, the assassination in fact invigorated it: The dead imam was succeeded uninterruptedly by nine more imams, and the Shi'ite faith was vastly expanded.

Some time around 873-74 A.D. the twelfth imam mysteriously disappeared. His followers refused to accept his death and for about seventy years he was represented on earth by a series of four *vakils*, or deputies. The last of them died, however, without resolving the problem of succession. Since the imam was the ultimate head of the entire community, the matter could not be left in abeyance. A lengthy debate led to a consensus that the missing twelfth imam should henceforth be represented on earth by the Mujtahids, the most eminent theologians and jurists of the time, who hold the title *ayatollah*, "Miraculous sign of God." For good measure, the ayatollahs who so decreed hastened to add that this was a provisional arrangement pending the return of the hidden imam. The latter became a messianic figure, a *Mahdi*, or "The Lord of the Age," whose return is always expected and will herald the Day of Judgment and usher in an era of justice and equity on earth.

This brief and simplified summary of the origins of the Shia underlines the key tenets of this faith up until the present day: the utter negation of all other paths to God, chief of all the Sunna; the ethos of martyrdom; a constant anticipation of the Day of Judgment; and last but not least, the very special status of the *ulama*. The Shia's intolerance leads to an overbearing sense of conflict with the environment. The exaltation of Hussein's martyrdom led to a cult of suffering and weeping in which the believer is obliged to relive frequently the torments of the dead imam by watching passion plays, participating in recitations of sufferings of holy martyrs, and, above all, taking part in elaborate processions of self-flagellation. This tradition finds its clearest expression in the feast of *Ashura* on the tenth day of the month of *Muharram*, in which processions of worshipers slash their heads with razor blades and knives, then beat the wounds with the flat edges of swords to make the blood run freely onto the white sheets they wear as a sign of mourning as they march.

The ultimate form of identification with Hussein's suffering, at least in the view of a radical Shi'ite fringe is *Shahada* (martyrdom), a supreme form of self sacrifice in which the would-be martyr (*Shahid*) overcomes his fear of death in defense of the faith. Such a sacrifice is made more attractive in the Shi'i tradition by an elaborate emphasis, typical of all strands of Islam, on the delights of the hereafter (to which the latter-day martyr is certain to go by the sheer virtue of the sacrifice). Guidance in these and more mundane matters related to daily routine is entrusted to the clergy. Representatives of the missing twelfth imam, they are themselves referred to as *ulamah*, *mullahs*, or, as in the case of the Shi'ite community of Lebanon, *sheikhs*.

In a society that is conservative and traditional enough to embrace such a simplistic and darkly violent faith, the imams enjoy an uncommon position. They are the ultimate authority on matters of faith and on things temporal. They are the interpreters of God to man and of man to God. They are above the law and political institutions. They may legitimize or delegitimize a ruler (such as the shah of Iran). They have almost unlimited power in local politics, and they can manipulate religious symbols for political ends without challenge. Their power lies in the belief of their flock in their special status on

earth. And in conservative rural Shi'ite communities where such a belief is widely shared, the clergy is occasionally capable of sending volunteers to their martyr's death.⁵⁵

Theoretically, the Shi'ite clergy in south Lebanon—a peripheral province of the Shi'ite world—should all represent a radical, fundamentalist, Khomeinist commitment to the goal of an Islamic republic. All of them, indeed, were trained in Iran and frequently traveled back to that center of the faith. In practice, however, the ulama in south Lebanon for the most part eschew the idea of an Islamic republic and accept the need for a Shi'ite participation in the political life of Lebanon as a multireligious state. Theologically such an attitude is legitimized by the doctrine of *Taqiyah*, an elaborate but ambiguous notion that both Shi'ites and Druzes have adopted as a means of facilitating their survival as exposed minorities in a hostile environment. Politically, the rejection of the idea of a (Shi'ite) Islamic republic and the emphasis on the legitimacy of a pluralist Lebanon is logical not only because of reasons of geography but also because, as Shi'ites, they are hardly enamored of the pervasively Sunni idea of Pan-Arabism. A multireligious Lebanon retaining its autonomy on the rim of the Arab world has been as acceptable for Shi'ites as it has been for Lebanon's Christians and Druzes and for precisely the same reason.

Such a predisposition also facilitates coexistence, but perhaps not harmony, between the clergy and al Amal, the Lebanese Shi'ite political movement. Those who rejected this coexistence found expression in fringe political-religious organizations such as the Party of God (Hizbollah) and the Islamic *Amal*. In different ways both organizations unite political action with a fervent commitment to Shi'ite Islam in its more or less pure form. The rest have been content to accept a division of labor within the Shi'ite community between themselves and the secularist political activists of *al Amal*. In the final analysis, though, there is no question about who wields ultimate power. In Beirut and its vicinity the essentially secularist *al Amal* seems to have hit deeper roots. In the country, by contrast, the masses would go along with al Amal only insofar as the latter accepts the ultimate supremacy of the clergy.

An essentially secularist organization, *al Amal* supports Lebanese independence from the Syrians, the PLO, and the Israelis and a power reshuffle in the Lebanese system that would facilitate an equitable distribution of status and resources for the Shi'ites. It is a natural ally of the Druzes, a potential ally of the Maronites, but an uncompromising foe of the wealthy Sunni aristocracy. From the organizational point of view *al Amal* is a modern, rather centralized, voluntary association run by a central body consisting of a number of subcommittees, the most important of which is the security committee which oversees the operations of the *al Amal* militia. In addition there are parallel committees in charge of education, welfare, and so on. This same structure also exists in *al Amal's* three regional branches in the south, the Beqa'a, and Beirut. Every regional organization relies on individual cells in every specific locale. Every such cell depends on its individual members. Every individual member operates in the local milieu in which the populace is often devoted beyond bounds to the local sheikh. Thus, in the final analysis, *al Amal's* "troops" in Lebanon's rural south are likely to show as much deference to their local religious mentors as to the instructions of the organization's headquarters in Beirut.

Apart from their tendency to view the south as a secondary issue and their misguided inclination to apply to the Shi'ites attitudes and methods that had previously worked in the West Bank and Gaza, the main reason for the Israelis' failure to achieve successful accommodation with the Shi'ites was that they did not fully perceive the implications of this pattern of power in the Shi'ite community. To the extent that any attention was paid to the Shi'ites it was primarily focused on *al Amal*. The clergy was

first overlooked and then treated with insufficient subtlety. Many of them were clearly connected to Hizbollah and/or the Islamic *Amal*, which aroused the suspicion of the Israeli security services and led to searches, interrogations, and other precautionary measures. By humiliating the sheikhs in front of their flock, by challenging their status and authority, the Israelis could not but sow the seeds of conflict. Every sheikh who was thus turned into an enemy could easily carry with him his entire parish and gradually influence the positions of his counterparts in other locales. Every locale that was antagonized in this way also became a vehicle of change in the disposition of the *al Amal* movement. Given the small size of the area and the skill with which the ulama could use the mosques, the prayers, the mass sermons, and the *fatwa* (religiously sanctioned decree) as means of influencing their communities, it required no elaborate political infrastructure and took very little time from the first signs of trouble until the whole area was mobilized to oppose the Israelis. The theme of such a revolt would be secular and essentially universal—resistance to oppression. The instruments of recruitment, mobilization, loyalty, and sacrifice would be, however, religious and particularist. What the PLO tried to invoke among Palestinians through the basically alien (European) notion of secular nationalism, the Shi'ites could easily achieve by relying on the familiar symbols and institutions of the Shi'ite religion.

Last, but from the Israeli point of view, not least, the closely knit social structure of the Shi'ite community in south Lebanon together with the intensely religious aura of the resistance to occupation made the intelligence-gathering task of the various security services exceedingly difficult. In the West Bank and Gaza almost any type of simple intimidation and bribery could easily lead the population to divulge valuable information. Indeed, owing to this intrinsically collaborative predisposition of the Palestinians, the Israelis were very seldom required to resort to physical torture in order to obtain information. In south Lebanon, however, none of these techniques were effective. The Shi'ites were always more impressed by the dictates of their religion than by the fear of punishment at the hands of the Israelis. And the greater the conflict between the Israelis and the Shi'ites, the more difficult was the task of the Israeli military intelligence and SHABAK (acronym for the Hebrew equivalent of General Security Service, Israel's equivalent of the FBI) in collecting information about underground cells, sabotage programs, and overall Shi'ite planning.

The evidence supporting this interpretation of the Israeli-Shi'ite conflict in Lebanon seems rather compelling. Twelve days after the beginning of the war, the Israelis watched with delight a gathering of some 100 Christian and Shi'ite *mukhtars* (village chiefs) declaring Saad Haddad their legitimate spokesman. Moreover, during the same meeting the leader of *al Amal* in the south expressed his movement's determination to fight alongside Christians and Israelis until the PLO in south Lebanon was totally emasculated. This friendly atmosphere survived, judging by press reports, for several months. "There is no evidence," writes the *Washington Post* on December 7, 1982, "that Israel is seeking to supplant the Lebanese civil administration with its own or establish settlements as it had done in the West Bank." But the IDF had settled down in the offices of the Lebanese government and established "ten or so 'liaison units' in various villages which deal with local administration and increasingly serve as 'consulates' providing visas for Lebanese wishing to go to Israel." Moreover, visually the Israeli presence "is quite striking in many ways throughout the south. For instance, most of the road and village signs along the main coastal road . . . are now brand new Israeli posts written exclusively in Hebrew. In some villages gas pumps also have Hebrew writing as well as Arabic or English. Israeli

trucks and civilian as well as military vehicles, clearly marked through their number plates, seem as numerous as Lebanese ones along the coastal road. Big Israeli trucks loaded with Israeli goods, or foreign imports now entering from Haifa [in Israel] can be seen parked here and there on the roadsides south of Sidon, transferring their goods onto Lebanese vehicles." These transfers are not part of any agreement, implies the *Washington Post* report; nevertheless in "some cases the transfers are done right in downtown Sidon within sight of the Serail, the main Lebanese Government building."⁵⁶

A month later, however, as the Israeli-Lebanese negotiations were showing no signs of progress, Israel took steps that in retrospect seem to have begun to introduce some strains in the relations with the local population. Throughout the winter of 1982–83 the IDF and the SHABAK made a visible effort to set up a number of local militias consisting of Christians, Shi'ites, Palestinian refugees, and some Druzes. The purpose seems to have been dual; to breathe some life into the idea of an Israeli security zone, and to impress on Amin Gemayel's government that if it continued to procrastinate in the Khalde–Kiryat Shemoneh negotiations, Israel would act unilaterally.

These efforts were naturally quite successful in the case of Saad Haddad's militia, which drafted a fair number of new recruits. The Israelis attempted to emulate the same model in a dozen other centers throughout the south. Here, however, they failed abysmally. Either there was no response whatsoever or, worse, they succeeded only in recruiting elements of questionable credentials, drifters, marginal social cases—individuals who were looked upon by the population with scorn and who, in some cases, had even served on a similar basis with the PLO before the invasion.⁵⁷

The reason for the failure was simple enough. The IDF was out to recruit precisely those Shi'ites who would be al Amal's mainstay. An IDF success in evolving proxies in south Lebanon would undercut al Amal's efforts to mobilize the sleepy Shi'ite community for the purpose of changing the distribution of power in the Lebanese system as a whole. Not yet fully established themselves in the south, the al Amal activists were nevertheless sufficiently influential to deny Israel any success in this attempt to build pro-Israeli militias.

Frustrated by both the Khaldeh–Kiryat Shemoneh negotiations and the abortive attempts to form indigenous militias, the Israelis began impatiently to put pressure on the population to cooperate in the implementation of a plan for the organization of the area. The plan, it seems, was not much more than the Village League idea that had been previously tried, with limited success, on the West Bank. Every village would have a committee of five to eight members who would act somewhat like the Israeli local council, a semi-consultative/semi-executive "board" assisting the mayor or the *mukhtar* in running local affairs. In addition every community would set up a small militia of fifty to sixty members that would receive light firearms and some training and take charge of local security.

Both political and religious leaders of the Shi'ites in the south admonished their followers not to collaborate with this plan. Nabih Berri, indeed, threatened that if the Israelis had any intention of staying in Lebanon, the people "will break everything" and "fight" to prevent it.⁵⁸ Nevertheless the Israelis stepped up the effort to form these militias, this time using pressure and inducements. Some Shi'ite objectors were jailed for a number of days and intimidated. Others who had relatives in the Israeli prison camp at Ansar were promised that their relatives would be released if they collaborated in implementing this village league idea.⁵⁹

When these methods failed to elicit a more positive response on the part of the

Shi'ites, the IDF, in a deliberately demonstrative act, requested Sa'ad Haddad to march his troops through some of the area's main centers. On February 15 the Haddad force, escorted by tanks and armored personnel carriers, marched through the important Shi'ite urban center of Nabatiyeh. Simultaneously, Haddad's small army established a base in the port of Sidon and in the mainly Druze village of Hasbayah. Thus, at least nominally, the Haddad militia received from the IDF direct control over the entire twenty-five-mile security zone. In practice, however, Haddad did not have a large enough force to control this mainly Shi'ite and Sunni (both Lebanese and Palestinian) population. The main purpose, it seems, was for psychological impact on both the local population and the Lebanese government: if the former would not cooperate in setting up the local militias they might be faced with the superimposition on them of the Haddad army; similarly, if the politicians in Beirut would not agree to sign an agreement the Israelis would effect an arbitrary unilateral solution.⁶⁰

The paradox was, however, that while apparently successful in convincing the Lebanese populace that this was not a bluff but rather Israel's real intention—which it was not—the ploy failed to elicit positive response from the Lebanese government. The negotiations were ultimately affected, as has been seen, by other factors, especially U.S. pressure. But meanwhile Israel's relations with the population in the south became more tense. This led to an increased activity of the SHABAK, to greater pressures on the Lebanese, to arrests, and, inevitably, to a greater resistance.⁶¹

There is little doubt that the Israelis were fully aware of this. But, unable to achieve any of their goals and convinced that what worked in the West Bank would work in south Lebanon too, they reasoned that greater pressure might after all work. This state of mind led, on March 18, to the arrest and interrogation of Sheikh Rajib al Hahreb, the Imam of Jibshit. In retrospect al Hahreb's arrest seems to have been a critical turning point in Israel's relations with the Shi'ites. The sheikh, to be sure, had not only been active against the Israeli occupation before his arrest but was about to deliver in his Friday sermon (due on the actual day of the arrest) a scathing attack, including a *fatwa* (decree) not to speak with Israelis, buy from them, or have anything else to do with them. From the Israeli point of view the move was therefore logical both as a deterrent against similar behavior by others and as a prophylactic measure insofar as al Hahreb himself was concerned. But the importance of this young (thirty-one years old) religious leader was so great (which the Israelis must have realized) that his arrest instantly provoked a wave of violence. On March 23, three Shi'ite demonstrators were wounded by Israeli soldiers in the village of Adloun. Hundreds more marched the same day in Nabatiyeh, and there were sit-down strikes in almost every Shi'ite village from the Israeli border to Beirut and even in Ba'al Beck, in the Syrian-controlled Beqa'a.⁶²

The Israelis were inclined to interpret these events as the work of a small group, inspired and assisted by either the PLO or Iran through Hizbollah infiltrators from the latter's center in the northern Beqa'a Valley.⁶³ But while this information may well have been reliable, such a diagnosis of the problem failed to see that the reactions to al Hahreb's arrest were fueled by something deeper than incitement by a small and marginal group. In fact very quickly the IDF came close to an all-out conflict with the mainstay of power in the Shi'ite community, the clergy.

Paradoxically the May 17 accord and the Israeli redeployment that followed three months later only made things worse in the south. For one thing Israel had increased its emphasis on the threat that if Gemayel would not sign and subsequently ratify the accord, the IDF would settle in the south for an indefinite duration. Second, the May 17 accord

revealed to the southern Lebanese the extent to which the Israelis would remain involved in their affairs even if Gemayel proceeded to ratify it. Israel may have felt that it made major concessions to the Lebanese in order to facilitate an agreement. But from the Shi'ite point of view even this watered-down version of Sharon's October 1982 plan suggested that Israel was bent on staying in the south in one guise or another for many years to come. In a word, what for Israelis appeared a low profile appeared to the Shi'ites as something bordering on annexation.

Third, though opposed to the May 17 agreement because of its tacit intentions to reinforce Maronite supremacy while underwriting Israel's special privileges in south Lebanon, the Shi'ite community was also opposed to Israel's intention to implement the May 17 agreement unilaterally. Alarmed, it watched the IDF constructing camps, depots, airstrips, installations, encampments, and fortifications in the area south of the Awali River.⁶⁴ Whereas the attitude of the *ulama* was affected by religious fervor and by the harassment and humiliation of individual leaders, the Israeli decision to implement the May 17 agreement unilaterally became a focal point of *al Amal* opposition. Until the beginning of the summer of 1983 the movement had not become directly involved in resistance activities save for peaceful protests and marches. But the outrage of the mullahs on the one hand and the visible signs of an Israeli intention to settle in the south (as it appeared to the Lebanese) on the other prompted *al Amal* into action as well. "The trouble will really begin for the Israelis," warned Mohammad Ghaddar, a moderate *al Amal* leader from Ghaziyah, a few days before the redeployment of September 4, 1983,

after the partial withdrawal. *Amal* is ready to take a decision against the Israelis. After the partial withdrawal they will no longer be on a peace mission—they will be an army of occupation. The Israelis say 'we want to get rid of the terrorists.' That's all right with us—so long as they leave eventually. They say the partial withdrawal is a first step toward a full withdrawal. But they are doing the opposite of what they are saying. They are building new roads, defenses and fixed houses—not for one winter but for many winters.

Israel, Ghaddar added, is holding thirty-two *Amal* activists on the suspicion that they were planning attacks. "Every time they arrest people and beat them, there is more hatred for the Israelis. They are stirring up the people—we in *Amal* don't need to stir them."⁶⁵

What the Israelis do not seem to have fully understood is that their actions in the south were judged by the Shi'ites in the light of Israel's policy in the West Bank. In their own eyes the Israelis were in south Lebanon not in order to satisfy irredentist ambitions but to find a solution to a burning security problem. But in the eyes of the south Lebanese the Israelis were held suspect *ad initio*. They had not annexed the West Bank legally but they had been doing so through settlements. Likewise they had not declared an intention to annex Lebanese territory, but given half a chance they would do so. Israel's image as an expansionist intruder was deeply engraved in the Arab mind, including the minds—the Israelis failed to realize—of friendly Arabs such as the Shi'ites of the south. "Israel has slogans," said Muhamad al Ghazala, the *Amal* chief in Adloun, "that she only wants the Palestinians out of south Lebanon. But history tells us she wants to take south Lebanon and the waters of the Litani River."⁶⁶

Fourth, the tension between Israel and the Shi'ites further intensified during the summer of 1983 because of one more Israeli attempt to step up the establishment of militias throughout the occupied zone. The logic of Israel's action in this regard was seemingly inpeccable but ultimately questionable. Having attempted and failed to allow

Haddad's militia a leading role, a new approach was perfectly warranted. The trouble with Haddad, the Israelis figured somewhat belatedly, was not only that his force never quite succeeded in recruiting enough soldiers of sufficient quality but also that it became anathema to all other non-Christian groups. Therefore it seemed logical to assume that confining Haddad to the immediate vicinity of the Israeli border and encouraging national guard type of units on an ethnic basis elsewhere would offer a better solution. Indeed, there was some response to the call, and although the quality and reliability of the recruits were dubious—because others would not disobey the orders of the clergy and of *Amal* not to join—the enterprise seemed at the very least worth trying. In the final analysis the most important reason why the Israelis were prepared to spend so much effort and resources on this questionable enterprise was precisely the fact that they were becoming almost desperate and genuinely had a strong and logical urge to reduce their own presence to a bare minimum. But, still not convinced of the Shi'ites' ability to fill the power vacuum that would be created by an IDF withdrawal, they were determined to construct a network of local surrogates as a means of maintaining a certain hold over the area "by proxy."⁶⁷

From the Shi'ite point of view this would mean that they would remain indefinitely under Israeli control. During the summer of 1983 the Shi'ites saw for the first time in their memory a genuine opportunity to join hands with the Druzes to force the Maronites and the old Sunni establishment to agree to a new national distribution of power and position. But to achieve this they needed their own canton, an autonomous constituency, and therefore a lever with which to lay claim to greater representation in the power game in Beirut. Accordingly they had a clear interest in forcing an Israeli withdrawal from every part of the south, and it made no sense from their point of view to permit Israel to cultivate surrogates. If the Israelis were successful they would create a new force in an area that *al Amal* saw as its own base. Therefore this Israeli policy had to be foiled at all costs. Given the logic of this attitude the Israeli attempt to create the "home guard" was in itself bound to lead to further friction. The IDF pressed Shi'ites and others to collaborate. The Shi'ites for the most part applied counterpressure in different ways, including the assassination of collaborators. In turn some of the pro-Israeli elements took matters into their own hands and responded—probably not with explicit Israeli encouragement—with some violence of their own against both religious and *al Amal* elements. Thus inadvertently the introduction of the home guards created a kind of shadowy civil war (on a tiny scale), which was precisely the opposite of what the Israelis had hoped to achieve. To make matters even worse, if the IDF had previously been accused of attempting to superimpose the Christian Haddad on the unwilling Shi'ites, when the IDF changed its policy to a more pluralistic home guard approach it was accused of playing a dirty game of divide and rule.⁶⁸

Yet another reason for the *al Amal* decision to intensify action against the IDF in the fall of 1983 was connected to the organization's posture vis-à-vis Syria. The Shi'ites are ethnically Arabs but because of their religious particularism they have kept aloof from the Arab national movement. They see themselves as a minority group that can only hope to offset its inherent weakness in a small multiethnic or at least multireligious state such as Lebanon. That makes them as much patriots of an independent Lebanon as the Maronites. But the Maronite-Sunni order that had prevailed in Lebanon since independence relegated the Shi'ites, Lebanon's largest religious group, to a marginal status. Their conflict with the Gemayel regime was thus parallel to the Druze conflict with the same regime and, like the Druzes, they too needed to avoid any unnecessary friction with Syria and, if possible,

obtain Syrian support for their demands for a new national concordat. To this should be added the fact that the Syrians could use the Hizbollah and the Islamic *Amal* as instruments of subversion versus the mainstream *Amal* in the same way that they have been using the *al Saiqa* organization and the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) as instruments of penetration into the PLO. After all both these Shi'ite factions, the Hizbollah and the Islamic *Amal*, had bases in the Syrian-controlled part of Lebanon and were therefore under Syrian influence whenever the Syrians so wished.

For all these reasons Nabih Berri's *al Amal* had to avoid any impression of collusion with, not to mention acquiescence to, Israel. Having been unabashedly delighted at the defeat of the PLO that for years had controlled the main part of Shi'ite Lebanon, they had to leave no doubt about their hostility toward Israel as a means of ensuring the goodwill of the Syrians. And since they could not afford to dispute the clergy's advocacy of a struggle against the Jewish state and genuinely feared that the IDF would stay in south Lebanon if it could only afford to, it was perfectly logical for this movement to ride the crest of grassroots resistance to the IDF which was gaining momentum during the summer of 1983 as a result of the Israelis' heavy-handed encounter with the Shi'ite clergy. The result was that the previously somewhat mute Shi'ite struggle against the IDF received a powerful amplifier in terms of both media visibility and presentation of their political demands at the level of the Lebanese cabinet. Nabih Berri, previously an obscure politician, suddenly became a celebrity. Probably imitating the PLO style which he had had ample opportunity to follow closely, he would appear frequently in interviews with the world's largest television networks. At the same time he became the greatest obstacle (apart from Syria) to an Israeli-Lebanese agreement in the framework of the Naqura talks. Although neither he nor the organization he represented could really claim the dubious credit for instigating a successful terror campaign against the IDF, to the world and to many Israelis he became the spokesman if not, indeed, the symbol of the Shi'ite ascendance.

Added to these broad political reasons for the rise in Shi'ite militancy in the summer and fall of 1983 were also fortuitous factors. On October 16, which in 1983 happened to fall at the time of the *Ashura* feast, an IDF convoy, ignoring instructions, drove straight through the marketplace of Nabatiyeh, one of the Shi'ites' largest and most religious centers in the country. This innocent blunder was provocation enough for thousands of locals to stream out of their mosques and surround the convoy. Intimidated, the soliders opened fire, injuring ten people. Meanwhile the soldiers were being shot as well, and hand grenades and other explosives were tossed at them. Three IDF vehicles were set ablaze, and so was the mood of the Shi'ite population throughout most of the Israeli-occupied south. In an obvious attempt to mollify the Shi'ites, the IDF hastened to put the commander of the convoy on trial. He was found guilty and duly punished. Under different circumstances this might have helped reduce the tension somewhat, but the next day IDF and Haddad units entered Nabatiyeh, set roadblocks around it, imposed a curfew, and began a thorough search for those who had shot at the soldiers. The impact of the punishment of the careless soldiers was thus virtually annulled by the impact of these humiliating searches.⁶⁹

Almost instantly the entire Shi'ite community was up in arms against the IDF. Two days after the convoy incident there was a large gathering in Nabatiyeh at which the main speaker was the spiritual leader of the Shia in Lebanon, Sheikh Mohammed Mehdi Shams al Din. Rather than harp on religious themes, the sheikh had a thoroughly political message. He called on his flock to step up their resistance and warned Israel not to close

the Awali bridges—something the Israeli government threatened repeatedly as a means of exerting pressure on the population to stop the attacks. “Any collaboration with Israel,” he decreed, “is totally opposed to our faith.” He then proceeded to outline six guidelines for the struggle against Israel: (1) dealing with the Israelis is absolutely illegal and should be viewed as an act of treason; (2) anyone cooperating with the Israelis should be boycotted; (3) all Lebanese should cling to their land; (4) all Lebanese factions should maintain their solidarity in the face of the occupation; (5) pressure should be brought to bear on the Lebanese national leadership to protect the national institutions; and (6) all Lebanese under occupation should work together to counter Israel’s campaigns of arrests and intimidation.⁷⁰

Three days after this speech the tension rose to a new peak as a result of yet another incident between IDF soldiers and Shi’ites. An IDF unit entered the village of Jibshit and launched a search for caches of weapons. The population flocked into the streets, threw rocks at the soldiers, and surrounded one of the houses where the search was in progress. A reinforcement was called in and three Shi’ites were killed in the clash that followed.⁷¹ Ten days later the National Resistance Front, a loose umbrella organization containing *al Amal* as well as all other (mainly small) elements of resistance to the IDF, carried out the already mentioned car bomb attack against the Israeli compound in Tyre. Sixty people, including twenty-nine Israelis, lost their lives. The Shi’ite community in Lebanon declared a total war against the IDF.

The immediate result of the intensification of the struggle was the collapse of the Home Guard system that Israel had worked so hard to foster. A month earlier, on October 6, a bomb had exploded in Adloun, killing Hussein Wehbe, one of the most conspicuous leaders of the Israeli-inspired “guards.” The message to the others who had agreed to take part in this effort despite the repeated fatwas of the clergy became starkly clear: everyone who continued to collaborate with the Israelis did so at their own peril. What followed was a wave of desertions leading to the collapse of the entire guard system. The most conspicuous desertion was that of Abu Sateh. Formerly a member of the Syrian-backed *al Saiqa* organization, he had been recruited by the IDF and promptly sent with 120 others to train somewhere near Bint J’beil, close to the Israeli border. He then became a commander of one of the largest and most sturdy guards throughout the south, or so it seemed. On November 30, he disbanded his militia, crossed the lines on the Awali, and went straight to the *al Amal* headquarters in Burj al Barajneh, Beirut.⁷²

The final collapse of Israel’s attempt to establish a system of militias in the south was symbolically underlined by the death on January 14 of Saad Haddad. From Israel’s point of view he had been a model Lebanese patriot: personally courageous, unassuming in appearance, devoted to Lebanese independence, burning with hatred toward both the Syrians and the PLO, and of course utterly committed to a lasting partnership with the Jewish state. Yet to an extent it was precisely this blend of positive attributes that was so misleading. There was only one Saad Haddad. The Israeli assumption that others like him existed and that if Israel only tried hard enough it would find them was entirely unrealistic. By the time of the Major’s death the Israelis were beginning to come to grips with this truth. But evidently it was too late.

Haddad’s death and the escalating conflict with the Shi’ites, under the combined leadership of the clergy and an increasingly more militant *Amal*, led to something amounting to a policy review. The idea of the home guards was abandoned. Haddad’s own militia was turned into a regular army, and a protégé of the Chamounites, a retired Lebanese Army Brigadier General by the name of Antoine Lahad, was appointed as this

army's commander. In the next year or so, the IDF figured, the South Lebanese Army (SLA) could be rapidly expanded to a force of 5,000 soldiers by drawing primarily on the population of all denominations in the southernmost part of Lebnaon, close to the border with Israel. The SLA would thus provide an orderly force rather than a para-military militia, and it would fit precisely into the framework of the May 17 accord. In fact it would be the territorial brigade that the Annex (to the May 17 accord) envisaged for the southern zone of the security belt.

The new model also had an important economic aspect. Organized as a professional army, the SLA would pay the soldiers regular salaries. Close to the Israeli border it would enjoy a degree of confidence that no small village militia across the Litani River could ever hope to develop. Accordingly, the incentives for recruitment into this army would be increased and the disincentives reduced. It could provide a source of respectable subsistence for a lot of young people, making it attractive not only to Christians but also to other communities, including the Shi'ites in the area. But since all this would cost a great deal of money, which Israel could ill afford to spend, the SLA should be allowed to raise taxes from the communities within its jurisdiction. The Lebanese government might be willing to pay half the cost in order to underline Lebanese sovereignty in the area, while raising the taxes from the local population would create a deeper bond between the SLA and the population within its jurisdiction. In turn the IDF might not have to be too intimately involved in the daily operations of the SLA.⁷³

The second aspect of the new policy that began to emerge early in 1984 related to the method of dealing with Shi'ite resistance. The IDF reached the conclusion that there was no escape from a significant increase in pressure. The logic of this is not difficult to understand. There were basically two choices: to play a game of accommodation in the hope that it would induce a similar response from the rebellious Shi'ites, or to attempt to change the Shi'ites' attitudes through greater pressure. Accommodation could reinforce a Shi'ite evaluation that the IDF was acting out of weakness which in turn would lead to an escalation of Shi'ite terrorism. Given the tacit rivalry among the local clergy, the local *al Amal* network, the militant factions in the Beqa'a, and the *al Amal* national leadership under Berri, there was every reason to believe that the moderates among the Shi'ites would lose and that the result would be an attempt to exploit IDF restraint for the purpose of increasing the Shi'ites' gains. Berri's increasingly militant speeches and the fact that moderates such as Ghaddar lost ground supported this classic response to the security dilemma. By contrast, if the pressure on the Shi'ite population were increased sufficiently to make day-to-day life virtually intolerable for the population, there might be pressure on the leadership, the IDF figured, to fall back on a policy of passive resistance.

Paradoxically, this argument was quite clearly reinforced by the collapse of the May 17 accord in early February 1984. Previously the lingering hope that the accord could be saved had led the Israeli government to avoid the complete sealing of the Awali bridges. Security searches on the Awali and Bisri bridges, to be sure, had become quite extensive leading to a great deal of resentment on the part of Lebanese who had to wait in line for hours and sometimes days to cross. But at least the pretense of "open bridges" (as across the Jordan River) was maintained. Once the Lebanese moved to abrogate the agreement, Israel was no longer bound by it either. It therefore became a feasible policy to build up popular pressure against the resistance to Israeli presence through a manipulation of the passage on the bridges. If the bridges were closed the hardship for the population would be substantially increased, and there might be demands for a letup in terrorism against the Israelis. Moreover, it was widely assumed by the IDF, partly on the basis of evidence and

partly as a result of the experience on the West Bank, that terrorism within the area under Israeli control could be curbed through the creation of an "explosives famine." Whatever people's motives, if they have neither weapons nor explosives they are bound to become far less dangerous. On the West Bank, Israel was very successful in curbing violence through such forms of covert coercion. The result was that terrorists on the West Bank had to produce their own homemade weapons and charges. This was complicated and resulted not only in primitive implements but often in more damage to those who produced them or tried to employ them than to their prospective victims, the Israelis.

In the long run such a policy may have had a certain chance of success. In the short run, however, it turned the already difficult situation in the Israeli-occupied part of Lebanon into a virtual pressure cooker. Business in the south was reduced to one-third its normal volume. Sit-ins and demonstrations took place in almost every urban and semi-urban center. Sermons by the Shi'ite clergy became increasingly anti-Semitic, reminding audiences of the massacre of Jews in the Arabian peninsula in the seventh century A.D. and promising that the Israelis were destined to a similar fate.⁷⁴

The pressure led to disputes among the Lebanese themselves, which on a number of occasions ended in shootouts and casualties. In turn the *Amal* movement became somewhat split between advocates of increased resistance and advocates of a return to less violent forms of pressure on the Israelis.⁷⁵ Against such a background a catalytic incident would be disastrous. This happened on February 16, 1984, when Sheikh Hahreb, the most militant imam in the area, was shot dead. His excited followers hastened to blame Israel for the killing, and several weeks later a deserter from one of Israel's militias did in fact turn up in Beirut and claimed that he had been paid by the Israelis to perform the assassination. But the truth is that it was done either by local rivals of the sheikh or, as the Israeli intelligence suspected, by outside provocateurs.⁷⁶

Since the Shi'ite populace assumed as a matter of course that the Israelis were the culprits, it does not really matter who in fact was responsible. The die was cast by the suspicion, which reflected accurately how strongly some Lebanese had come to feel toward the Israelis whom they had received as liberators only eighteen months earlier. The Israeli government was slow to acknowledge this change. As late in the process as February 1984, Minister of Defense Arens was still claiming confidently that behind the violent minority there was a vast "silent majority" of southern Lebanese who were basically friendly toward Israel.⁷⁷ But the extent to which he failed to grasp the magnitude of the problem was revealed in the steadily growing unrest of the coming months and especially late in September, when Israel was widely blamed for another murder perpetrated by Lebanese against Lebanese. The background to this incident was the slaying of some Druze soldiers of the SLA by a Shi'ite ambush. The Druze response was quick and vicious. Several Druzes in SLA uniform on a search mission in the village of Sukhmour rounded up some of the locals, all Shi'ites, and proceeded to shoot them. They managed to kill thirteen and wound twenty-seven before being stopped by General Lahad and an Israeli officer.⁷⁸ Israel was widely accused by the population of having deliberately encouraged the act. Tempers rose further, and so did the extent of Israeli security measures. There were more roadblocks, more preventive detentions, more searches for arms and hidden local leaders, and, despite all this, more Israeli casualties. Things were clearly getting out of hand.

The Government of National Unity under Shimon Peres decided to make a bold bid for accommodation. On November 11, 1984, it announced an offer to the Shi'ites to agree to a ceasefire in order to stop the vicious cycle of terrorism and repression. But the Shi'ite

response was utterly negative. Nabih Berri was clearly riding a wave which he pretended to control. The signs that the IDF was increasingly anxious to leave Lebanon were obvious to anyone who followed the Israeli media or watched the conduct of Israeli soldiers in the field. If *al Amal* were to accept Peres's offer it would lose the political momentum it had gained by the escalation, risk a dispute with the mullahs (which it could not win), and merely make it easier for Israel to drive a harder bargain concerning the future of south Lebanon.⁷⁹

There is every reason to believe that Peres and his colleagues fully realized that these were the main components of the Shi'ite's calculus at this juncture. But, preparing to launch the final stage in the IDF's withdrawal from Lebanon, they were determined to improve Israel's weak bargaining power. This meant that pressure on the Shi'ites would have to be further stepped up. But before doing so it would be politic and would not involve any risk to offer a stretched hand. The Shi'ite rejection, which was paralleled by Berri's pressure on the Lebanese cabinet to slow down the already lethargic Naqura talks, thus gave Israel a reason to call off the talks. It also became the prelude to Israel's implementation in south Lebanon of an Iron Fist policy and, simultaneously, a process of withdrawal from the inferno that the Iron Fist inevitably created there.

The Domestic Debate

"By leaving Lebanon," wrote a Hebrew University professor of political science in January 1985, "Israel returns to sanity."⁸⁰ If his verdict is correct it took the Jewish state a long time to make its way back to sanity. Over a year and a half had elapsed from the "redeployment" of September 4, 1983, to the final withdrawal of the IDF from Lebanon on June 6, 1985, the third anniversary of the invasion. During this period approximately 100 Israelis lost their lives, bringing the total number of dead in this war to 654 and the total number of widows to 394. Meanwhile the number of injured Israelis rose to 3,873, and the cost to the Israeli economy climbed to a staggering sum of anything from \$1.5 to \$5 billion, depending on what is counted as a cost.⁸¹ Why did it take so long?

The answer lies in two related aspects of adaptation to change. First, the withdrawal resulted from a painful reassessment of perceptions on the part of the Israeli population as a whole and the decision makers acting on their behalf. Second, the decision to withdraw required a domestic consensus no less than had the decision to launch the war. The withdrawal, at least on the face of it, made no immediately apparent strategic sense. It would make Israel look weak. It might lead to the buildup of fresh pressures. It could result in renewed attacks on the Galilee. And for all these reasons it ran contrary to the common logic of response to the nation's security dilemma. Yet the cost of holding on was growing so fast that the entire Israeli political elite was forced to reassess these assumptions. The reappraisal was easy enough for those who, on both extremes of the political spectrum, were quick to come up with clear-cut advocacies either to hold on (as advocated by the extreme right) or to pull out as quickly as possible (as advocated by the extreme left). Mainstream political opinion was, however, slower to digest the need for a reassessment and to come up with an agreed formula for carrying out the disengagement from the quagmire.

In a sense this is why the withdrawal took so long. In more specific terms the reappraisal evolved in four distinct phases. During the first phase, from September 1983 to February 1984, the government was still optimistic about the prospects for a withdrawal

within the framework of the May 17, 1983, agreement, whereas the main opposition argued that this was impossible and called for the immediate initiation of an orderly but unilateral process of disengagement. During the second phase, from March to September 1984, the debate between the government and the opposition became inseparably intertwined with the election campaign. The result, paradoxically, was not the intensification of the debate but rather its muting to almost a whisper. During the third phase, September 1984 through January 1985, the former opposition joined the coalition in a Cabinet of National Unity and while continuing the debate, both main components in this coalition pinned their hopes on the outcome of the Naqura talks. When it became clear that a withdrawal within the framework of an agreement with Lebanon and (indirectly) Syria was a pipe dream, the strategic debate entered its last and most crucial phase. Ultimately consensus was reached. But the search for a stable consensus had had a significant impact on the method that was chosen to put the withdrawal into effect as well as on the timetable.

The key participants in the debate over withdrawal were the leaderships of the three main party blocs, the Likud, the Labor Alignment, and, to a lesser degree, the small religious parties. Public opinion was relegated to a secondary role. Moreover, even the debate between the party leaderships was conducted in the open only during the first six months of the year and a half under discussion. Accordingly the analysis in this chapter is divided into five parts. It opens with a brief overview of public opinion. Then it moves to a presentation of the parliamentary opposition up to the general elections of July 23, 1984. A third section takes a look, once again, at the position of the IDF. A fourth section examines the position of the Likud government up to the election campaign in the summer of 1984. And the concluding section offers a detailed history of the decision-making process that led to the final withdrawal.

Public Opinion

The fact that the Labor party, in its June 1983 decision, embraced the demand for a withdrawal resulted in an almost total eclipse of the extraparliamentary opposition. Peace Now and its antiwar partners such as Parents Against Silence and Yesh Gvul maintained a semblance of continued activity. But only on one occasion, the first anniversary of the murder of Emil Grunzweig, on February 4, 1984, were they successful in organizing a mass rally of a comparable magnitude to the demonstrations of the previous two years.⁸² Otherwise their activities were reduced to meetings with cabinet ministers,⁸³ colorful street theater featuring antiwar themes,⁸⁴ a weekly demonstration (mainly by left-wing *HaShomer HaTza'ir* members of kibbutzim) opposite the prime minister's office,⁸⁵ and a number of conventional rallies which failed abysmally to draw any public interest.⁸⁶

As the reappraisal leading to withdrawal progressed, however, there were some faint signs of opposition against a withdrawal. The attempt to arouse people against a withdrawal was naturally most noticeable in Jewish villages and towns along the Lebanese border. These communities were apprehensive that a withdrawal might return them to the dark days of Katyusha rocket attacks when they suffered casualties, economic damages, and the discomfort of having to spend long hours in air-raid shelters. "For the first time in many years," the major of Kiryat Shemonah who led such a demonstration told reporters, "we have tasted a normal life in a quiet region."⁸⁷ But his message failed to elicit any serious public response. The number of demonstrators in a gathering such as this was minuscule. In fact it appears to have smaller than even the number of participants in

a mainly kibbutznik-based "Bring the Boys Home" counterdemonstration that took place in the same place and at the same time.

If the reason for the apathy on the left was that the Labor party had monopolized the call for a withdrawal, the reason for apathy on the right was more complex. It stemmed, in the first place from the fact that traditionally—with the exception of a hyperactive vociferous fringe—the constituency of the right in Israel had been far less active in its participation in political life. In fact Begin proved to be the only right-wing politician capable of drawing large crowds to political rallies. Second, the Israeli right was, in a sense, thrown off balance by the evidence that its own representatives in the Knesset and the cabinet came around only grudgingly to the view that a withdrawal was inevitable. The only political forces that refused to accept the notion of a withdrawal were the *Tehiya* party and Rabbi Meir Kahane's *Kach* movement, both of which had only a small following. Finally, even the Israeli right found it hard to demonstrate against a withdrawal when every day Israeli soldiers were falling in south Lebanon. This attitude caused diehards such as former chief of staff Rafael Eitan to establish a new movement based on the principles of Zionist fundamentalism. "Something has happened to this nation," Eitan said. "There has been erosion on the most basic matters—education, aliyah [immigration], settlement, and work. We have founded this movement at the eleventh hour to help the country."⁸⁸ But Eitan's rhetoric (he is far from being a good speaker) and principles had hardly any impact on the emotional and essentially nonideological populist right. The war in Lebanon seemed to have exhausted both left and right.

Exhaustion and resignation should not, however, be mistaken for any fundamental reshuffle of voters' alignments. If anything, despite the cost of the war, despite the deteriorating economic situation, despite the image of abject failure that the media had (justifiably) given the Likud government, electoral support for the Likud and the right more generally hardly declined. To be sure, Begin's inglorious departure from the political scene did result in a decline in support for his party during the first six or seven months after his resignation. A poll taken in July 1983, when Begin's popularity was already in decline, had given him the support of 33.2 percent of the respondents. His successor, Itzhak Shamir, according to a poll in January 1984, received the support of only 17.6 percent of the respondents and, for the first time since the Likud's advent to power in 1977, less than the popular support for a Labor leader, President Itzhak Navon, who was seen by 18 percent as "best suited to serve as Prime Minister."⁸⁹

Another poll conducted in April 1984 underlined the adverse impact of Begin's departure on support for his party in a somewhat different way. Based on the question, If elections were held today which party would you vote for?, the poll registered a Likud decline from 38.5 percent in May 1983 to 34 percent in December 1983 to 28 percent in

Table 4.

| | May 1983 | December 1983 | April 1984 |
|-----------------|----------|---------------|------------|
| Economy | 22% | 11% | 12% |
| Social Policy | 36 | 28 | 29 |
| Defense | 55 | 49 | 40 |
| Foreign Policy | 38 | 53 | 40 |
| General Success | 38 | 31 | 24 |

Table 5.

| | <i>December 1983</i> | <i>April 1984</i> | <i>June 1984</i> |
|-----------------|----------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Economy | 11% | 12% | 12% |
| Social Policy | 28 | 29 | 29 |
| Defense | 49 | 40 | 40 |
| Foreign Policy | 53 | 40 | 38 |
| General Success | 31 | 24 | 25 |

Source: Jerusalem Post, 29 June, 1984.

Table 6.

| | <i>April 1984</i> | <i>June 1984</i> |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Labor Alignment: Peres, Navon, Rabin | 41% | 43% |
| Likud: Shamir, Levi, Arens | 31 | 32 |
| Both Equally Good | 8 | 9 |
| Neither Good | 12 | 11 |
| No Opinion | 8 | 5 |

Source: Jerusalem Post, 29 June, 1984.

April 1984. At the same time this poll indicated a corresponding revival of support for Labor. In May 1983 Labor had scored 33 percent. In December 1983 the main opposition party was supported by 40.5 percent. In April 1984, Labor scored 41 percent, compared with Likud's 28 percent. As the results shown in Table 4 suggest, the main reason for the Likud's decline was the public's perception of poor performance. The respondents were asked the following question: "In your opinion is the government succeeding in the following areas?" The same trend continued into June (see Table 5). Yet, another question posed in the same survey revealed that the main reason for the Likud's decline was the image of its leading team rather than its specific policy performance. The question to the respondents was: "Before you is the list of three leading personalities in the two big parties. Which group do you think can better lead the country?" The answers to this question leave no doubt about the importance of the personality factor, as Table 6 shows very clearly. One of the most striking features of these results is the number of respondents who were either indifferent or opposed to both leadership teams. This suggests a considerable floating vote as well as potential support for other parties. A month later, just a few days before the elections, this was confirmed by another set of surveys which indicated a strong recovery of popularity by the Likud, despite the economic situation, despite even Begin's absence, and, most important of all, despite the growing number of casualties in Lebanon. The surveys also indicated a further increase in the percentage of "undecided." Tables 7, 8, and 9 bring that out quite convincingly.

The significant percentage of undecided, the fact that the Likud was recovering, the Likud lead in terms of its perceived ability to deal with the social gap (between Ashkenazim and Sephardim), and the narrow gap between the perceived Likud and Labor ability to deal with Lebanon should have alerted Labor to the fact that the Likud was not in for a severe electoral punishment. Indeed, within less than a week the elections took

Table 7. Likud Government's Performance

| | December 1983 | April 1984 | June 1984 | July 1984 |
|-----------------|---------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| Economy | 11% | 11% | 12% | 18% |
| Social Policy | 28 | 29 | 29 | 46 |
| Defense | 49 | 40 | 40 | 46 |
| Foreign Affairs | 53 | 40 | 38 | 45 |
| General Success | 31 | 24 | 25 | 34 |

Source: *Jerusalem Post*, 17 July 1984.

Table 8. Rival Leadership Teams

| | April 1984 | June 1984 | July 1984 |
|--------------------------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| Labor Alignment: Peres, Navon, Rabin | 41% | 43% | 41% |
| Likud: Shamir, Levi, Arens | 31 | 32 | 36 |
| Both Equally Good | 8 | 9 | 7 |
| Neither Good | 12 | 11 | 10 |
| No Opinion | 8 | 5 | 6 |

Source: *Jerusalem Post*, 17 July 1984.

Table 9. Evaluation of Rival Teams' Performance

| | Labor Alignment | Likud | Others or No Opinion |
|-------------------|-----------------|-------|----------------------|
| Economy | 46% | 26% | 28% |
| Inflation | 44 | 24 | 33 |
| Lebanon | 44 | 38 | 18 |
| Public Savings | 36 | 32 | 32 |
| Judea and Samaria | 36 | 43 | 21 |
| Social Gap | 27 | 41 | 32 |

Source: *Jerusalem Post*, 29 July 1984.

place and the Likud lost very little support. Labor's lead was insufficient to enable it to form a government coalition, and the bulk of the support the Likud lost went to *Tehiya*, *Morasha*, and Kahane's *Kach*, all of which were significantly more militant in terms of Jewish-Arab relations in all facets, including Lebanon, than was the Likud.

In a sense the Labor party should not have been very surprised. At the very beginning of the election season the Labor campaign management ordered a survey whose purpose was to define which issues should feature prominently in the party's electioneering. The survey was never made public because it turned out that 50 percent of the respondents would react very badly to a Labor emphasis on the Lebanon issue. The country was clearly divided down the middle between those who felt that the war was justified and that retreat would be a mistake and those who felt otherwise.⁹⁰ The result was that during the

election campaign the Lebanon issue was hardly touched by either leading party. Thus, while Israeli soldiers were getting killed almost every day, the reason for their suffering such a fate was not discussed in the country's general elections.

After the elections the topic came back into the domain of public opinion, but in a very modest way. With both the Likud and the Labor parties in the cabinet, neither had any interest in engaging in a public controversy that would complicate the issue further and subject the fragile coalition to additional strain. On the Labor side this attitude was manifested by a clear disengagement from Peace Now. On the second anniversary of Emil Grunzweig's death the movement planned yet another mass rally. They invited Prime Minister Peres to attend the meeting, but he declined. This drew some angry reactions from Peace Now activists. "Since Peres became a Prime Minister," one of them said acidly to a journalist, "we've stopped being an acceptable party fit for cooperation."⁹¹ The speaker's chagrin must have been furthered by the fact that the rally was attended by less than 1,000 people, compared with some 50,000 the year before.⁹² If that was the feeling among Peace Now activists they could draw some solace from the fact that despite deep anxieties in the Galilee as the IDF's withdrawal was nearing,⁹³ there were hardly any demonstrations against withdrawal either. The feeling in the Galilee was vividly depicted by Shlomo Avineri, a former Director General of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, who had initially supported the invasion of Lebanon.

The real verdict on the Israeli Government's decision to withdraw unilaterally from Lebanon has not come from Beirut or Washington, but from Kiryat Shemonah. This development town in northern Israel has been a frequent target for PLO terrorism; it is inhabited mostly by Jews of North African origin, and has traditionally been a stronghold of the right wing Likud. It was there that Menachem Begin was acclaimed as "King of Israel," and it was there that he uttered his "sacred vow" that no Katyusha rockets will ever fall on Israel from Lebanon. Yet, when last week the Likud Mayor of Kiryat Shemonah tried to organize a mass demonstration against the withdrawal decision, more journalists and TV crews turned up in the town's center square than demonstrators.⁹⁴

The Knesset

Having made a decision in the party's political bureau in June 1983 to demand a unilateral withdrawal, the Labor party leadership was at last freed of all constraints. No longer did it need to resort to ambiguities and verbal gymnastics. It was at liberty to blast the Likud government persistently in the hope that either the latter would come around to its views—which would be to Labor's electoral advantage—or that it would not do so, which in the face of the growing costs of the war would once again be, Labor hoped, to its electoral advantage. Given such a calculus, individual Labor leaders could also ease their own consciences about the impact of their domestic political position on Israel's national posture. Having overcome their own doubts about the pros and cons of staying within Lebanese territory as a means of maintaining the twenty-five-mile security belt for which the war was officially initiated—with Labor consent—the Labor leadership could assume that this would not work. Following such an assumption, casualties suffered as a result of the weakening of the government's position by domestic criticism seemed more acceptable than casualties incurred as a result of a prolonged stay in Lebanon. Hence Labor criticism was not only legitimate but, in the view of the Labor leadership, a sacred duty of the parliamentary opposition.

The tone of Labor criticism was set by the party chairman, Shimon Peres, barely a week after the September 4, 1983, redeployment. Speaking at the Haifa Labor Council, he states that Israel should withdraw from Lebanon within "two to three months."⁹⁹ If Israel continued to search for a political settlement in Lebanon as a prerequisite for a military pullout, there was a danger, he told a (left-wing) MAPAM meeting three weeks later, that the IDF would remain bogged down in Lebanon for years.⁹⁶ Echoing at last the same view, Rabin called Israel's involvement in Lebanon (which he had supported during the war itself) a *plonter* (Yiddish for "Gordian knot") and advocated that security arrangements be made, to the extent possible, in the south, and that the IDF pull out without delay.⁹⁷

A less specific but incomparably more eloquent plea for a unilateral withdrawal was made two weeks later by Abba Eban who, unlike Rabin and (to a lesser degree) Peres, had opposed the war all along. In a *Jerusalem Post* article entitled "Bad Advice from Good Friends," he admonished both the U.S. and the Israeli governments not to become involved in a war with Syria for the purpose of defending Gemayel's shaky regime in Beirut. Quoting Alfred North Whitehead, he reminded his readers that war "can protect, it cannot create." Israel's war in Lebanon was fought without consensus and was misguided from the start, since in the last prewar year "of ceasefire and deterrence . . . no Israelis lost their lives in Galilee or anywhere else in northern Israel." Israelis, he continued, "have about as much nostalgia for Beirut and the Shouf mountains as Americans have for Saigon." The Jewish state "will absolutely decline to invest the lives of its sons in the expulsion of Syrian forces or in the fantasy of a stable, united Lebanon under a Christian Phalangist leadership which has manifestly failed to assert its authority or to become the focus of a Lebanese consensus." A change of course for Israel would be, Eban argued, the most rational thing to do. "If a nation changes the direction of its thought and policy under the influence of experience, this should not be described as a 'flinch' or as 'retrenchment' but as a return to the rationality which is a nation's surest and strongest shield. The alternative is to throw more and more assets onto the wheel in the hope of a jackpot result that would seem to recoup the existing loss." The key to a prudent policy, he concluded, is a search for limited but viable arrangements with Syria. Under Assad,

Syria . . . is capable of pragmatic arrangements that express a mutual interest in the avoidance of a shooting war, and once an agreement is concluded with Damascus, it is likely to be effective. Not a single shot has been fired and not a single terrorist infiltration has taken place across the disengagement lines for nine years. . . . The problem of reconciling basic Syrian interests with a maximal degree of Lebanese sovereignty is intricate; but it cannot be solved by Israeli bombs or even by Israeli presence.⁹⁸

During the spring and early summer of 1984 Labor criticism of the government's policy and advocacy of a unilateral withdrawal became increasingly more pointed and specific. The Labor party's position, Peres told a Zionist General Council meeting early in January, is that Israel should leave Lebanon unilaterally, implementing by itself the four security conditions demanded by the Likud: the right to fly over southern Lebanon; the right to patrol Lebanese coasts; the right to regularize the Haddad militia forces; and the right to preserve intelligence elements inside south Lebanon.⁹⁹ To achieve this, Itzhak Rabin said a month after Peres's speech to the ZGC, Israel should not withdraw to another line inside Lebanon but withdraw altogether, leaving behind it local units of friendly

elements and a UNIFIL force.¹⁰⁰ The reason for leaving in such an abrupt way, the ex-prime minister and chief of staff indicated two weeks later, is that the tide of Shi'ite terrorism as a result of the IDF's presence in south Lebanon makes PLO terrorism look like "child's play."¹⁰¹

Rabin's argument was echoed in greater detail by Peres during a television interview the same week. Instead of waiting for the impossible to happen, he said, Israel should make it happen. Instead of waiting for an elusive political reality to facilitate an IDF withdrawal, Israel should extricate itself from the quicksand of Lebanese politics, ignore the need for a political solution, and defend itself from its own side of the border through an active and aggressive defense policy. If the IDF patrolled the skies of Lebanon as well as its coasts, if it maintained a small intelligence infrastructure capable of giving an early warning of PLO return, if some kind of an "executive" (rather than a contractual) link were maintained with Haddad's militias, and if the terrorists were made to understand that they would be hit remorselessly every time they tried to set up base close to Israel's border (which, he forgot to mention, they must have understood before the war), then, Peres said, Israel's security in the north could be ensured.

With all due respect to the negotiating talents of Uri Lubrani and Meir Merhav (Israel's chief contacts with the local population), Peres added, they have been given an impossible task. The checkerboard of ethnic and religious groups in the south of Lebanon cannot be put together through these gentlemen's diplomacy. Nor, cautioned the Labor chairman, would it be wise to effect a second partial withdrawal to, for example, the Zaharani or to the Litani and part of the "iron triangle" in the Nabatiyeh Heights. Such a partial withdrawal would still leave a substantial Lebanese population under Israeli control and would therefore not do enough to reduce Israel's casualties and friction with the Lebanese. Instead, he concluded, Haddad's army could be used effectively to man roadblocks, keep an ear to the ground in the towns and villages of the south to pick up any surreptitious return of the terrorists. Specialist Israeli intelligence personnel and sophisticated electronics could augment the capacity of this "ear."¹⁰²

While other Labor leaders such as Gad Ya'akobi,¹⁰³ Mota Gur,¹⁰⁴ and Chaim Bar Lev¹⁰⁵ were making speeches in which they claimed that the war had cost \$4.5 billion (including indirect costs), still cost some \$800,000 daily, and should therefore be stopped unilaterally, Ezer Weizman, previously Begin's Minister of Defense, formed a new party under the name *Yahad* ("Together") and proceeded to argue for a pact with Syria. Sharon. Weizman argued, "cannot be held solely responsible for the war. It was a cabinet decision. The other Ministers [in the Likud Government] cannot say, 'I am only responsible for telephones or for energy and not for the war.'" The government should "climb down off the withered limb of its policy in Lebanon, and stop insisting on linking an Israeli withdrawal with a Syrian pullback of troops." Although one of Weizman's closest partners in the new party was "Fuad," Brigadier General Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, one of the main architects of the Maronite connection, Weizman advocated a unilateral withdrawal based on Haddad and on an understanding with Syria. Both Syria's own record, he said, and the tacit but stable understanding with Jordan since 1967 suggest that a tacit pact with the *Ba'ath* Republic can and will work.¹⁰⁶

By June 12, 1984, as the election campaign was gathering momentum, this constant barrage of criticism culminated in a full-dress Knesset debate. The initiative for the debate came from the Labor party and Itzhak Rabin, the party's recently elected "shadow" Minister of Defense, who presented his party's position in great detail. After two years, he said to the Knesset, Syria had tightened its control over Lebanon, a government hostile

to Israel was in power in Beirut, 20,000 terrorists were back in Lebanon, and more were returning while a Khomeinist Shi'ite terrorism had come into being. The Likud government, argued Rabin, had no solution for ensuring the security of the Galilee settlements or for bringing home the troops.

Having prefaced his presentation with this diatribe, he then proceeded to outline Labor's alternative policy. The IDF should set itself a target of leaving Lebanon in two stages, to be completed six months after a number of conditions were met. The main condition was that a beefed-up UNIFIL force should move into all areas evacuated by the IDF as a means of keeping Syria "and as much as possible of the terrorists" out of range. In the first stage, Rabin proposed, the IDF should withdraw primarily in the eastern sector, to an area south of Qar'oun Lake, and for three months it should examine from this new position the extent to which UNIFIL had been successful in fulfilling its mission.

Another condition that would have to be met before further withdrawal was that the South Lebanese Army would be put in charge, with Israeli help, of stability in the south, until Lebanon regained its sovereignty and territorial integrity (implying a Syrian withdrawal). Amid spirited heckling from the Likud benches and shouts that Rabin in his proposals was "playing chess with himself" since there were no parties with which to carry such a plan into effect, Arens, the incumbent minister of defense, rose to answer the Labor motion in the name of the government. He reminded Rabin that as prime minister he himself had had no faith in UNIFIL. He then proceeded to review some of Israel's previous war experiences in order to underline the fact that almost every one of the previous wars had been accompanied by disputes and differences of opinion among the Israelis themselves as well as by further violence owing to the Arabs' continued hostility. Even the Six Day War, the minister of defense reminded the House, had been followed by a bloody war of attrition in which 772 Israelis were killed and 3,482 wounded, and there were arguments at the time, Arens tartly recalled, about the wisdom of digging in on the banks of the Suez Canal.

What, then, was the difference between the Lebanon war and all previous wars? Arens inquired rhetorically. The real difference, he charged, was that in Israel's five previous wars differences of opinion had not been trumpeted in public and did not lead to demonstrations in the streets. "I regret to say," he concluded, "that the opposition failed in its duty, though it knows as well as we do. . . . "This charge evoked noisy interjections from Labor benches, including exclamations such as "Catch the thief!" "Now we know who's guilty!" and "You were good in opposition, you [meaning Arens' Likud] should have stayed there!" When the storm subsided Arens, a cool and well-composed person, continued his admonition: "The opposition should know that in battle there is no substitute for unity." From here he moved to the substance of his reply to Labor's motion, namely, whether or not the IDF would be defending Israel's north more effectively from inside south Lebanon or from behind the international border. Citing a number of recent cases in which Katyusha rockets had fallen on the Galilee while the IDF was in Lebanon, he argued that this was the best proof that staying in Lebanon was better than moving out. It is far more difficult for terrorists to shoot their rockets from behind IDF lines than to shoot without an IDF presence. Hence the Galilee is best defended, despite IDF casualties, when Israel remains in control of a security belt inside Lebanon.¹⁰⁷

The Knesset debate took place one day before the beginning of the House's summer recess, during which the general elections would be held. As such it was in a sense the end of the public debate in Israel over the involvement in Lebanon. After the elections there would be a National Unity coalition, and all serious debate would be confined to the

cabinet's chambers. But neither the Labor critique nor the government's retort had been mere politicking. They represented two basic approaches to the problem which had their pros and cons in strategic terms and had less to do with party politics than was suggested by the Knesset debate.

The IDF

Comparing his impressions of the IDF in 1983 to his impressions after an eighteen-month stint in Washington, Israel's leading military correspondent, Zeev Schiff, had this to say:

It is not just a different Lebanon. It is first of all a different Israeli Army. It is astonishing and painful. What the people who have initiated this war have done to the Israeli Army is unforgivable. You no longer talk about "what the Israeli Army is defending" but about "who will defend the Israeli Army." You see the change first of all in the eyes of the soldiers. It's a look which reminded me of the look in the eyes of the American soldiers I saw in the final stages of Viet Nam. It is the look of soldiers and officers who know that their chances of winning in Lebanon are less than negligible. In Lebanon you can see an army that has experienced firsthand how military might is rendered impotent.¹⁰⁸

Schiff may have somewhat overdramatized matters. Nonetheless, there can be little doubt that the long experience in Lebanon had an adverse effect on the IDF in a variety of important ways. In the first place, the need to use a substantial part of the units in occupation duties undercut the IDF's training programs. A reserve army, its "main job," in the words of a senior officer, "is to prepare for the next war. This can't be done if you spend your reserve duty on security trivia in Lebanon." Instead of spending the thirty-odd days a year that a reservist is obliged to contribute on improving professional standards, studying new weapons, tactical exercises of varying scales, the IDF's best field units were called up for occupation duties. "Instead of becoming better tank gunners, reservists are becoming better policemen. . . . This harms [Israel's] strength."¹⁰⁹

A second, less palpable but at least as important damage to the IDF was the deepening divisions within its ranks over the rights and wrongs of this controversial war. This had a highly adverse effect on morale, that most elusive of all components of power. Not easily measured, a vivid way in which the existence of this problem can be gauged is through an impressionistic press description of a talk that soldiers in one combat unit had with Prime Minister Itzhak Shamir. In a freewheeling question-and-answer session, one soldier stood to challenge the validity of Israel's continued presence in Lebanon. "Sometimes when I'm riding the roads of Lebanon," the tall, bearded soldier from one of the kibbutzim said to the prime minister, "I feel like an occupier in a foreign country. . . . Like an actor in a movie about the Germans in Europe during World War II, or like a Russian in Afghanistan. My hope is that more and more soldiers will refuse to serve in Lebanon and that they will put more pressure on the Government to pull out entirely."¹¹⁰

This soldier's opinion was no more accurate a reflection of the view of the IDF than a reflection of the view of the country as a whole. Coming from a kibbutz background, the speaker was at best representative of something like 4 to 5 percent of the total population, and this small community in itself was not united in opposing the war. But the fact of the criticism was, nevertheless, very important in itself. It had never before led to

such an outright advocacy of conscientious objection: 140 soldiers were punished because they would not serve in Lebanon, far exceeding the total number of conscientious objectors throughout Israel's years of statehood. Last, but not least, the kibbutz movement and like-minded segments of the urban population had always been the IDF's single most important reservoir of quality manpower. Thirty to forty percent of all junior officers, pilots, and naval commandos had always come from the kibbutz movement. This fact made the criticism of this particular soldier, as well as the steady demonstrations of kibbutz members mentioned earlier, a voice of criticism that the government in Israel could afford to dismiss as marginal only at the country's peril.

But there was, of course, another side to the same coin. During the prime minister's talk with the soldiers he was also criticized by a soldier who held precisely the opposite point of view. "Why don't you send the refusers up here to join us for a while?" this soldier inquired sardonically while making a gesture reminding his listeners of the cold and rainy weather outside the tent where the meeting with Shamir was held. "Then we can all be together." Like his comrade quoted above, this man expressed his own opinion but also reflected a widely shared attitude. If the kibbutznik's critique was underlined by Peace Now and *HaShomer HaTza'ir* demonstrations, the other soldier's questioning was underlined by the results of the general elections of July 1984 among the soldiers serving in Lebanon. One could have expected soldiers serving in Lebanon to be, on average, more critical of the prolonged occupation than the electorate at large or, at the very least, as critical as the rest of the country. After all, these 20,000 young men experienced firsthand the horrors of the occupation. Yet the striking thing about the election returns was that support for the Likud, the Tehiya, and, above all, Rabbi Kahane's *Kach* among the soldiers in Lebanon far exceeded the national average. Since the size of the Israeli contingent in Lebanon was a military secret, no precise analysis of the soldiers' vote was ever published, but the estimated 20,000 soldiers, together comprising less than the total vote required for one Knesset seat, caused Labor, in the final count, to lose one seat and gave an extra (fifth) seat to the right-wing *Tehiya* party which advocated that Israel stay in Lebanon.¹¹¹

A third adverse result of the war and the prolonged occupation that followed it were disputes in the higher echelons of the IDF. As the saying goes, success has many parents but failure is an orphan. It was clear in the course of the 1973 war that this was generally true when, as has been noted, the IDF general staff was torn asunder by angry disputes over who was responsible for what failure. On balance, at least in Israeli perceptions, the 1973 war was perceived as far less of a failure, as far as the IDF was concerned, than the 1982 invasion. This was related in the aftermath of the 1982 war by a spate of press interviews with many senior officers in which they not only criticized the cabinet for not giving the IDF sufficiently clear directives about the military objectives to be pursued, but also engaged in barely veiled criticism of one another. What made this an important factor in the final phase of the occupation of south Lebanon was the fact that it gathered momentum after the first anniversary of the war rather than in its immediate aftermath. By October 1983 this phenomenon—reflecting as it did not only a certain malaise in the IDF but also the general self-doubt that engulfed Israel and its servicemen as a result of the war—had reached such alarming proportions that Minister of Defense Moshe Arens, a democrat by all accounts, was prompted to take action. The IDF legal authorities were thus instructed to take measures against any officer who spoke to the press without prior clearance.¹¹²

Table 10. IDF Estimates of Balance of Forces, Fall 1984

| | <i>Israel</i> | <i>Total Eastern Front</i> | <i>Syria</i> | <i>Jordan</i> | <i>Iraq</i> |
|----------------------|---------------|----------------------------|--------------|---------------|-------------|
| Regular Troops | 170,000 | 833,300 | 313,300 | 80,300 | 440,000 |
| Reserves | 370,000 | 1,010,000 | 500,000 | 30,000 | 480,000 |
| Total Manpower | 540,000 | 1,843,300 | 813,000 | 110,300 | 920,000 |
| Combat Planes | 670 | 1,350 | 690 | 120 | 540 |
| Transport Planes | 96 | 100 | 25 | 12 | 63 |
| Helicopters | 75 | 724 | 265 | 25 | 434 |
| Armored Divisions | 11 | | 5 | 2 | |
| Mechanized Divisions | | 35 | 3 | 2 | 23 |
| Tanks | 3,600 | 10,200 | 4,200 | 1,100 | 5,000 |
| APCs | 8,000 | 8,400 | 3,500 | 1,460 | 3,500 |
| Artillery | 1,000 | 6,350 | 2,350 | 550 | 3,500 |

Source: *HaAretz*, 25 November, 1984.

A fourth problem faced increasingly by the IDF was financial. On this issue the situation in Lebanon was merely one facet of a larger problem. The deepening economic crisis led the Shamir government to introduce austerity measures. Minister of Finance Aridor, whose policies had helped Begin win the 1981 elections but subsequently nearly led to an economic collapse, was replaced by his chief critic in the Likud, Yigal Cohen-Orgad, amid a major stock exchange and banking crisis. The latter supported a simultaneous increase in the burden on the taxpayer and severe cuts in the government's own budget. In turn the defense budget, the single largest item on the government's agenda, had to suffer too. What made matters worse was that the arms race with the Arab world was alarmingly accelerating as a result of Western sales to oil countries Egypt and Jordan as well as, in particular, a massive Syrian buildup, with Soviet help, as a direct response to the 1982 war. Table 10 reflects the IDF estimate of the arms balance at the time of the debate over the withdrawal from Lebanon.¹¹³

The accelerating arms race was at once quantitative and qualitative, moving into latest-vintage weapon systems at steeply increasing prices. The Israelis were in no position to increase the defense budget to meet these accelerating costs. This reinforced the urge to develop its own arms industry as a means of boosting exports as well as reducing costs (production costs in Israel are on the whole significantly lower than in the United States). Yet in the short run projects such as the *Merkava* main battle tank and the *Lavi* multipurpose fighter aircraft merely increased the burden on the defense budget. For Minister of Defense Arens, an aeronautical engineer by profession and one of the most important contributors to the growth of the Israel Aviation Industry, the *Lavi* project was an all-consuming preoccupation. The Israeli Navy was pressing for a new missile boat. These demands further drained the defense budget even though the United States had agreed, in a calculated gesture back in the spring of 1983, to permit Israel the use of \$250 million of military assistance in Israel as a means of financing the *Lavi* project.¹¹⁴

The annual direct cost of the occupation of Lebanon was roughly \$200 million. Had it not been for other pressures on the IDF budget, the cost of staying in Lebanon would have been quite tolerable since it was no more than 5% of the total defense budget. But given the already difficult financial situation, the IDF became increasingly anxious to pull out of Lebanon as a means of coping with the budgetary crisis. The choice was basically

simple: either the IDF pulled out of Lebanon or there would have to be major cuts in training programs and earmarked reserve-duty days (from an average of sixty per annum to an average of forty-five). The IDF planners, as their *Tochnit Avoda* (work plan) for FY 1984 indicated, could cope with cuts in training programs by increasing their reliance on simulations and decreasing the use of live munition in training exercises. This was not a change they supported, but they could make do for the time being on such a basis if the government were to decide to stay in Lebanon. At the same time, IDF planners were given, owing to this factor, a specific incentive to press the government to change its policy vis-à-vis Lebanon.¹¹⁵

Beyond all these reasons for pressuring the government to order a withdrawal, the IDF itself was, however, of two minds about whether or not a pullout would be the optimal alternative from the strategic and military-tactical point of view. From the very beginning of the war, the problem had two autonomous aspects, one relating to Syria and the eastern front and one relating to terrorism and the western sector of IDF deployment. With the former problem it was a question of optimal strategy for basic security, that is, avoidance of and preparation for general war. With the latter it was a problem of current security, that is, the threat of disruption of day-to-day life in the Galilee as a result of small-scale but steady guerrilla harassment. As in Israel's previous experiences, often there were critical tradeoffs not only between different approaches to each of these two separate problems but also between which approaches would be best from a current security point of view.

The issue of basic security, namely, reducing the prospects for an all-out or even a limited, attrition-type, war with Syria, offered essentially two choices. One alternative would be to maintain forces in the Beqa'a all the way to Jebel Barouq. By deploying on this strategic massif the IDF had a territorial edge over the Syrians and the benefit of superb readiness. Given their very presence there and the installation of the latest model of early-warning systems, the Israelis could be more or less certain of their ability to deny Syria any possibility of a surprise attack. Moreover, from its position in the upper part of this area the IDF could simultaneously threaten the outskirts of greater Damascus (some 14 miles to the east) and a critical section of the Beirut-Damascus road.

Such advantages were not taken lightly. Israel's small size made it forever conscious of two fundamental vulnerabilities: an inability to disperse airfields and depots over a large (and therefore less exposed) area, and a highly concentrated civilian rear. Under these circumstances a successful Arab surprise attack could be a prelude to a national catastrophe. It could immobilize the IAF and thus leave the numerically inferior ground forces exposed to superior enemy forces supported by an enemy air power, a reversal of what had happened during the Six Day War as a result of Israel's own very successful surprise attack. Moreover, with Israel's main force based entirely on reserves, a successful surprise attack could throw the mobilization process back in the rear totally off balance. A chaos in the urban centers of the Tel Aviv metropolis would mean that reserve soldiers would be unable to reach their units within the prescribed twenty-four to seventy-two hours. The small kernel of regulars who would have to deal with the initial onslaught of the enemy on the ground would be unable to hold the line, as nearly happened in the Golan during the first three days of the Yom Kippur War. Clearly not even a continued Israeli presence on Jebel Barouq could totally guarantee the ability to thwart a Syrian-spearheaded Arab surprise attack. But it would, without doubt, substantially augment Israel's ability to thwart such an attack.¹¹⁶

But there was another side to the same coin. Staying on Jebel Barouq would double the Syrian incentive to build its own huge force facing west (Lebanon) and, in the long run, to initiate hostilities of some sort. The Syrian army is based mainly on regular soldiers. Syria has therefore vast forces-in-being, whereas Israel's forces-in-being are small. Syria can initiate a surprise ground attack without prior mobilization, with a view to obtaining limited objectives before Israel would have a chance to augment its own forces. A forward deployment in close proximity to the Syrians—who, on top of that, would have a stronger nationalist motive for initiating hostilities—was thus to Israel's disadvantage. Such a concept had led the Israelis to sign the peace treaty with Egypt, which created a vast demilitarized zone between the two armies. In turn, if Egypt wished to initiate hostilities, its army would have to cross the Sinai desert—which takes days—thus giving the Israelis advance alert to call its reserve. Space, in this concept, equals time, and time equals an improved ability to rely successfully on a reserve-based army.¹¹⁷

Israeli planners believed that fifty to one hundred miles' distance between the Egyptian and Israeli armies in the Sinai would be enough to make war highly unlikely. In Lebanon no such distances existed. Yet what was absent in terms of space was compensated for by the Lebanese terrain in which, as the Israelis themselves knew very well, movement is slow, cumbersome, and exposed. Thus, something like the Egyptian-Israeli model could be applied in Lebanon to Israel's advantage if, and here was a major political question mark, Syria agreed. Without Syrian consent a unilateral IDF withdrawal could be followed by a Syrian Army move into the spaces vacated by the IDF. In such an event, if the IDF acquiesced, it would be giving the Syrians a priceless strategic gift. Conversely, if the IDF attempted to stop the Syrian Army from creeping into the vacated areas, there could be a war simply as a consequence of an IDF withdrawal.

To some IDF planners this did not represent a grave problem because they figured Syria could be deterred from moving into the areas vacated by the IDF through a calculated red-lines strategy of deterrence. This kind of policy had worked with Assad's Syria, therefore there was a reasonable chance that it would work again. Indeed, the pattern of Syrian involvement in Lebanon suggested a great reluctance to become militarily involved in Lebanese politics. But this, everyone would agree, could not be taken for granted.

On the other hand, a withdrawal in the eastern sector would accrue two more advantages which could not be taken lightly. First, it would substantially shorten the IDF's internal lines, reduce its overextended logistic spread, and improve the ability to move reserves from base to front. Second, it would relieve the IDF of the unpleasant, burdensome, and basically unwinnable job of maintaining law and order in that part of Lebanon which, since June 1982, had been behind its front-line deployment. At this point, the arguments for withdrawing in the east converged with the arguments for withdrawing in the west.

On the face of it the western sector did not pose a dilemma from a purely military point of view. The IDF saw its main vocation as providing absolute answers to the absolute question of basic security, rather than as dealing with nagging but, from a military point of view, inconsequential troubles with terrorists and marauders. Therefore it should have had no problem telling the government that the sooner it received orders to withdraw from Lebanon, the better. But, without denying that from the IDF's point of view basic security took precedent over current security, it would be utterly misleading to

argue that the question of terrorism was viewed by the IDF with equanimity. As part and parcel of Israeli society rather than a guild unto themselves, IDF general staff officers were pained like all Israelis whenever terrorism took the lives or (through hijacking) the liberty of any Israeli or Jew. Their problem in Lebanon, at least in the western sector, was that they had no simple solution for the threat of terrorism. If they had, they would have come up with it before the war and probably argued against going to war at all. But, successful as the IDF may have been in building strength and neutralizing basic security threats, it had always been, in particular since the 1967 war, quite unable to generate an effective deterrent against terrorism and guerrilla warfare. The solution would have to be a political one. Either there would have to be a political decision to lay the responsibility for low-level threats at the doorstep of specific, and thus punishable, Arab regimes, in which case the IDF would be called upon to administer appropriate conventional punishments, or Israel should attempt to accommodate politically the perpetrators of terrorism, which again was not for the IDF to decide. The only intermediate alternative, as far as the IDF was concerned, was to learn to live with terrorism as a chronic but not fatal disease. But since this, realistic as it may have been, was inherently unacceptable to any government, the armed forces were constantly under political pressure to offer solutions to a problem they knew had no military solution.

From this perspective the proposition of a unilateral withdrawal from the western sector of south Lebanon with its hostile Sunni population, including 80,000 Palestinian refugees in towns such as Sidon and Tyre, and with its more hostile Shi'ite population in most of the rest of the area posed a major dilemma for which the IDF had no easy solution. The choice, at least as a matter of projection into the future, was between risking the lives, the morale, and the professional standards of IDF personnel on the one hand, and risking the lives of the civilian population of the Galilee from Nahariya to Kiryat Shemonah on the other hand. If the IDF were to look at it from the point of view of its own best interest as an instrument of the executive branch, there would be no question that it would prefer a withdrawal followed by an aggressive defensive posture based in Israel's own territory. But, part of the larger society with whose defense it had been entrusted, the IDF never took such a narrow view. Indeed, even from a narrowly bureaucratic perspective the IDF would be reluctant to offer a unilateral withdrawal, since it would be the first to be pressed for an answer to the problems that would arise in its wake.

Then there was, of course, the question of the strategic relation between the optimal choice in the east and the optimal choice in the west. If on both issues the optimal alternative were to stay put or to effect a unilateral withdrawal all the way to the international border, or, indeed, to effect a partial withdrawal halfway to a new lateral (east-west) line of deployment, there would be no particular problem. But there would be if the ultimate professional evaluation were to lead to some combination of these simple alternatives, for example, a deep withdrawal in the west without any corresponding withdrawal in the east. Strategically, such a decision would make no sense even for the conceptually rather flexible IDF. The IDF was instinctively prone to accept high-risk, deep-penetration wedges and encirclement maneuvers, which allow thrusts to expose their flanks in order to speed up a strategic decision. But a strategic preference for full-scale mechanized warfare is quite a different proposition than a strategic preference for static deployment for the long haul. To maintain the entire sector all the way to Jebel Barouq in IDF control while giving back, in fact abandoning unilaterally, the vast western flank of such a wedge would be courting trouble of unimaginable magnitude. The western flank

from the Litani "bend" near Kle'a to the Bisri and Barouq ravines could easily become a perfect sanctuary for guerrilla activities not only against Israel proper but also against the IDF wedge from Metula to Jebel Barouq. In fact it would then be squeezed between the massive Syrian force on its right (east) and the hostile chaos to its left (west). Cutting its vulnerable lines of communication through harassment rather than full-scale war would easily become a daily event, almost a kind of sport that competing elements among the population to the west could find politically irresistible.

The implication of such an analysis was, clearly, that whatever the IDF's preference vis-à-vis the eastern (Syrian) sector, in the final analysis a decision to withdraw in the west would make a parallel withdrawal in the east virtually unavoidable. This was the key problem facing the IDF irrespective of, or at least prior to, hearing the verdict of the politicians' decisions. A strong party inside the IDF, consisting primarily of officers of armored corps background, seems not to have learned anything from the lessons of forward deployment along the Suez Canal. These officers were instinctively inclined to believe that Israel's deterrence had been at its very best on the eve of the Yom Kippur War, when the IDF was overextended in a hopelessly extravagant forward deployment. From this questionable presupposition they proceeded, logically, to the conclusion that the IDF should stay on Jebel Barouq come what may.¹¹⁸ But since this would imply having to stay in the populous and increasingly hostile western sector as well—which these officers, like all Israelis, detested—they came up with a compromise solution.

Dubbed the "Sidon solution," it basically advocated a unilateral withdrawal from Sidon. The IDF would move out of this large hostile town into the hills overlooking the city. It would thus conveniently shake off the single largest concentration of hostile population without effecting an exposure of the eastern wedge toward Jebel Barouq or increasing unnecessarily the risk to the Galilee population. Such a move raised, of course, two important questions: Who would take over responsibility in Sidon, and what kind of line should be built south and east of Sidon for the IDF to fall back on safely? The answer to the first question was seemingly simple. As soon as the United States completed the restructuring of the Lebanese Army, the latter would move south along the Shouf toward Sidon and take over. The second was only a financial question. There was no escape from rebuilding part of the line south and east of Sidon. Owing to the mounting casualties in the area under IDF control, the financial aspect of this proposed minideployment did not pose a major obstacle. Chief of Staff Moshe Levi therefore brought the plan to Defense Minister Arens, who approved it without major reservations. The two of them then met Prime Minister Shamir on January 4, 1984, and the latter, too, approved the "Sidon Plan." But while the IDF was preparing to carry the plan into effect, the Gemayel regime lost control in west Beirut to the Shi'ite and Druze militias; the Druzes continued to nibble their way toward the Beirut-Sidon highway; the United States prepared to pull out the Marines; and the whole idea of having the Lebanon Army take over Sidon proved to have been misguided.¹¹⁹

The collapse of the Sidon Plan led some officers in the IDF Planning Division, formerly under Major General Avraham ("Abrasha") Tamir and now under Major General Menachem Einan, to discuss the question of an all-out withdrawal. A document summing up this argument was drawn on the assumption that the expulsion of the Syrians from Lebanon was impossible by political means and undesirable by military means. Syrian presence in Lebanon, the document concluded on this issue, has to be accepted as a lesser evil and it may even bring some advantages to Israel. Assuming this, the paper continued, Israel is confronted with basically two simple choices: dividing Lebanon and

continuing to occupy the south up to the Awali, or withdrawing unilaterally. If the IDF were to stay in its present lines, it ran the risk of a head-on confrontation with Syria and of a popular uprising of the Lebanese under its control. The conclusion was therefore this: the IDF should withdraw unilaterally, all the way back to the international border, leaving behind it whatever security arrangements could be made, and ensuring through deferent threats that the Syrians would not move in.¹²⁰

The document was somehow made available to opposition member of the Knesset Shulamit Aloni, a vociferous opponent of the war and head of the Civil Rights Movement. She publicized it as a means of arguing that the government refused to effect a withdrawal for reasons of prestige and internal power struggles despite, or even against, the best professional advice of the IDF. This caused an embarrassment to the Shamir government when it started speculations in Washington and in Israel that either a withdrawal was being planned or that Arens and Shamir were engaged in some dispute.¹²¹ To the extent that can be judged, however, neither speculation was correct. What the paper suggested was merely that the pro-withdrawal party inside the IDF was determined to pursue the matter in what they viewed as both its own and the national interest.

By the end of March 1984 these ideas of the general staff's planning division had been adopted as the view of the IDF as a whole. The Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Moshe Levi, on his own admission, adopted this policy recommendation and began to push for its endorsement by his political chief, Minister of Defense Moshe Arens.¹²² Meanwhile the planning process had resulted in far more specific recommendations for the mechanics of the withdrawal as well as its time frame. The U.S. withdrawal in February 1984, Amin Gemayel's subsequent decision to abrogate the May 17 accord, and the ultimate Syrian victory, according to the emerging IDF position, freed Israel's hands. If Gemayel had survived as a quasi-independent actor, one of the planners told a reporter, Israel would be "bogged down on the Awali forever." Now that the Lebanese president had become a virtual Syrian puppet and Israel had given up any hope of salvaging the May accord, the Jewish state could attend to its own immediate interests without worrying about either the US or the Lebanese response.

Starting from this premise the IDF recommended that Israel find a Lebanese officer (as in Dayan's and Ben Gurion's plan of 1954–55) to appoint as commander of a brigade group of approximately 2,500 men, which would be set up by Israel in place of the ragtag Haddad militia. The commander of this proposed South Lebanese Army should have a good military record and be regarded among the Christians of the north as a respectable Lebanese patriot. His appointment would be linked, the IDF plan proposed, to Gemayel's "sellout" to Syria and to the south's need to protect itself from again becoming the battlefield of the Palestinians' war against the Zionist state.

Israel should do what it can to make this South Lebanese Army effective. It should pay those who were willing to serve in the proposed SLA the same salaries that soldiers in the "northern" Lebanese army received, and perhaps even a bit more, to buy more loyalty. Within a matter of three or four months the SLA should double in size, and its equipment should be fully modernized.

Several hundred Israeli advisers should be attached to this force at all times, helping to build up this surrogate army both operationally and logistically, making it superior to any force in the area other than the Syrians, which the IDF plan described in this context as "not a problem." The refurbished SLA should be deployed, on Israel's instructions, in an area north of the international border, to a depth the IDF would consider necessary in order to prevent the return of organized terror. The SLA would man roadblocks; keep

an ear to the ground in the villages; patrol key smuggling routes; and be sufficiently well trained and well armed to take effective military action against an obstinate threat. To back up all that, highly skilled Israeli combat units could be sent into action almost immediately in the unlikely event, according to IDF predictions in the spring of 1984, of something happening that the SLA could not deal with.¹²³

The IDF plan had many familiar features. Basically it amounted to a recommendation to go back to the situation that had prevailed before the Israeli invasion but without the PLO force, apparently without UNIFIL, and, instead of the small Haddad militia, with a Lebanese Army in the role of an Israeli surrogate as envisaged by the now-defunct May 17 accord. In addition the plan sounded almost identical to some of the ideas the Labor leadership was proposing at exactly the same time. Hence, even if Minister of Defense Arens had been fully convinced of the urgent need to adopt the IDF recommendations, which was not at all the case, he was in no position to convince his cabinet colleagues. Sharon was raising hell in the background. Shamir had barely won the Likud leadership contest against him. Elections were due in a few months which meant that the Likud could not afford to admit—by ordering a retreat—that the entire edifice was coming apart. In short, April 1984 was a bad month to begin the debate in the cabinet and in the Likud party, without which a withdrawal could not be effected. But since there was no point in postponing what could be done even without putting the whole plan into effect—for example, setting up the SLA and appointing General Lahad—this part of the IDF plan was implemented almost instantly. Such a decision not to push for an immediate implementation of the whole IDF plan can be fully understood only through a close look at the evolving position of the cabinet.

The Cabinet, September 1983–September 1984

There are three principal ways to evaluate the policy of the Shamir cabinet from the redeployment of September 1983 (which more or less coincided with the formation of this cabinet) to the general elections of July 1984. The cynics would argue that this government was motivated by one and only one consideration. Being a government of continuity based largely on Begin's cabinet, the Shamir ministry could not dissociate itself abruptly from the policy of the previous cabinet which had led the IDF into the Lebanese quicksands. Most of Shamir's colleagues had been members of Begin's cabinet, felt a strong personal loyalty to their retired leader, had been strongly in support of the war, and were concerned not to lose ground in their own party and in the country as might happen if they were suddenly to effect a complete policy shift. Hence, the whole delay in the withdrawal throughout 1983–84 was affected by no legitimate strategic considerations. The name of the game was party politics.

An opposite, and therefore naive, interpretation would go to the other extreme and argue that Shamir and his colleagues were concerned with nothing but the national interest, in their, admittedly subjective, interpretation of it. Having invested so much in life, money, and anguish, Israel, in this view, would be acting frivolously if it did not give a real chance to the possibility of extracting the maximum long-term political and military benefits from the IDF's presence in Lebanon. It could not have been foreseen that the dormant Shi'ite self-awareness would awaken so suddenly and so brutally. By biding its time and moving cautiously, according to this argument, the Shamir cabinet was not putting its party's political interest ahead of the national interest but acting exclusively in the pursuit of the latter.

A third, and probably the most realistic, interpretation of the policy of the Shamir cabinet combines elements from both its cynical and naive alternatives. Shamir and his colleagues found it psychologically difficult to admit that their policy was ill advised; they felt a strong bond of loyalty to Menachem Begin; they had private careers to worry about; and they were definitely trying to avoid electoral punishment. But to underline all these factors, in themselves the stuff of political behavior, is not to imply that there were no legitimate strategic considerations in their repeated decisions to put off a unilateral withdrawal. Indeed, the closer the IDF was to Israel's border, the greater the legitimacy of strategic considerations to delay withdrawal. In the final analysis, then, the reluctance of Shamir and his colleagues to order the IDF out of Lebanon was due to a mixture of the legitimate with the illegitimate. To some members of this coalition, personal, and thus at least partly "illegitimate" reasons for delaying a retreat, weighed more heavily than it did for some of the others. The leading team, Itzhak Shamir, David Levi, and Moshe Arens, in particular, seem on balance to have been overwhelmingly preoccupied with perfectly "legitimate" considerations. All three were prone to make harsh strategic assumptions and to advocate firmness and evenhandedness in the face of adversity. To an extent it was precisely this kind of an attitude more than any ideological verbiage that had made them leading members of the Likud in the first place. But, above and beyond this important factor, they also had to face party politics as a legitimate pursuit. Without it no policy could be effected since there would not be a winning coalition of their colleagues in the cabinet and in the party to facilitate a formal decision. To put it bluntly, Sharon was (rightly) criticized for acting without cabinet approval, and if Shamir and Arens are to be judged by the same yardsticks, they cannot be blamed for the delay in the withdrawal because they were careful to build a consensus behind each and every decision.

In more specific terms the Shamir cabinet approached the issue in two different ways during two consecutive phases. The first phase began with the redeployment along the Awali-Bisri-Barouq line and ended with the collapse of Amin Gemayel's autonomy following the departure of the multinational force. This phase began with cautious optimism, with a determination to stick to these lines until a comprehensive settlement was obtained, with an almost exclusive attention to developments across the line to the north. It ended, however, in doubt, a growing pessimism, and an almost exclusive attention to the relations with the Shi'ites within the area under IDF control.

The second phase commenced with a policy reappraisal. This led to a search for damage limitation but ultimately to Israel's decision to bide its time. Although domestic political considerations and, in particular, preparation for general elections without Menachem Begin at the head of the Likud, had an impact, Shamir and Arens also had some weighty strategic reasons for not making a decision to withdraw before the summer of 1984. Indeed, it is not implausible to argue that if they had not lost their exclusive control over the government as a result of the elections, they too would have reached a decision to effect another withdrawal some time in the fall of 1984 or in the winter of 1985.

The main premises that guided Israeli policy during the first phase (September 1983 through February 1984) were outlined by Defense Minister Arens a few days after the redeployment along the Awali-Bisri-Barouq line. In the first place, he said, "I am not a great believer in 'red lines.' Sometimes I can see the advantage in terms of avoiding misunderstandings and making very clear that there are a lot of disadvantages attached as well to drawing lines on the map and spelling out certain commitments you take upon yourself that maybe thereafter you might not be overly happy with."¹²⁴

This comment on “red lines,” taking issue as it did with Shimon Peres’s advocacy of such a policy, did not refer directly to the south of Lebanon but it did imply a basic approach to the problem in this area. If Arens were not enamored of deterrence through a declared red-line policy in the Shouf, by implication he would be even less inclined to favor such a policy in the area astride Israel’s northern border. In the Shouf he would prefer power projection through occasional IDF and IAF forays across the Awali, for the simple reason that actually staying in the Shouf-Beirut nexus would be even more costly. But Arens’s words suggest that in the south he would rather see the IDF actually controlling a security belt outside Israel proper than falling back on a red-line policy. As he put it a short while later, Israel “cannot build a solid dividing wall running from Metula to Rosh Hanikra and say to itself, ‘Let the various Lebanese factions, and the PLO and Syrians too, kill each other while we mind our own business on this side of the wall’ because it just won’t work out that way.”¹²⁵

There was only one alternative to a red-line strategy: an IDF forward deployment as far away from the Galilee as both strategy and domestic political constraints would permit. The IDF, in Arens’s perception early in September 1984, should therefore stay south of the Awali-Bisri-Barouq line for a long time. In the east, facing the Syrians, he said, “there will be no withdrawal under circumstances in which there is no Lebanese government that could take over from us and there is no Syrian withdrawal.” But since he admitted that it was “improbable, certainly difficult” to find such a Lebanese government, his words clearly implied a determined intention to leave the IDF in the Beqa’a for a long time.

Arens sounded more hopeful that the IDF might be able to phase out its presence in the western sector soon. A unilateral withdrawal from the western sector, he argued, would be a recipe for catastrophe. “We have some people in Israel,” he said, saying “‘Well, it’s about time, and we should go all the way. Why stop at the Awali River?’” But, considering the chaos that had followed Israel’s withdrawal from the Shouf these people should be having second thoughts. “Fortunately, the line on which we are redeploying is some distance away from Israel’s border. But imagine for a moment that we really had not stopped at the Awali, and our tanks and personnel carriers had just gone on to the international border. I think it is a fair guess that within a matter of weeks, if not a matter of days, the people in the northern part of Israel would be down in the shelters again.”¹²⁶

In specific terms Arens was merely stating—like most Israelis at that time—that what had happened before the war would simply repeat itself in the future. In more general terms he was instinctively following the logic of the security dilemma: if Israel did not act assertively its foes were bound to; therefore Israel should act assertively. In the words of Arens, again: “So, our withdrawal from the Awali line back to the international border is something that has to be contingent on a feeling of assurance in Israel that what is happening in Lebanon right now in the areas we evacuated is not going to happen in . . . the south, along the Israeli border, that there is going to be somebody that we can turn the area over to that will take upon themselves the responsibility of making sure that there are no hostile acts from that area against Israel.”¹²⁷

In Arens’s view, the operational implication was that the IDF should stay south of the Awali while working “toward arriving at a good understanding and good relationship with the local population in the area which we are in.” Such efforts should facilitate, he thought, not another redeployment but rather a gradual transfer of power to the local population, a kind of phased-out withdrawal or a thinning-out process as far as the IDF

profile in the region was concerned. As he put it: "We will try to transfer to them maximum responsibility for administration and the maintenance of law and order in the area."¹²⁸

The Shamir government's policy as explained by Arens in September 1983 survived more or less without change until the early days of January 1984. Early in November, just a few days after twenty-nine Israelis and thirty-three Lebanese were killed in the Tyre car bomb incident, Deputy Foreign Minister Yehuda Ben-Me'ir still thought that "Syria's withdrawal is demanded not as an end in itself, but as a key factor, though not necessarily a sine qua non, in ensuring Israel the security she needs. . . . The basic condition for withdrawal . . . is Israel's ability to create a reasonable security situation in the south. And that, of course, is not unconnected to the general political situation in Lebanon, which in turn depends to a large extent on the Syrians." But even if the Syrians remain obdurate, Ben-Me'ir continued, Israel is determined to set up that "reasonable security situation" before withdrawing: "We are working on it, with the local population in the South. I won't go into details . . . we are intent on reducing our deployment steadily until we can leave altogether."¹²⁹

Yet, while outwardly maintaining the same line, Shamir and his colleagues increasingly realized some of the previously unforeseen difficulties. The "frenetic" (in Ben-Me'ir's words) arms buildup of the Syrians,¹³⁰ the fact that, in Arens's words, "Syria's regular army has grown in numbers and is now equal to our own army in the manpower it can muster . . . [while] Soviet arms are being delivered to Syria in record quantities,"¹³¹ was bound to have an effect on Israeli thinking. So was the failure of the United States to stand up to the Syrians and, of course, Israel's mounting casualties in the south. The IDF on the one hand and Labor opposition on the other were increasing pressure on the government to reappraise its policy. Consequently, the first signs of a serious reconsideration appeared early in January.

During the first ten days of January there were persistent reports, confirmed by Reagan administration officials in Washington, that the Israelis were preparing for a policy shift.¹³² These rumors were rejected by official spokesmen for the Shamir government.¹³³ Yet, almost in the same breath, Shamir and his colleagues were indicating that within a matter of days the Lebanese Army would be ready to send forces down the Beirut-Sidon highway, thereby facilitating a small Israeli withdrawal from the town of Sidon as well as a "thinning out" of IDF forces in a wider area.¹³⁴ When this hope did not materialize and, instead, Israel learned of the U.S. decision to pull out the Marines, Shamir and his colleagues began to change their tune in a subtle but important respect. Instead of emphasizing the connection of an Israeli withdrawal to a reciprocal Syrian withdrawal and to some agreement with the Lebanese within the framework of the May 17 accord, they began to shift attention to security arrangements in the south as a result of a unilateral Israeli action. "If we can reach an understanding with the Lebanese government," Shamir told the Israeli newspaper *Ma'ariv*, "well and good. If not, Israel can find her own way to security arrangements in the south."¹³⁵

The subtle shift in emphasis was picked up by both the press and the government's critics on left and right, who charged that Shamir and his colleagues had been equivocating for too long and should make up their minds quickly. In reply, Defense Minister Arens revealed to the Knesset Foreign Relations and Security Committee what must have been the main reason for the refusal to announce a change of policy. There was no reason for the Israeli government to renounce the May 17 agreement through its own actions and declarations. A policy shift may have been called for, but so long as the May

accord had a glimmer of a chance Israel had no interest in undermining it by taking incompatible unilateral action.¹³⁶

Thus, in a sense, began the second phase in the Shamir government's policy. A policy review was urgently needed. Much of it had in fact already been conducted on a contingency basis in the preceding weeks. Now came the time for a decision in the cabinet. Broadly speaking the cabinet discussed no less than six, perhaps even seven, proposed alternatives. The first was proposed by *Tehiya* Minister of Science and Technology Yuval Ne'eman. A former deputy head of IDF military intelligence and a world-renowned professor of physics, Ne'eman had little patience for halfway measures. His proposal took off from three assumptions. First, as he put it to a member of the press, "I know enough about terrorism and about security to assure you that we shall not have peace and quiet if we content ourselves with half measures." Second, Ne'eman "never accepted the theories of . . . [his Likud] cabinet colleagues that the Israelis were in Lebanon as guests, and so could not take any measures which might be interpreted as partitioning that country." Hence he never had any compunctions about telling "the Likud ministers after the Tyre terror-bomb assault that the blood of . . . the fallen was on their hands, because they did not have the guts to carry measures all the way through." Third, those who argue that a harsh policy would bring unacceptably harsh international reactions to Israel should be reminded of the fact that all "around the world realpolitik means maintaining your deterrent might at all times. Were it not for the balance of terror between the United States and the Soviet Union the world would not be at peace today . . . 90 percent of those who ever studied military history look at things the way I do," Ne'eman believed.¹³⁷

Starting from these assumptions his recipe for dealing with south Lebanon was clear. If Israel could not afford to leave Lebanon there was no alternative to dealing with terrorism forthrightly: "We must use all the technical and administrative techniques at our disposal to pinpoint the hostile elements. We must check everybody, give forgery-proof identity cards, and make sure that nobody escapes our dragnet." The model, Professor Ne'eman thought, should be Arik Sharon's policy in Gaza back in 1969. When terrorism there had reached an unbearable degree Sharon, as OC Southern Command, moved in with a great deal of force, sealed the whole area, conducted ruthless searches, arrests, and interrogations, ordered the IDF engineers to break vast avenues right across the most terrorism-prone areas, and, in the face of criticism in the press, succeeded in calming Gaza entirely. Why, inquired Ne'eman with his skeptical colleagues, could not the same policy be applied in south Lebanon which, from the Israeli security point of view, is just as important as Gaza? Why could not the IDF close south Lebanon, "hermetically" sever "all the links of the area with the rest of Lebanon," and allow only those "residents of the area who are sympathetic to Israel" to stay there?¹³⁸

A second set of ideas on the cabinet's agenda was that of former Minister of Defense Ariel Sharon. The full details are not known but the basic idea has been published by Sharon himself. He proposed that the bulk of the IDF should be withdrawn from the south of Lebanon altogether, but that no part of the security zone should be ceded. In order to maintain control with a small number of troops he suggested the construction of five "strong points" near Sidon, Tyre, Nabatiyeh, Jebel Barouq, and Qar'oun Lake. Each one of these points would be manned, Sharon proposed, by 120 men who, presumably, would be entrusted with law and order duties, intelligence gathering, and a first line of defense against a surprise attack by a conventional force.¹³⁹

Sharon's plan, to the extent that can be judged, raised some grave problems. How,

for example, did he envisage the maintenance of communication among the "strong points" or between them and the Israeli rear, without running unacceptable risks of becoming as involved in fighting and policing the Shi'ites as the IDF had become anyway? Owing to such problems and to the unacceptable harshness of Ne'eman's ideas, his and Sharon's plans were not discussed as seriously as their authors had hoped. Real attention was focused, rather, on the IDF's proposals, as outlined earlier, and on another set of ideas proposed by a number of ministers. These ministers were, for the most part, lacking in any military background and did not really go into the precise details of logistics and strategy, but their ideas nevertheless had an air of seriousness and validity lacking in those of Ne'eman and Sharon.

They started from the assumption that Israel's security problem in Lebanon could not be solved through military means. The Syrians were unwilling to engage in businesslike discussion, and Amin Gemayel had proved quite unable to put the Lebanese humpty-dumpty together again. Israel therefore had no alternative but to fend for itself unilaterally, implying a military solution. But since the most important reason for a policy revision was that an extensive military solution had failed, the only alternative would be the most modest Israeli military presence that could be devised without raising the risk for the Galilee. This logic led to a search for a reduction in the inhabited space to be left under IDF control after a new redeployment, leading to the proposition that perhaps the IDF should redeploy on the Zaharani ravine halfway between the Awali and the Litani rivers. The Awali runs too far from Israel's border and therefore leaves an unbearably large Shi'ite population under Israeli control. By contrast, the Litani runs too close to the Israeli-Lebanese border, especially in its northward bend near Metula, to ensure adequate protection of the Galilee. Thus, by simple logical deduction more than any particular strategic argument, the Zaharani line appeared optimal.¹⁴⁰

The supporters of this approach were not, however, very particular on the Zaharani as such. Some of them were quite prepared to back up the idea of a "Litani-plus" solution in which the new line of deployment would run along the Litani where it was far enough from the Israeli border, but across the Litani in some of the points where the river flows barely a few hundred yards from the border. This seemed logical, but when the details were checked it turned out that one of the most difficult Shi'ite areas in the whole south, the Nabatiyeh-Arnoon Heights, would remain inside Israel's lines. The result of adopting a Litani-plus solution would thus be a major depreciation in the IDF's deployment for a major conventional onslaught without any meaningful reduction in the size of hostile population under its control.¹⁴¹

But there was yet another major drawback in the idea of an intermediate line of deployment, be it the Zaharani, the Litani, or the Litani-plus formula. If the new line were to be permanent the friction with the Shi'ites and the heightened hostility of the Syrians would remain unaffected. Indeed, the IDF would find itself, Shamir feared, facing hostile Shi'ites both north and south.¹⁴² If, on the other hand, Israel were to withdraw to a line that, for these political reasons, would remain provisional from the start, it might mean huge expense or, alternatively, saving on the provisional intermediate line but exposing IDF personnel to greater risks owing to inadequate sheltering. This point in particular worried the IDF planners and the minister of defense, for whom the economic dimension was a major incentive for redeployment.¹⁴³

In the face of such a baffling variety of imperfect alternatives, Prime Minister Shamir was inclined to put off the decision for the time being. His main political problem stemmed from the fact that there was a group of some five to eight ministers, more or less

corresponding to the antiwar party in the spring of 1982, and many of whom were not members of the Likud, which pressed for a decision as soon as the U.S. Marines and the multinational force were withdrawn from the shores of Beirut. Sharon, who by now was rapidly becoming Shamir's (not to speak of Arens's) number one political rival, was not demanding a withdrawal but only a reorganization and a thinning out of the existing force. Ne'eman could be ignored too because no one, not even Sharon, and certainly not the IDF, took his draconian ideas seriously. The Liberal ministers in the cabinet apparently supported Shamir's argument that there was no reason to rush out of Lebanon.¹⁴⁴ Above all, Uri Lubrani, the government's "coordinator" on south Lebanon and, owing to his rich experience in Iran, Israel's leading authority in practical matters on the Shi'ites, argued for patience. Pulling out too soon, he felt, would lead to chaos. Many Shi'ites, especially in the area near the frontiers, constituted a kind of "silent majority." They would go along with Israel's attempt to create a security zone in the far south, but if the IDF were suddenly to pull out, these people would instantly switch their tenuous loyalties out of fear of revenge by the radicals. By pulling out prematurely, then, Israel would reduce casualties in the short run but lose in terms of consolidating a "remote control"-operated security zone in the long run.¹⁴⁵

Shamir brought the topic up for discussion in the cabinet on February 19. The meeting was adjourned without conclusion, and a second cabinet meeting took place a week later, on February 26, in which the prime minister ultimately won the debate without much difficulty. To the arguments mentioned above he added two more, namely, that the United States would rather not see the IDF withdrawing yet again and leaving behind it an immeasurable chaos, and that an IDF withdrawal so shortly after the MNF would deal a death blow to the Gemayel regime.¹⁴⁶ The ministers accepted Shamir's recommendation to leave the matter for a "further study" by the IDF. From then until September the topic ceased to be discussed in a sustained manner. Israel had moved into a period of election campaign, and this was no time for hard decisions such as further withdrawal.

Back to the "Good (Old) Fence"

In a broad sense, the Shamir cabinet's decision not to change policy opened gradually, almost imperceptibly, a gap between the political and the military policy-making echelons. The IDF had resolved its own internal controversy over whether to retreat and had become committed to a withdrawal as soon as possible. The political echelon from which the IDF had to obtain the go-ahead for carrying out the withdrawal plan remained, however, more or less committed to staying put, at least for a while. The reasons for this view, whose main supporters were Prime Minister Itzhak Shamir, Minister of Defense Moshe Arens, Minister-without-Portfolio Ariel Sharon, Minister of Science and Technology Yuval Ne'eman, Minister of Energy Itzhak Moda'i, and a number of others were, it should be emphasized once again, primarily strategic rather than domestic-political or ideological. All of them, especially the prime minister and the minister of defense, realized that the basic choice was not between winning or not winning the war but between two methods of ensuring peace for the Galilee. One assumed, as some Israeli experts were arguing, that the Shi'ites had developed sufficient self-awareness and military capabilities to act—in their own interests—as Israel's buffer against a return of the PLO.¹⁴⁷ The other method assumed that the Shi'ites were still sufficiently disorganized and penetrated by outside militant influences, such as the Syrians, the PLO, even

the Iranians, to be unable to provide such a buffer. If the IDF withdrew, Israel would appear to have weakened, the Syrians would draw encouragement from it and, relying on the Shi'ites in the south, would turn the clock back to the dangerous situation of the late 1970s.

Shamir, Arens, and their like-minded colleagues were inclined to assume that the second, worst case, scenario was the more likely. Therefore, despite the considered opinion of the IDF, despite the fact that the issue no longer helped them cultivate a favorable domestic opinion, they opted for inaction in the hope that the two scenarios would be put to the test of time. As on many previous occasions mentioned in this book, this was not an unusual, in fact it was a perfectly normal, response to the security dilemma. A unilateral Israeli withdrawal would constitute a combination of an accommodative move with a good deal of weakness. Thus, if normal accommodation is in most cases assumed to whet the appetite of the opponent to exploit the defender, an accommodative move based on what could easily be construed as weakness was certain to be perceived as a recipe for adversary assertion. Therefore, a responsible leadership—and even the Labor opposition never charged Arens and Shamir with irresponsibility—would stick to its guns, mobilize its resolve, and hold on to the Awali-Bisri-Barouq line.

When Sharon was minister of defense, such a gap between the military and political echelons would have led to a major loss of confidence, in fact to an atmosphere of alienation and mistrust, because of Sharon's personal style. Under Shamir and Arens such factors played no part. Relations between the military and their legitimate political chiefs were very good and were based on mutual respect. Hence the fact that the two echelons were set on courses that would draw them farther apart with every additional casualty in Lebanon never surfaced in any dramatic way. But this is not to say that the IDF was not pleased with the return of Labor to the government and, especially, with the appointment of Itzhak Rabin, a former chief of staff—as much one of them as any person in Israel—to the post of minister of defense for the full four-year period of the National Unity coalition.

Again much, perhaps far too much, can be made of ideological and psychological-cultural factors affecting this IDF preference for Rabin and Labor over Arens and the Likud. Such an interpretation seems to exaggerate trivial elements into a critical explanatory set of variables. Rabin was many years the senior of the upper echelon of the IDF who had been captains or majors when he retired from service. He was, on top of that, a far less polished socialite than Arens. A harsh and somewhat uneasy introvert, he would have been the last man in Israel to generate camaraderie. But this was quite beside the point. He had been chief of staff during Israel's single most successful war, and his professional reputation as a strategist and an organizer was beyond dispute. For the IDF he was a real and trusted authority, more so than any minister of defense since Dayan and perhaps even more than that rather erratic minister.

But, quite apart from even this important advantage Labor had over the Likud, the IDF must have been delighted to see Labor back because there was a complete fit between Labor's views on the withdrawal issue and those of the general staff. Both entities were concerned and apprehensive about the same things, and both were anxious to effect a full withdrawal as soon as technicalities would permit. This, however, was not to be for two principal reasons. First, both the IDF and the Labor leaders soon discovered that some of their assumptions about an orderly and prudent withdrawal had been quite unrealistic. Second, the Labor party was not alone in the cabinet. The Likud was a major partner, and

some of its leaders needed more time before agreeing to the change in policy that the IDF and the Labor party were advocating.

Throughout the period from June 1983 to September 1984 the Labor leaders advocated a unilateral Israeli withdrawal on the basis of three debatable assumptions: (1) a tacit understanding with Syria along the 1976 red line agreement was feasible; (2) UNIFIL was willing and able to act both as a buffer between Israeli forces and their Syrian adversary (along the lines of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force [UNDOF] model in the Golan) and as a "fig leaf" giving the seal of legitimacy to Lahad's SLA; (3) the SLA could be brought into shape within six to nine months.

That Syria had no intention of facilitating an Israeli withdrawal through a respectable disengagement or "tacit red lines" agreement became clear within a matter of weeks after the formation of the National Unity coalition. The Syrians, as has been shown, raised no objection to Israeli-Lebanese talks that would, the Syrians apparently hoped, lead to a new armistice type of regime, but this was something no Israeli government, certainly not the National Unity coalition, could really accept. Therefore the Naqura talks with Lebanon turned out to be a great disappointment. Indeed, the Labor leaders had been convinced from the outset that there was no point in holding talks with the Lebanese, who had by then become a virtual Syrian satellite.¹⁴⁸ Yet, realizing that this might be the only way to obtain an agreement of sorts with Syria and not knowing at the beginning of the talks that the Syrians would not agree to bargain on this issue, the Labor leaders had to watch three of the nine months within which they had promised the electorate to effect a complete withdrawal virtually wasted in useless talks with the Lebanese delegates.¹⁴⁹

Attempts to recruit the United Nations into Israel's effort to obtain an honorable withdrawal from Lebanon were no more successful. Rabin had always been very skeptical, even outrightly rude, about the usefulness and reliability of the United Nations. This reflected an attitude that Ben Gurion had once encapsulated in the comment "Um-Shmum"—a denigrating pun on the Hebrew acronym for the United Nations.¹⁵⁰ Other Israeli leaders, chief among them Moshe Dayan, had always maintained that if Israel and its neighbors could settle their differences the UN would be redundant, whereas if they could not the UN would merely play straight into Arab hands by underlining the fact that it was possible to get away with denying Israel legitimacy, with UN blessing.¹⁵¹ Rabin himself was intensely involved in friction with the UN in his position as OC Northern Command, deputy chief of staff, chief of staff and, later, prime minister.¹⁵² Yet, despite all this, as soon as Rabin became minister of defense in Peres's National Unity government he began to speak publicly about the UN in unusually positive terms.¹⁵³

He had not had any basic change in his opinion about the UN. Rather, his reason for speaking favorably of it seems to have been a fairly transparent attempt to lure the UN into cooperation. What Rabin had in mind were two new roles for the UN. The first was as a peacekeeping buffer in the Beqa'a, as the UNDOF had offered in the Golan since the disengagement agreements with Syria in April 1974.¹⁵⁴ Second, Rabin fully appreciated that Syria and its Lebanese surrogates, especially the Shi'ites, were adamant about the future of the SLA. Syria had stated time and again that it would not allow this barely veiled surrogate of Israel to remain in Lebanon. Hence Rabin sought to invite a token UNIFIL force into Lahadland—the security zone astride the Israeli border on the Lebanese side—as a means of legitimizing the SLA. Not fully realizing how strongly Syria felt on this residual sticking point and not entirely aware how conscious of their greatly enhanced bargaining power the Syrians had become as a result of the Israeli invasion, Rabin evidently thought that the Syrians would accept such a face-saving

device. Again, it did not take very long, not more than a few weeks, for Rabin and Peres to discover that both the UN and President Assad had very different ideas. The UN would agree to deploy along the Israeli border, but not as a "fig leaf" for Lahad. Rather, at Syria's behest—which the UN, with its standing majority of Soviet bloc and Third World nations, could not ignore—the UN Secretariat made it plain that it would accept a role only as a peacekeeping force.¹⁵⁵ The implication was that Israel would have to choose between a UN force and a Lebanese surrogate army under General Antoine Lahad. Between these two quite unattractive alternatives, Israel under any government would have had no doubt that Lahad was preferable. Experience showed that a UN force would be both ineffective and a constant source of friction. The likelihood that the SLA would be very effective was not very great, but at least, the Peres government felt, Lahad and his army would act on Israeli orders. The negotiations with the UN therefore came to naught, which might explain why, shortly afterward, a frustrated Rabin exclaimed in the Knesset Foreign Relations and Security Committee that UNIFIL was an obstacle and that the French, in particular, were "the biggest bastards."¹⁵⁶

Thus, two of Labor's most important arguments throughout the previous year for repeatedly demanding a withdrawal were proved to have been based more on wishful thinking than on reliable facts. This must have made Labor amply conscious of the fact that it was offering the nation a virtual gamble. But, beyond this, it made Labor's task of winning cabinet approval for the withdrawal far more difficult than had been envisaged. This was a direct consequence of its failure in the July 23, 1984, elections. Despite Begin's departure, despite the ever-worsening economic crisis, despite, above all, the evident failure of the war, the Likud lost very little support in these elections and, in fact, emerged still stronger than it had been after the 1977 elections in which it was allowed for the first time to form a government.

During the six months prior to the elections, the Likud's popularity plummeted, whereas Labor was on the rise. In the last week to ten days the trend was reversed, and on election day it turned out that Labor's optimism had been premature. (See Table 11 for the final results of the July elections).

From the point of view of the Labor party these results were alarming. In the first place the party lost three seats. Second, the success of the Likud without Begin and after such a poor track record in losing only seven seats (none of them to Labor) suggested that the stalemate between the two rival blocs had hardened. Third, the great variety of small splinter parties meant that their ability to squeeze the leading party in any government for far-reaching political payoffs might have increased to alarming proportions. Fourth, although the Likud won fewer seats than Labor, its ability to coalesce with other parties was greater. Labor could almost automatically count on the support of *Shinui*, the Citizens' Rights List, and *Yahad*. Under certain conditions it could also coalesce with the religious parties, NRP, *shas*, and Agudat Israel. Yet these parties in themselves could not possibly sit on the same coalition with *Shinui* and the Citizens' Rights List which are, above all, anticlerical in their programs. Moreover, the Labor party would never join in a coalition with either of the mainly Arab parties, the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality and the Progressive List for Peace.

By contrast, whereas the Likud could not join forces with *Shinui*, the Citizens' Rights List, or the two Arab parties, it could draw on the support of *Tehiya*, *Morasha* (a religious nationalist splinter representing the Gush Emunim West Bank settlers), all the religious parties, *Yahad*, *Ometz* and even Kahane's *Kach*. Thus, the total number of seats the Likud could muster was probably larger than Labor's, even though the latter had done

Table 11. Votes Cast and Distribution of Knesset Seats, 1981, 1984

| Party | Key Leader | Seats in Knesset | | Percentage of Votes | Number of Votes |
|---|-------------|------------------|------|---------------------|-----------------|
| | | 1984 | 1981 | | |
| Labor Alignment | Peres | 44 | 47 | 34.9 | 729,074 |
| Likud | Shamir | 41 | 48 | 31.9 | 661,302 |
| Tehiya | Ne'eman | 5 | 5 | 4.9 | 88,037 |
| National Religious Party | Hammer | 4 | 6 | 3.5 | 73,530 |
| Democratic Front for Peace and Equality | Toubi | 4 | 4 | 3.4 | 69,815 |
| Shas | Peretz | 4 | — | 3.1 | 73,530 |
| Shinui | Rubinstein | 3 | 2 | 2.6 | 54,747 |
| Citizens' Rights List | Alloni | 3 | 1 | 2.4 | 49,698 |
| Yahad | Weizman | 3 | — | 2.2 | 46,302 |
| Progressive List for Peace | Mi'ari | 2 | — | 1.8 | 38,012 |
| Agudat Israel | Porush | 2 | 4 | 1.7 | 36,079 |
| Morasha | Porat | 2 | — | 1.5 | 33,237 |
| Tami | Abu Hazeira | 1 | 3 | 1.5 | 31,103 |
| Ometz (Courage) | Horovitz | 1 | — | 1.2 | 23,865 |
| Kach | Kahane | 1 | — | 1.2 | 25,907 |

Source: Adapted with additional information from *New York Times*, 29 July 1984; *The Guardian*, 27 July 1984; *New York Times*, 1 August 1984.

better in the election. Yet, in the final analysis, neither major party was able to form a viable coalition government. This meant that they would either have to agree on another election campaign which they both feared and which would have resulted in further deterioration in the economy, or they would have to form a National Unity government with their parties as its two main pillars. After nearly seven weeks of bargaining the Likud and Labor opted for a complicated agreement making Peres the prime minister for the first two years and Shamir for the last two years.

Against this background the failure of Peres and Rabin to obtain a tacit understanding with Syria and to come to some arrangement with the UN constituted a major setback. Even if they had been successful in these efforts it would still be difficult to overcome the grave doubts that the bulk of the Herut ministers from the Likud entertained concerning a unilateral withdrawal. Without these important reassuring elements Labor had to convince its Likud partners that a unilateral withdrawal that left behind Lahad's SLA would not lead to a resumption of attacks on the Galilee. Moreover, having attempted to build up the SLA, not to mention the lesser militias, the Likud knew, in a sense, better than Labor how difficult, slow, and uncertain it would be to turn the SLA into an effective buffer. Hence, even if ultimately they were inclined to accept the notion of a withdrawal, they would still contend that Israel should make haste slowly.

On the positive side Peres, Rabin, and their labor colleagues in the government could draw encouragement from a number of important factors. The Likud, to start with, was not at all united in opposing withdrawal. David Levi, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Housing, had led the demand from Shamir to effect a withdrawal back in February 1984. Levi cut a major figure in Likud politics. A Moroccan-born, self-made man from Beit She'an, he was second only to Begin in electoral appeal. Without him

Shamir would be in trouble, all the more so since Shamir was beleaguered by the ambitious Sharon. In addition to Levi it was clear that the National Religious Party (NRP) ministers, Burg and Hammer, as well as minister of communications Amnon Rubinstein of Shinui, Weizman of *Yahad*, Pat and Sharir of the liberal faction of the Likud, and Peretz, the one minister representing the Sephardi religious party *Shas*, were inclined to support a withdrawal. Above all, the fact that 604 Israelis had lost their lives by the end of 1984, had caused a sharp decline in public support for staying in Lebanon—from 84 percent in June 1982 to 64 percent at the end of 1982, 51 percent at the end of 1983, down to 36 percent (20 percent according to another poll) early in 1985.¹⁵⁷ Peres and other supporters of withdrawal could thus calculate that if they were to press for a vote on withdrawal and the Likud were to reject it, Labor could go to the country armed with a lethal electoral weapon. Indirectly, every further casualty could be laid at the Likud doorstep. Hence the Likud would be unable to prevent a cabinet vote and, once it came to a vote, a majority was more or less guaranteed. Indeed, having attempted to deal with the Lebanese in the framework of the Naqura talks, Labor could argue that everything humanly possible had been done to salvage the May 17 accord. The Likud could not deny that and had no choice but to focus exclusively on one issue—which would be less of a gamble: staying inside south Lebanon and suffering more casualties there, or pulling out in the hope that the Shi'ites had become strong enough to prevent the return of the PLO and to avoid hostilities with the Jewish state.

To a certain extent it seems that Peres and Rabin had anticipated such a conjunction of circumstances. Within a few days of entering office Rabin ordered a review of the IDF's plan for withdrawal.¹⁵⁸ Within less than a month the minister of defense was ready with a more or less complete plan. He announced that a withdrawal would take place six to nine months after the cabinet decision, and he shared his thoughts on the matter with the Knesset Foreign Relations and Security Committee.¹⁵⁹ Having gone through this stage in the planning and having warned as early as October 30, 1984,¹⁶⁰ that the Naqura talks had to be concluded within three months, Peres's office let the press know that by the middle of January, that is, within three weeks, the cabinet would be invited to make a decision.¹⁶¹

As the critical debate in the cabinet approached, opponents and supporters of the withdrawal began to share their thoughts with the public. As was the case often, Sharon was the first opponent to voice his criticism: "We—and I mean the Likud," he blasted, "did not form a national unity government in order to serve as a fig leaf for Labor party plans in the political and security spheres, plans we view as disastrous."¹⁶² A few days later Ezer Weizman, another former minister of defense and retired General, appeared on television to announce precisely the opposite. If the talks in Naqura lead nowhere, he suggested, the IDF should withdraw unilaterally and rely on occasional incursions into Lebanon if and when attacks came from there.¹⁶³ A few weeks later Shamir, the ranking Likud member in the coalition, gave an extensive interview to the press. In contrast to Sharon, Weizman, and even Peres himself, who spelled out what they thought the cabinet should decide, Shamir declined to go into details because, as he put it, "the rumors which abound and which reach the ears of the Lebanese and the Syrians, that Israel intends to withdraw at any price—these rumors prevent progress. The Syrians say: 'If they are going to go anyway, why should we negotiate?'" But he did spell out in general terms the main options the cabinet was considering: "Someone might think that security can only be ensured by the IDF staying there. Someone else may believe that a very limited IDF presence is all that is required. A third view may be that cooperation with a local Lebanese

force is enough." The "Lebanon issue," he emphasized, is "not a matter of principle . . . It is a matter of determining what is the most effective means of attaining security for the north."¹⁶⁴

As if to confirm the validity of Shamir's insistence that the issue had been insulated from party politics, Mordechai Gur, minister of health and chief of staff of the IDF during Operation Litani, made a public speech that same week in which he, a leading Labor minister, objected to unilateral withdrawal. Gur dismissed Lahad's SLA as worthless and the Naqura talks with Lebanon as a waste of time, arguing, as he had consistently since the Lebanon Civil War of 1975-76, that the key to all arrangements was an understanding with Syria. Until that was made possible, he concluded, Israel should not leave south Lebanon.¹⁶⁵

Against the background of this intermittent sniping by members of the cabinet, Peres, Rabin, and the IDF were clearly bracing for a final decision and, or so it seems, generally expecting cabinet approval of the IDF recommendation to withdraw. A final notice was issued to the Lebanese government that if no real progress was made in the Naqura talks within ten days, Israel would act unilaterally.¹⁶⁶ The IDF Northern Command launched a quiet campaign in the Galilee, the purpose of which was to prepare the population for the possibility of Katyusha rockets again landing on their homes after a withdrawal. Moreover, the government was apparently making funds available for the purpose of refurbishing and expanding the existing shelter and civil defense system.¹⁶⁷ Amid sardonic reminders to Peres that he had committed himself to a withdrawal within six to nine months of taking office, the cabinet was summoned on January 13 for a full-dress debate on the matter.¹⁶⁸

The nature of the choice that faced Peres and his colleagues can be defined in two alternative ways. To supporters of a withdrawal it seemed, in the words of Chairman of the Knesset Foreign Relations and Security Committee Abba Eban, that both "staying and leaving have risks involved. The risk of staying had already been proven, regrettably, in terms of human life." The risk of leaving therefore appeared more promising. After all, the "skies are still open for aerial surveillance and the way is still open for ground surveillance."¹⁶⁹ To the opponents of a withdrawal it seemed, in the words of Moshe Arens, "a gamble and it is difficult to argue with gambles. We all live in fear that the security of the people of the Galilee will be severely hurt and we are all waiting for a miracle that everything will be all right. In fact we are all saying that if it does not work we shall act. And the implication of this is that we shall have to launch the war for peace in the Galilee for a second time."¹⁷⁰

The debate began with a statement by the minister of defense in which he explained the rationale of the decision and the logic of his proposal to withdraw in three stages. The general rationale of the decision to withdraw rested on five principal assumptions. First, Israel had exhausted all the possibilities for an agreed and negotiated withdrawal. Second, the IDF was paying in blood, morale, and professional standards a price that was not worth paying. By returning to Israel's border and operating from there it would regain its traditionally spirited and aggressive posture. Third, by staying in Lebanon, Israel was risking a growing conflict with the Shi'ites with whom it basically had no quarrel. By withdrawing from Lebanon, Israel would be providing the Shi'ites of the south with an opportunity to assert themselves in the south and in Lebanese politics more generally. A solid belt of Druzes between the Beirut-Damascus road and the Awali River, and a Shi'ite "canton" south of there, should be sufficient to prevent the return of the PLO. This move

would reflect not sentiment for Israel but the self-interest of these two Lebanese communities.

Fourth, by withdrawing from the Barouq Mountain and Qar'oun Lake area back to Israel's border while making clear to Syria that mobilizing its forces would mean war, Israel would be recreating a system of deterrence based on red lines. By deploying in close proximity to the Syrians,

we were hamstrung in terms of our ability to respond effectively to attacks behind Syrian lines. We were forced to play the game by Syrian rules. Now we are going to be leaving an open area between us and them and anything that moves there will be considered an offensive action. It will put the onus of proof on the Syrians to demonstrate that they were not involved. We hope that the Syrians will interpret accurately the situation and not miscalculate.

If they were to miscalculate, Israel "will retaliate and things will escalate real fast."¹⁷¹ The Syrian record of playing by the rules was exceedingly good. They observed religiously the rules of the disengagement agreements of 1974, and they kept their word following the tacit understanding of April 1976. The chances that they would do so again were, Rabin told his colleagues, rather good.

Fifth, the withdrawal would proceed in three stages. In the first, to be completed within five weeks, the IDF would withdraw from Sidon and its environs to a line more or less on the Litani River, except for part of the Arnoon-Nabatiyeh Heights and the Hasbayah and Qar'oun area all the way to Jebel Barouq. After this withdrawal the IDF would watch carefully to see what happened. The UN was asked to take over the vacated areas. If it agreed, all the better; if not, and violence were to erupt as a result of a scramble by the various militias to grab what they could of the vacated zone, the IDF would not intervene. But if the PLO and/or Syrian forces were to participate in this scramble as key actors, the IDF would move in again to stop it before they had an opportunity to consolidate positions.

If this worst case did not materialize, the IDF would have to effect the second stage in the withdrawal, namely, climbing down from the Barouq and repositioning itself in the Hasbayah area. In the third and final stage the IDF would gradually thin out its presence in the area between the outskirts of Tyre in the west and Hasbayah in the east. The pace and method of the thinning out would be determined by the success of the SLA in taking charge. Even if Lahad's army proved effective, however, the IDF would leave a great number of advisers, backup services, and intelligence installations inside the SLA zone. The withdrawal would be completed before the winter of 1985. The timing and scope of phases two and three would remain undetermined and certainly unpublished.

After Rabin's presentation, the cabinet began what turned out to be an eleven-hour-long debate in which thirteen ministers (out of twenty-two present) took active part. As a result the cabinet failed to take a vote on January 13 but met again to vote in a special session the next day. Throughout the discussion it was defined as a Cabinet Security Affairs committee, implying a stricter-than-usual demand for secrecy.

The absence of Sharon, who was in New York attending to his libel suit against *Time* magazine, had a salutary impact on the atmosphere, which was serious, businesslike, and unpolemic. But the opponents of the withdrawal fought it with determination. Shamir, in particular, called the withdrawal a reflection of weakness for which Israel might subsequently be made to pay. Other Likud ministers attempted to extract from the cabinet

a formula to turn the line after the first phase of withdrawal into a semipermanent one. Rabin opposed this strenuously. "We should have learned from the past," he told his colleagues, "not to take decisions that do not project where we are going two or three steps farther along the road. It would be wrong to take a decision that was not shaped by a comprehensive strategic approach."¹⁷²

Rabin was seconded in this approach by none other than Likud leader David Levi, who vigorously rejected, according to one source, "the idea . . . of a permanent partial pull back [which] would be to doom the IDF to an inevitable war of attrition, deployed, as it would be, between hostile Shi'ite populations to the north and to the south." Given this split among the Likud ministers and Sharon's absence, the debate drew to a decisive result without acrimony. Sixteen ministers voted in favor of the Rabin/IDF plan. Six voted against. Rounding up the discussion, Prime Minister Peres repeated again the threat of Shi'ite radicalism and stated emotionally: "We have been sitting in Lebanon for three years and there are still some who ask, 'What's the hurry?'"¹⁷³

In retrospect there seems to be little doubt that the debate in the cabinet was not between two ideologies, or two interpretations of the Jewish past, or, indeed, two competing political parties. It was rather an almost purely strategic controversy between two contending approaches to the security dilemma. Both schools assumed the worst about the Arab adversaries. Neither, in this sense, was proposing a move of accommodation. Yet supporters of the two views were divided over what would be Israel's optimal form of assertion.

The supporters of withdrawal viewed the friction with the Shi'ites at once as a prelude to catastrophe and as a controllable situation. If Israel were to impose itself on the Shi'ites it would ultimately drive them to a worldwide terrorist campaign which Israel would find hard to arrest. Conversely, if Israel disengaged from the south of Lebanon, friction with the Shi'ites might be reduced to manageable proportions and, ideally, the Shi'ites might yet become the buffer insulating the Jewish state from Lebanon, that gutter into which all the violence, corruption, rivalry, and frustration of the Middle East ultimately seemed to be pouring. Beyond this there was, in the view of the supporters of withdrawal, an even greater concern: Syria. An intensified conflict with the Shi'ites, they feared, would mainly weaken Israel's ability to deal with the Syrian threat which, in the final analysis, was the real threat. Apprehensive about Syria's growing military power, they sought to disengage Israel from the morass of south Lebanon as a means of given the IDF, indeed, the nation, a respite in which to put the economy in order, facilitate the recharging of the seemingly depleted psychological batteries of the Israelis, and attend to the challenging task of wrestling with the genuinely existential threat posed by the *Ba'ath* Republic.

The equation on which the opponents of withdrawal were basing their position was somewhat different. They felt that the problem in south Lebanon posed a threat of equally existential proportions. The resumption of terrorism across the northern border could wear Israel down as effectively as any direct, conventional threat. The specter of an Israeli withdrawal, the inevitability that the Arabs would interpret withdrawal as weakness, was bound to lead to a reinvigorated Arab onslaught, not only from south Lebanon but perhaps in the West Bank. In their view Israel could barely tolerate the price of retreat within the framework of a peace treaty. Moshe Arens and the *Tehiyah* members of Knesset who voted against the withdrawal from Lebanon had also voted, it should be recalled, against a withdrawal from the Sinai within the Camp David formula. It was therefore only logical that they should view with alarm a decision to withdraw unilaterally out of an almost explicitly acknowledged exhaustion.

From the point of view of Peres and the Labor party, the government's decision to withdraw was clearly a great domestic victory. But the decision was only the prelude to a complicated process which was directly the result of the cabinet's vote on January 14, 1985. Contrary to the situation immediately preceding the decision to withdraw, however, pressures on the domestic front were decreasing despite the fact that pressures on the IDF inside Lebanon were increasing. The Jewish state was clearly falling into the traditional pattern of national unity in the face of external adversity.

On the domestic front the main source of pressure was not the lingering grumbles of the *Tehiya* (in opposition since the formation of the National Unity government) or Likud backbenchers but rather pressure on the government's left to speed up the withdrawal. Unlike the situation prior to the elections, the criticism now originated, to Labor's embarrassment, from MAPAM and the Citizens Rights List, who had been Labor's close allies throughout the preceding two years. When the Labor party decided to enter into a coalition with the Likud, it gained the support of Ezer Weizman's three-seat *Yahad* party—which eventually merged with Labor—as well as of Yigal Horovitz's one-member *Ometz* party. This four-seat addition was, however, undercut by defections on Labor's left, namely, the breakup of the alignment by MAPAM, and the painful departure of Knesset member Yossi Sarid, the war's toughest and most consistent critic, who joined Aloni's Citizens Rights List. Now that Shimon Peres and Itzhak Rabin had succeeded in maneuvering the Likud to agree to a withdrawal, MAPAM and the Citizens Rights List were raising hell over the phased-out method of withdrawal which was causing casualties, and they called for a tough IDF response. This noisy critique gave Peres and his party an opportunity to experience the same difficulties that the Likud had experienced from June 1982 to September 1984 as a result of the criticism of Peres's own Labor. The phased-out method of withdrawal made a great deal of strategic sense because it allowed for corrective measures, even for a change of plans, without creating an image of a beaten IDF running away. But the criticism at home, especially after the experience of the previous two years, encouraged the Shi'ites and the Syrians—or so Peres thought—to believe that their increased pressure on the IDF would further underline its defeat. Irrate and angry at the critique by MAPAM and CRL, Peres lashed out at them in the same way that Begin, Arens, Sharon, and Shamir had previously lashed out at him. "The public dissent in Israel would merely enhance the terrorists' prestige," he told MAPAM leader, Victor Shemtov, during a meeting of the Knesset Foreign Relations and Security Committee. Instead of making the complicated withdrawal operation even more difficult by making "exaggerated statements" about the events taking place across the northern border, the critics should join in "a broad and solid national consensus on military issues."¹⁷⁴ His colleague Arik Nehemkin, Labor minister of agriculture, was even more explicit. "I simply do not understand [what the critics want from the government]," he told a meeting in Tel Aviv on March 21. "I understand that they would protest if the government had decided to stay in Lebanon. But the Government has decided to pull out." The critics "do not understand that every time they hold a protest meeting it is shown on television in Lebanon and this encourages the terrorists there to act against our soldiers. Don't . . . [the leftist critics of phased-out withdrawal] understand that if we run away from Lebanon the terrorists will run after our soldiers?"¹⁷⁵

There was a touch of irony in these comments, given the Labor party's own previous confrontations with the Likud on the same grounds. But the issue was not really important. And demands for slowing down or halting the withdrawal were not difficult to deal with. For one thing, the line of IDF deployment by the end of the first phase was so

indefinite that even diehard Likudniks could not seriously demand that the IDF stay there one day longer than envisaged. Indeed, it took the cabinet a total of ninety minutes to approve (with only one abstention) the implementation of the second phase (compared with eleven hours in the debate of January 13–14).¹⁷⁶ Thus, paradoxically, it appears that cumbersome as the National Unity government may have been, it offered Peres a major advantage. Rather than having to deal with a noisy Likud opposition and expecting to be blamed for every casualty after the withdrawal, he had the Likud chained to his own policy. It may have prolonged the decision to withdraw, but, on the whole, it gave more of a guarantee that there would be no charges of feebleness or treasonous neglect.

Moreover, considering the grave problems with which the withdrawal confronted the IDF in Lebanon, the domestic debate was a midsummer night's dream. Before the announcement of the decision to withdraw, the Peres government approached the *Amal* leadership with an offer of at least tacit cooperation: since the IDF would be leaving, why should the Shi'ites continue their attacks and force Israel to retaliate or even to halt the proposed withdrawal?¹⁷⁷ This was Israel's second attempt to signal to the Shi'ites that there was no conflict between them and Israel, the first having been Peres's public call for a truce, back in the fall of 1984.¹⁷⁸

But the Shi'ite response was to indicate that there was no room for an understanding as long as Israel insisted on keeping Lahad's SLA, and that in any case Israel should, as a precondition, leave Lebanese territory. This negative response threw Israel's dilemma with Lahad's status into sharp focus. Labor leaders with a solid military background such as Mota Gur, the minister of health and Chief of Staff until shortly after the 1978 operation, argued that the SLA was not worth the trouble.¹⁷⁹ Arab affairs specialists such as Clinton Baily argued in the same vein from a different perspective. The choice was between a large Shi'ite majority and a small Christian minority. The latter stood no chance. As soon as the IDF withdrew the SLA would fall apart like a house of cards.¹⁸⁰ Yet the credentials of the Shi'ites as tacit allies of Israel were still a matter of academic conjecture, not proven fact, whereas Lahad's SLA existed and seemed to be making slow but satisfactory progress. Moreover, in the cabinet debate the only tangible asset the advocates of a withdrawal could point to—once an understanding with Syria and the UN's role were proven a figment of Labor's imagination—was the SLA. Could Peres and Rabin now turn to Shamir and Arens, as the withdrawal process was beginning, and explain that Lahad should be abandoned?

If Lahad was not going to be abandoned the implication was that the withdrawal process would turn into an all-out Israeli-Shi'ite war—precisely what Peres and Rabin were most intent on avoiding. It began with a wave of Shi'ite attacks on SLA personnel. Within a few days of the Israeli decision to withdraw, no less than sixty south Lebanese accused of collaboration with Israel were assassinated. The result was a wave of desertions from the SLA which reduced its force by roughly one-third, demoralized it immeasurably, and even led to calls in the Knesset for an offer by Israel to resettle SLA personnel and their families inside Israel.¹⁸¹

But the worst part was yet to come. The pending withdrawal of the IDF created an irresistible temptation for everybody in the south—Shi'ites, Sunni Lebanese, Sunni Palestinians, even Christians—to engage in attacks against the retreating army. For former collaborators with the IDF this was an opportunity to absolve themselves of the charges of collaboration and, perhaps, thereby save their own skin. For the militants this was a way of leading their underground operations to a final, bloody crescendo. Internal competition among different factions must have also encouraged such an attitude, as did

the evident impression that the decision to withdraw was born of an Israeli sense of defeat, that the IDF was "broken," and that Israeli soldiers would do anything not to have their names added to the bottom of the soon-to-be-closed list of Lebanon war casualties.¹⁸²

This upsurge of attacks on the IDF as it was departing confronted the Israeli government with one of its most acute dilemmas since the beginning of the involvement in Lebanon. The decision to pull out was predicated on the hypothesis that it would be seen by the Shi'ites as an act of accommodation. The Shi'ites, Peres and his colleagues hoped, would reciprocate the gesture: an accommodative Israeli move would elicit an accommodative Shi'ite response. But if this were a miscalculation, if the Shi'ites were to interpret Israeli withdrawal as weakness and be induced to exploit it, should the IDF further encourage them to think so by avoiding punitive (that is, assertive) action? An IDF attempt to deter the Shi'ites from increasing their attacks might lead to precisely the escalation that the supporters of withdrawal feared most. It might lead to an all-out terrorist campaign against the state of Israel, and possibly world Jewry, which would make PLO terrorism look like child's play. As Minister of Defense Rabin told the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations in a speech in New York, "Shi'ite terrorism carries with it a much greater danger . . . than PLO terrorism. If as a result of the war in Lebanon we will have succeeded in eliminating to a large extent the PLO terrorists, but will have brought about Shi'ite terrorism, one would have to think twice about what really proved to be the results of this war." In twenty years of PLO attacks, he did not recall even one instance in which a Palestinian terrorist took a car loaded with half a ton of explosives and carried out a suicide raid. But there had been, he pointed out, five such raids against the IDF in Lebanon—all by Shi'ite extremists—and there probably would have been more if the Shi'ites themselves had had the explosives.¹⁸³ "No one of the PLO," he said on another occasion, "has ever dared to become a kind of land Kamikaze."¹⁸⁴

Informed by such considerations Israel exercised, during the period from January 15 to February 16, the first phase of the IDF withdrawal with a great deal of restraint and a policy described as Velvet Glove. Rabin and other cabinet members issued occasional threats that Israel would not cease fighting terrorism, and information about Shi'ite networks and organization was being gathered as a precautionary measure. But the IDF concentrated on dismantling its infrastructure in the area to be vacated and satisfied itself with looking after its own safety.¹⁸⁵ At the same time, assuming that attacks by Shi'ites during the second phase of the withdrawal could become more vicious, a fallback decision to deal with them severely was taken in principle.

As soon as the IDF was out of Sidon there was an eruption of celebrations in the city and a visit by president Gemayel who came to congratulate Sidon's "resistance" upon its "liberation."¹⁸⁶ The next day, however, fighting broke out in the city as Shi'ite, Sunni, and (Abu Moussa) Palestinian militias scrambled to fill the power vacuum created by the Israeli withdrawal. The Israeli government had warned beforehand that the IDF would not intervene to prevent bloodshed¹⁸⁷ but when, to Israel's surprise,¹⁸⁸ the violence among Lebanese in Sidon was followed by further violence against IDF units in the Tyre-Nabatiyeh "arc of resistance," the IDF was ordered to change its strategy altogether. Troops carrying out their duty were no longer to be deterred from opening fire by mass demonstrations of women and children, nor by the fact that in some cases buildings of religious significance were used by the Shi'ites as caches of arms. "This has become an all-out war," said an IDF officer, "and we have to protect ourselves. The argument that we will only create more enemies has become irrelevant; there are no more enemies to make here." Henceforth, until the completion of the withdrawal the IDF would start

hitting back at the Shi'ites offensively, rather than responding defensively as it had been. "When farmers cannot get to their fields, and merchants cannot open their shops, perhaps they will control the radicals among them. They know we intend to withdraw, and there is nothing left for them to achieve but their own misery if they continue attacking."¹⁸⁹

The logic of this change in policy had as much to do with strategy as with domestic politics. Strategically it was yet another example of the security dilemma. In Rabin's words, Israel "has no choice but to fight the Shi'ite terrorism that is striking our soldiers now and may seek to hit us across the border. If we do not fight it, there is little chance that it will stop at the border [after the withdrawal]."¹⁹⁰ In other words, convinced that the Shi'ites were going to act assertively, presented, in fact, by bloody evidence of that, the Israelis also acted assertively. They knew how their action would affect the Shi'ites but felt that the latter had to be made to understand a broader lesson: during the withdrawal process and even more so after it, if Israel had no peace the Shi'ites would have no peace either.¹⁹¹ The choice was with the Shi'ites. If they wished there could be a return to an updated version of the Good Fence policy that the Peres-Rabin team had pursued back in 1976. If on the other hand, threatened Rabin, the Shi'ites were to turn this offer down, Israel would resort to a scorched earth policy which would turn south Lebanon into a desert and its population into refugees.¹⁹²

Yuval Ne'eman, the *Tehiya* Minister of Science and Technology in Shamir's cabinet, and, since September 1984, a member of the opposition, viewed this apparent implementation of his own recommendation with great satisfaction, pointing out sardonically how much tougher Rabin from the dovish Labor party, was in comparison to Arens, the ultra-hawk from the Likud. "Rabin has shown," Ne'eman said, "that he knows how to carry out a tough policy in Lebanon. Arens could never have done what Rabin is doing. Arens is a gentle man. When I suggested all sorts of measures of punishing and deterring the Shi'ites, Arens would reply that he did not want to stir up the Shi'ites against Israel. But all he proved to the Shi'ites was that Israel is weak, and thus fanned their fanaticism."¹⁹³

But if Ne'eman thought that the difference in personalities was the key reason for the difference in policy, he missed the main point. With his unusually rich military experience, Rabin may well have been tougher than Arens, who had no military experience at all. But Rabin and Peres and the entire cabinet, with Knesset and wide public support, were acting rationally on the assumption that Israel had no other choice. Having gone into Lebanon, stayed there for three years, and decided to pull out, they knew that the option of repeating that did not really exist. If Shi'ite or any other terrorism were to follow the path of IDF withdrawal back into the Galilee, Israel would simply have no alternative but to do to the south Lebanese what had been done in 1968–70 to the residents of the populous Suez Canal area and the east bank of the Jordan valley: drive them out of their homes with an Iron Fist—as Rabin called this response to Shi'ite terrorism—in the hope that the vested interest of ordinary people in peace and welfare would prevail over the political interests of their leaders.

The pressure to follow this logic was of course greatest on the cabinet members who had led the advocates of withdrawal. If Shi'ite attacks were to follow the IDF to the Galilee, how would Rabin, Peres, Levi, and others face those in the cabinet, the Knesset, and the country who had warned all along that Israel should stay in the security zone? By this strange paradox the minimalists, the doves, the supporters of the tacit deals with the Syrians, the Shi'ites and the UN were forced to assume a posture harsh enough to recall Sharon's tactics during the dark days of the siege of Beirut.

The application of the Iron Fist policy began on February 20, 1985, with a raid on the village of Bazouriyeh, east of Tyre, where two IDF soldiers had been killed two days earlier. The next day, there was a similar raid on the villages of Burj Rahal, Burj al Shemali, and Bedias, which constituted part of the "arc of resistance" east of Tyre. The following week the area under attack was further expanded, and this phase in the policy came to a climax a week and a half later with a massive raid on Ma'arakhe, the largest of these villages.

The raids were conducted methodically. A large force in armored cars would suddenly surround a village chosen for a raid. Israeli soldiers would take the hills around it, and block all entrances to the village with physical barriers. The troops would enter the village shooting at anything that moved while commanding the residents through loudspeakers to stay at home. They would search every home thoroughly, and round up all the men aged sixteen to sixty and assemble them in the village square. Then, assisted by hooded informers, the Israelis would begin to identify suspected *al Amal* supporters and take them for further interrogation. Houses owned by suspected supporters of *al Amal* would be blown up. Any attempt to resist arrest would lead to shooting. Fifteen Shi'ites were killed in this way within the first ten days of the new policy.¹⁹⁵

While carrying out these operations the Israelis continued to signal to Shi'ite leaders that they were prepared to halt if the Shi'ites would respond in kind. "We would be ready to deliver *al Amal* leader Nabih Berri the south," a senior Israeli officer told a foreign reporter. "Why doesn't he understand that by cooperating with us in the withdrawal instead of trying to outbid the extremists, we could make him the King of the South! We would turn the whole place over to him. If he gets into competition with the Shi'ite extremists against us, he will never win, not in Beirut nor in the south."¹⁹⁶ Berri however, may have found it impossible to accept this offer. He may have had to show his hand to the Syrians or to the Hizbollah and Islamic *Amal* militants on his flank, or to both. Or he may have had far less control over the situation than the Israelis thought. At any rate the Shi'ites responded by further escalating the violence. On March 2, 1985, Berri declared that from "now on every time a village is attacked in South Lebanon, a village will be attacked in the Galilee."¹⁹⁷ On March 10, a car bomb attack hit an IDF convoy a short distance from the border near Metula. Twelve Israeli soldiers died.

Israel's response was to escalate the reprisals further. The day after the car bomb attack a large Israeli force crossed the IDF line of deployment and raided the village of Zrariyeh, within the area that had been vacated three weeks earlier. Thirty-four Lebanese Shi'ites were killed and much damage was done to the village.¹⁹⁸ Ten days later a large helicopter-borne Israeli force, supported on the ground by a great deal of armor, performed a similar raid on the villages of Humin al Tahta, Jaba, Sabra, Jal al Arab, Rukine, Rumine, Ankun, Kafr Fila, and Kafr Melki. The size of the raid was so large that one Beirut radio station called it a new invasion. By evening, however, the IDF force withdrew, leaving behind scores of blown-up homes and taking with it scores of prisoners.¹⁹⁹ During the operation two members of a CBS news team were shot, bringing accusations of a deliberate attempt to suppress reporting of the IDF action. Anyone making such an accusation must explain why Israel would antagonize the Western media for no readily apparent reason. In the final analysis, it is a moot point whether or not the accusations were correct. The main message of these raids was directed not to the media but rather to the Shi'ites in Lebanon. This was a foretaste of what their fate would be if they did not reciprocate Israel's "live and let live" policy.

Meanwhile, the Israeli cabinet made a decision on March 3, 1985, to carry out the

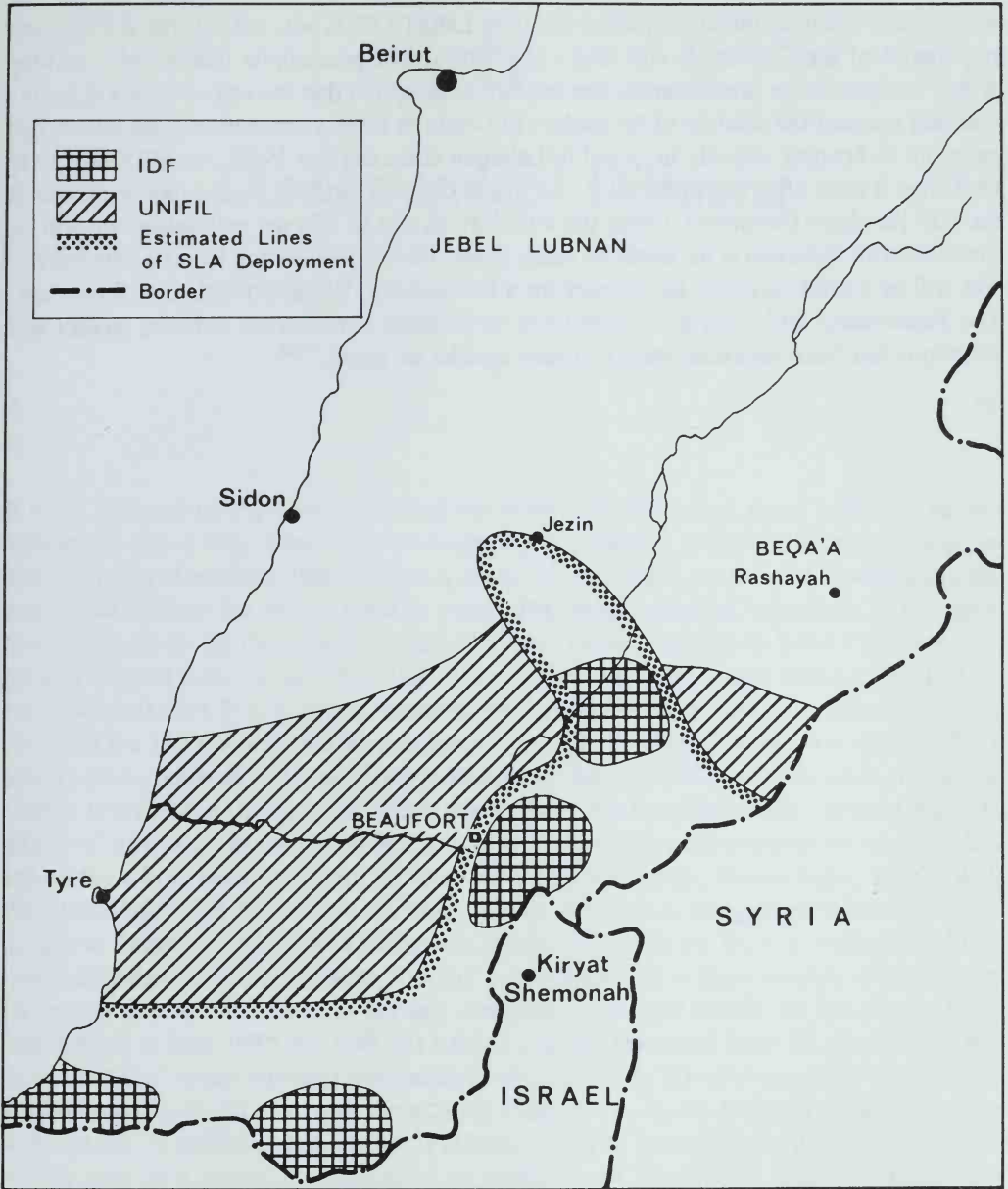
second phase of the withdrawal. In the background were growing domestic pressures, especially after the car bomb attack, to speed up the pullout. But Peres insisted that the "terrorists will not dictate" the pace. His reasoning, however, was not only strategic. The second phase involved dismantling the early warning systems on Jebel Barouq as well as a great deal of other infrastructure. The IDF needed time for this even if it had no sound strategic reasons for deferring a withdrawal. On the positive side the withdrawal in the eastern sector entailed no difficulties with the Syrians. The Israelis figured that Assad and his regime had "learned that the best way to operate against Israel is to fight until the last Shi'ite . . . or Palestinian. Why take the risk of a direct military confrontation?"²⁰⁰ Thus, although precautions were taken in case the Syrians were to make a move following the Israeli withdrawal, the atmosphere on the eastern front remained serene until the pullout itself.

The implementation of the second phase of the withdrawal plan of January 14, 1985, took the IDF out of Tyre, out of the bulk of the Shi'ite arc of resistance, and down from Jebel Barouq to the Hasbaya area. The danger of an unintended clash with Syria decreased as the result of a wide no-man's-land between the two armies. The Shi'ites turned their attention to battling the Christians and Palestinians in Sidon and Beirut. Encouraged by Syria and supported by Druze militiamen riding Syrian-supplied T-54 tanks, they were successful in seizing all major points from the southern outskirts of Beirut to the Israeli security belt in the south.

Moreover, Yassar Arafat continued to travel from one Third World and communist bloc capital to another and proceeded with his endless negotiations with King Hussein of Jordan with a view to formulating a joint approach to the Reagan plan of September 1982. The Phalange in turn became increasingly disenchanted with Amin Gemayel. In March 1985 they threatened to use force against the regime. This was followed by Syrian threats, the replacement of the commander of the Lebanese Forces Samir Jaja with Eli Hobeika (who had commanded the unit which carried out the Sabra and Shatilla massacres), and a sudden about-face of Hobeika, the toughest supporter of the late Bashir Gemayel vis-à-vis Syria. In a barely veiled gesture toward Syria, Hobeika declared in mid-May 1985 that the Lebanese Forces would thenceforth cut off all links with Israel. To demonstrate his sincerity he ordered the Lebanese Front representative in Jerusalem, Pierre Yazbek, to close the legation and return home.²⁰¹

A few days later the Israeli government exchanged 1,150 Palestinians convicted of murder and sabotage for three Israeli soldiers who had been held by Ahmed Jibril's guerilla organization since June 1982. This humiliating and potentially harmful exchange, together with the final rupture of relations with the Lebanese Front underlined the agonizing fact that Israel was back to square one. Moreover, although it had declared its intention to complete the withdrawal by June 6, 1986, the IDF seemed to be planning a continued involvement with the SLA in a vaguely delineated security belt along the lines of the cooperation with Haddad's militia before the invasion. To be sure, the SLA, an army of some 1,400 soldiers, was far bigger than Haddad's guards of the Good Fence before the war. It had received extensive training and showed a reasonable fighting spirit in battles against Druzes and Shi'ites in the approaches to Jezin, in the southern tip of the Shouf and in numerous skirmishes with Palestinians and Shi'ites. But a number of factors suggested that, much like Haddad's force, Lahad's "army" would not be able to hold its ground if the IDF were to leave it completely.

First, President Assad of Syria, in a meeting with Nabih Berri, Walid Jumblatt, and others among his supporters in Lebanon, on May 15, 1985 declared that he would not accept



Israel's Security Belt, June 1985 (Adapted from *Britannica Atlas*, Encyclopaedia Britannica)

Israel's plan of a security belt under Lahad's SLA.²⁰² Second, in terms of sheer training the Lahad force was still a long way from a satisfactory level of performance, according to the prevailing view in Israel. Worse, the bulk of the area under its command was Shi'ite, whereas 60 percent of its soldiers and an even higher percentage of its officers and NCO's were Christians. The question was whether *al Amal* would allow this force to continue to maintain control over this area, or whether it would attempt to activate the Shi'ites within the Lahad belt astride the Israeli border with a view to causing the collapse of the SLA. Judging by repeated warnings of leading *Amal* personalities ever since May 1985, the Shi'ite organization was determined to undermine Lahad's position as soon as it had the

power to do so.²⁰³ In any event, Israel did not and could not know whether the Shi'ites would carry out their threats to pursue not only Lahād's SLA but, indeed, the IDF and the population of the Galilee. It was thus only natural and predictable that Israel's attitude would continue to be predicated on the implicit assumption that the same vicious dilemma that had aroused the interest of its leaders in Lebanon forty years earlier, and which had caused it to become actively involved in Lebanon since the late 1960s, would continue to challenge it even after the withdrawal. As Major General Ori Orr, commanding officer of the IDF Northern Command during the withdrawal, put it: "In my estimation we will be involved with terrorism in the north for many years. Possibly following Israel's withdrawal, this will be within narrower parameters for a few months. But afterwards it will increase. The Palestinians will reorganize, and once the balance between the vermin, snakes and scorpions has been restored, they will turn against us again."²⁰⁴

6

The Unresolved Dilemma

In May 1986, when the final revision of this study was concluded, there were very strong indications that a new order might be emerging in Lebanon. It was strikingly different in many important respects from Sharon's grand vision, but if it survived it would not be unacceptable from the Israeli point of view. The most important ingredient of this new pattern seems to be the success of the Shi'ites, headed by Nabih Berri's *al Amal*, in gaining control over the area that lies between the Litani and Awali rivers as well as of most of southwest Beirut which, prior to the Israeli invasion, had constituted the main center of the PLO. An important corollary to the ascent of the Shi'ites was that the PLO lost its strongholds in Fakhani, Burj al Barajneh, Sabra and Shatilla. Another important change was that the Druzes gained firm control over the Shouf Mountains and the western slopes of this ridge to the Sidon-Beirut highway. The Maronite community was divided but on the whole came to accept the new order and was ready, almost eager, to return to the Syrian fold. The Sunni elite declined. In the deep south, along Israel's border and in a narrow finger pointing north within the southern part of the Beqa'a Valley, the SLA under Christian Brigadier General Antoine Lahad, but with a great number of Shi'ites in its ranks, seemed in control. Having completed the withdrawal on the war's third anniversary 6 June 1985 the IDF left behind a relatively small force as a backup to the SLA. *Al Amal* issued repeated statements to the effect that it would not allow any foreign force (meaning the PLO) to ensconce itself again in the south. Some of its leaders even went so far as publicly shaming the PLO for trying to foment strife deliberately in the Beirut area as a means of facilitating its return to its strongholds there. In short, the gamble on which the Israeli decision to withdraw from Lebanon had been based seemed to pay off.¹

But the Israelis themselves were not at all certain that it had. Speaking to the press barely a week before the end of the withdrawal, Israeli Defense Minister Rabin estimated that the problem of terrorism from Lebanon was not solved but merely temporarily contained, that Berri's promises to stop the attacks against Israel if Lahad's SLA was dismantled may have been "perhaps true for the day on which they were made," and that, above all, Syria was "bound to sooner or later permit her own terrorist organizations to carry out sabotage missions" against the Jewish state.² Thus, by Israel's own perception, the problem that had impelled it to invade Lebanon was not resolved. Sooner or later the Jewish state was bound to be faced again with the same old choices: to yield, to act

defensively, to launch limited reprisals, to act in a preventive and anticipatory manner (and thus possibly precipitate further tensions). Such premonitions are the very stuff of the security dilemma in its classic formulation. It has been true for all nations since the dawn of history; it has always been typical of the Israeli approach to the Middle East; and it was a natural and quite logical response to the painful experience that Israel suffered in Lebanon. But the problem was deeper than the precarious and menacing situation in South Lebanon. In the same interview cited above, Rabin reiterated an Israeli maxim of long standing: "the main problem of Israeli security is the threat of a large-scale action by regular Arab armies."³ This perception of the nature of the threat was not affected by the Lebanon experience and would not be altered even if the problem of security along Israel's border with Lebanon were entirely solved. It had been Israel's predicament all along. It may have become slightly less worrying as the result of the peace with Egypt—which went cold in June 1982, but showed faint signs of warming up again ever since the completion of the IDF's withdrawal from Lebanon. But even with a viable peace with Egypt, Israel still has to contend with an enduring, persistent, growing Syrian threat. One lesson of the Lebanon experience was clearly that with the growth of Syrian power, there was a reduction in the Syrian willingness to search for accommodation, even tacit accommodation.

Beyond Syria's military threat Israel still faced after its departure from Lebanon the political menace (in the Israeli perception) of the Palestinian problem. The drastic eclipse of Arafat's position as a result of Israel's military action in June 1982, Syria's military and political pressures throughout the aftermath of the PLO's expulsion from Beirut, and the routing of the PLO from the Lebanese capital by the Shi'ites during 1985–86 did not eliminate the problem of the Palestinians. It forced Arafat to be more flexible in his on-again-off-again negotiations with King Hussein, but by doing so Arafat brought matters closer than ever before to a point at which Israel would have no choice but to address the Palestinian issue head-on. The agonizing national and humanitarian condition of close to two million Palestinians could not be ignored forever. Israel may have succeeded—with tacit Arab collusion—in its attempts to force the Palestinians under occupation and much of the *Fateh* establishment to lower their sights and accept a lot less than their initial demands of only a few years earlier. But Israel has not succeeded and cannot possibly succeed in erasing the issue from its own consciousness or from the minds of Palestinians, Arabs, Europeans, Americans, Third World societies, the UN, the Soviet bloc, in fact almost anyone and everyone on planet Earth. Sooner or later the issue would have to be confronted again, and sooner or later it would impale Israel inescapably on the horns of the same old dilemma: to accommodate the Palestinians somehow and thereby run long-term risks but perhaps induce an accommodative pragmatic and businesslike Palestinian response, or to remain obdurate, maximize short-term security advantages but perhaps foreclose the option of a settlement in the long run.

As in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's gloomy theory cited repeatedly in this book, Israel's choice under any government is probably going to be the short-term gain/long-term loss option.⁴ Political leaders from the left or right seldom run short-term risks in the hope of making a long-term gain. Nor is the public to which such leaders are accountable very different in its perceptions, except for a permanent but always tiny faction of optimists on the left of the political spectrum in Israel, as anywhere else. Both leaders and public may of course be misguided. They may be missing endless opportunities to ameliorate their own predicament. But such, in the final analysis, is the human condition.

Indeed, beyond the specific problem in south Lebanon, beyond the Palestinian issue,

beyond the larger issue of Arab-Israeli relations, the Israeli disposition to assume the worst and thus eschew more imaginative action is nurtured by the continuing state of anarchy not only in the Middle East but in most of the wide and complex world that lies beyond it. The Iran-Iraq war; the tensions in the Gulf area; the continuing struggle between Somalis and Ethiopians; the violent antics of Colonel Mu'ammar Qaddafi in North and Saharan Africa; the conflict in the Morocco-Algiers-Mauritania nexus; the tensions between Greeks and Turks; the perennial problems in central and southern Africa; the endless warfare in Indochina, in Ceylon, in Bangladesh, between India and Pakistan, and between India and China; the war in Afghanistan; the trouble in the Koreas, in the Philippines, and in Latin America; and above all the awesome specter of a nuclear holocaust owing to the chronic East-West conflict—all these contemporary instances of violent struggle virtually make certain that the Israelis, like most of the human race, will continue to feel pervasively insecure and will respond to the security dilemma preemptively as they have done since the inception of the Jewish state and as the rest of the world has done since time immemorial.

Notes

Preface

1. Avner Yaniv and Robert J. Lieber, "Personal Whim or Strategic Imperative: The Israeli Invasion of Lebanon," *International Security* 8, no. 2 (Fall 1983).
2. Avner Yaniv and Robert J. Lieber, "Reagan and the Middle East," *The Washington Quarterly* 6, no. 4 (Fall 1983).
3. Robert Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (January 1978).
4. Shai Feldman and Heda Rechnitz-Kijner, "Deception, Consensus and War: Israel in Lebanon," Tel Aviv University, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, paper no. 17 (October 1984).

Chapter 1

1. For an analysis of the military aspects of Operation Peace for the Galilee, see Chaim Herzog, *The Arab-Israeli Wars* (New York: Random House, 1982) Richard A. Gabriel, *Operation Peace for the Galilee* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984) and Trevor N. Dupuy and Paul Martell, *Flawed Victory: The Arab-Israeli Conflict and the 1982 War in Lebanon* (Fairfax, VA: Hero Books, 1986).
2. For an appraisal of the protest in Israel following the 1982 war, see Yael Yishai, "Dissent in Israel: Opinions on the Lebanon War," *Middle East Review* 16, no. 2 (Winter 1983-84): 38-44.
3. Begin's words were:

Why is there no consensus today? Because the Alignment is in the opposition. . . . Those opposing this holy war are turning freedom of expression into freedom of defamation. . . . If you [Labor] who are responsible for the Yom Kippur War will defame us, will libel us, will supply our enemies with material, are we not permitted to answer back? We shall come back. We shall go to the people when election day comes. . . . and we shall exact the full price for your mischief in these days of war. Instead of backing the fighting Hebrew soldier you are saying that this is an aggressive war. Aren't you ashamed! In all our annals there has not been a more just defensive war than this one. Cited in *Ma'ariv*, July 17, 1982.

4. See *Ha'Aretz*, June 15, 1982.
5. For typical examples of anti-Zionist interpretations of Israel's conduct, see David Hirst, *The Gun and the Olive Branch*, 2nd ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1984); Erskine Childers, "The Wordless Wish: From Citizens to Refugees," in *The Palestine Issue in the Middle East Peace Efforts*, Hearings before the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives,

September–November 1975. U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976; Ibrahim Abu Lughod, ed., *The Transformation of Palestine* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1971); Seth Tilman, *The United States in the Middle East* (Bloomington, Ind.: University of Indiana Press, 1982); Edward W. Said, *The Palestine Question and the American Context* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, *I.P.S. Papers* 1(E), 1979); idem, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); Maxime I. Rodinson, *Israel and the Arabs* (London: Penguin Books, 1968); Hisham Sharabi, *Palestine and Israel: The Lethal Dilemma* (New York: Pegasus, 1969); Noam Chomsky, *The Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel and the Palestinians* (Boston: South End Press, 1983); Alan Hart, *Arafat* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1984).

6. For typical examples of Zionist Fundamentalist interpretations, see Moshe Shamir, *My Life with Ishmael* (Tel Aviv: Ma'ariv, 1969); Shmuel Katz, *Battleground: Fact and Fantasy in Palestine* (New York: Bantam Books, 1970); Moshe Beda, ed., *The World of Jabotinsky* (Tel Aviv: Dephusim, 1972); Harold Fisch, *The Zionist Revolution: A New Perspective* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978), esp. pp. 138–160. For critiques of this approach see Ofira Seliktar, “The New Zionism,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 51 (Summer 1983), pp. 118–139. Yehosafat Harkabi, *The Bar Kochba Syndrome*, trans. Max D. Ticktin, ed. David Altschuler (Chappaqua, N.Y.: Rossel Books, 1983).

7. The leading examples of the Psychological-Cultural perspective are the works of Michael Brecher and various associates. Cf. Michael Brecher, *The Foreign Policy System of Israel: Setting, Images, Processes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); idem, *Decisions in Israel's Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974); idem, with Benjamin Geist, *Decisions in Crisis: Israel 1967, 1973* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980). For another analysis belonging in the same category, see Sam S. Rakover and Avner Yaniv, “Individual Trauma and National Response to External Threat: The Case of Israel,” *The Psychonomic Bulletin* 16, no. 3 (1980). For a powerful restatement of the same interpretation see Conor Cruise O'Brien, *The Siege: The Saga of Israel and Zionism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986).

8. For typical examples of works belonging in the Domestic-Political perspective, see Shlomo Aronson, *Conflict and Bargaining in the Middle East* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); Gershon R. Kieval, *Party Politics in Israel and the Occupied Territories* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983); Yossi Beylin, *The Price of Union: The Labor Party up to the Yom Kippur War* (Tel Aviv: Revivim, 1985); Amnon Sela and Yael Yishai, *Israel—The Peaceful Belligerent 1967–1979* (London: Macmillan, 1985); Avi Shlaim and Avner Yaniv, “Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy in Israel,” *International Affairs* 56 (April 1980), pp. 262–268. Avner Yaniv and Yael Yishai, “Israel's West Bank Settlement Policy: The Politics of Intransigence,” *Journal of Politics* 43, no. 1 (1981), pp. 1105–1128.

9. David Vital, “The Definition of Goals in Foreign Policy,” in *Diplomacy and Confrontation: Selected Issues in Israel's Foreign Relations, 1948–1978*, ed. Benyamin Neuberger (Tel Aviv: Everyman University, 1984), p. 30.

10. Cf. Edward Luttwak and Dan Horowitz, *The Israeli Army* (London: Alan Lane, 1975); Gunther E. Rothenberg, *The Anatomy of the Israeli Army* (New York: Batsford, 1979); Zeev Schiff, *A History of the Israeli Army* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974).

11. Herzog, *The Arab-Israeli Wars*; idem, *The War of Atonement* (Jerusalem: Steimazki, 1975); Netanel Lorch, *One Long War* (Jerusalem: Herzl Press, 1976); Trevor N. Dupuy, *Elusive Victory* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978); Bowyer Bell, *The Long War* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969); A. J. Barker, *Arab-Israeli Wars* (London: Ian Allen, 1980).

12. Cf. Michael Handel, *Israel's Political-Military Doctrine* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard Center for International Affairs, 1973); Yoav Ben-Horin and Barry Posen, *Israel's Strategic Doctrine* (Santa Monica, CA.: Rand Corporation, Rand/R-2845-NA, September 1981); Dan Horowitz, “The Israeli Concept of National Security and the Prospects of (sic) Peace in the Middle East,” in *Dynamics of a Conflict*, ed. G. Sheffer (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1975); Yair Evron, “The Role of Arms Control in the Middle East,” London, International Institute of Strategic Studies, *Adelphi Papers*, no. 138; Efraim Inbar, *Israeli Strategic Thought in the Post-1973 Period* (Jerusalem: Israel Research Institute of Contemporary Society, 1982); Janice

Gross Stein and Raymond Tanter, *National Decision Making: Israel's Security Choices, 1967* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1980); Avner Yaniv, "Deterrence and Defense in Israel's Strategy," *State Government and International Relations* 24 (1985), "Israel's Conventional Deterrent: A Reappraisal," in Louis Rene Beres, ed., *Security or Armageddon* (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1985), pp. 45–60; and *Deterrence Without the Bomb: The Politics of Israeli Strategy* (Lexington Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1986).

13. Cf. Israel Baer, *Israel's Security: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (Tel Aviv: Amikam, 1966 [Hebrew]); Yigal Allon, *A Curtain of Sand* (Tel Aviv: HaKibbutz HaMeuchad, 1959 [Hebrew], also published as *The Making of Israel's Army* (London: Valentine and Mitchell, 1970); Shimon Peres, *David's Sling* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970); Shai Feldman, *Israeli Nuclear Deterrence: A Strategy for the 1980's* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

14. Joseph Joffe, "The Conditions of West European Order and the Role of the U.S." (Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, September 1–4, 1983): 7–8.

15. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *A Lasting Peace Through the Federation of Europe*, C. E. Vaughan, trans. (London: Constable, 1917), quoted in Robert Jervis, *Perceptions and Misperceptions in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 63.

16. Quoted in Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), pp. 167–68.

17. Cf. Robert Luce and Howard Raiffa, *Games and Decisions* (New York: Wiley; 1957).

18. See Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma." Jervis employs the language of game theory and therefore speaks about *cooperation* versus *defection*. For the benefit of readers who are not familiar with this jargon I employed the more familiar terms *accommodation* and *assertion* or *precipitation*.

19. Herbert Butterfield, *History and Human Relations* (New York: Macmillan, 1951), p. 20.

20. Waltz, *Man, the State and War*.

21. See Glenn H. Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics*, 36, no. 4 (July 1986).

22. David Vital, *The Survival of Small States* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 70–71.

23. Robert J. Lieber, *Theory and World Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Northrop, 1972), p. 108.

24. Dan Horowitz, "The Israeli Concept of National Security," in Benjamin Neuberger, ed., *Diplomacy and Confrontation*, p. 107. The volume holds three articles (by Vital, Klieman, and Brownstein) that make the same point in different ways, that is that Zionism and Israeli policy has always been thoroughly pragmatic and incremental. A similar point was made by Raymond Tanter and Avi Shlaim in a critique of the decision-making process leading to the deep penetration bombing of Egypt during 1969–70 in "Decision Process, Choice and Consequence: Israel's Deep Penetration Bombing in Egypt, 1970," *World Politics* 30, no. 4 (July 1978).

25. The diaries of Ben Gurion, Sharett, and Dayan, and the memoirs of Rabin, Weizman, Elazar, and Adan, to name but a few that will be quoted, offer ample opportunity to appreciate the pervasively pragmatic style of their thinking. A comparison between Ben Gurion's language in public and in his war diaries shows how great the difference in style can be. Yehosafat Harkabi, in his thought-provoking critique of Begin and the Likud in *The Bar Kochba Syndrome*, indirectly underlines time and again the thoroughly pragmatic thinking and policies of the Labor movement which had ruled Israel during its first twenty-nine years. Indeed, while pointing out that Bar Kochba's abortive rebellion against the Romans and the Hashmonean Kingdom two centuries earlier had been utter calamities owing to the lack of realism of their perpetrators, Harkabi points out how thoroughly realistic Jewish thinking had otherwise been. In a sense what he is arguing in this essay is that Zionism, a secular extension of Judaism, could not have succeeded, even partially, had it not been for the utter realism of the Jewish traditions from which the founding fathers of Zionism drew their inspiration. Hence, argues Harkabi, the lack of realism of Begin and the Likud should be opposed and Israel should return to the hard-nosed realism that had made her inception possible.

26. The origins of this widely held but debatable designation are difficult to trace. According to *Time* of October 11, 1982, Israel was thus ranked by the prestigious, London based International Institute of Strategic Studies. For self-evident reasons Arab writers tend to emphasize such designations. See for example Rashid Khalidi *Under Siege: PLO Decision Making During the 1982 War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) p. 57. Also in Noam Chomsky, *The Fateful Triangle*, p. 203.

27. This is the main thesis in Zeev Schiff and Ehud Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984). A similar approach is implicit in Amos Perlmutter, "Begin's Rhetoric and Sharon's Tactics," *Foreign Affairs* 16, no. 1 (Fall 1982): 67–83, and in Aharon Yariv et al., *War by Choice* (Tel Aviv: HaKibbutz HaMeuchad for The Jaffe Center for Strategic Studies, 1985). The latter is a collection of essays by some of Israel's best-known strategic thinkers, such as General Yariv, Yoram Peri, and Dan Horowitz.

28. Cf. Noam Chomsky, *The Fateful Triangle*, esp. pp. 181–241. See also Jacobo Timerman, *The Longest War: Israel in Lebanon* (New York: Vintage Books, 1982). Strictly speaking, Timerman's critique is not of Zionism but of the direction of Israeli politics and strategy in recent years. But his argument is close to the anti-Zionist critique in many important points. See also David Gilmour, *Lebanon: The Fractured Country* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), pp. 146–147.

29. Cf. Robert W. Tucker, "Lebanon: The Case for the War," *Commentary* 74, no. 4 (October 1982), pp. 19–30.

30. *The Sunday Times*, 8 Aug. 1982. For an up-to-date portrait of Begin's view of the world, see Eric Silver, *Begin* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984), as well as Uzi Benziman, *Prime Minister under Siege* (Jerusalem: Adam Publishers, 1981), pp. 48–53. Begin's reference to Arafat "in the bunker" invoking the memory of Hitler in his Berlin bunker is quoted in Schiff and Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, p. 39. The same point is emphasized in Dan Bavly and Eliahu Salpeter, *Fire in Beirut* (New York: Stein and Day, 1984), p. 39.

31. For a biographical profile of Sharon, see Uzi Benziman *Sharon: An Israeli Caesar* (New York: Adam Publishers, 1985) as well as Zeev Schiff and Eitan Haber, *Israel, Army and Defence—A Dictionary* (Tel Aviv: Zmora-Bitan-Modan, 1976), pp. 521–22.

32. For biographical details on Rafael Eitan, see Rafael Eitan with Dov Goldstein, *Rafal: A Soldier's Account* (Tel Aviv: Ma'ariv, 1985). On one occasion Eitan referred to Arabs as "cockroaches in a bottle." See David Shipler's report in *New York Times*, 14, 20 April 1983, and Gad Becker in *Yediot Ahronot* 13 April 1983.

33. See Yael Yishai, "Hawkish Proletariat: The Case of Israel," *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 13 (Spring 1985): 53–73. Also Ofira Seliktar, "Ethnic Stratification and Foreign Policy in Israel: The Attitude of Oriental Jews Towards the Arabs and the Arab-Israeli Conflict." *The Middle East Journal* 38 no. 7 (Winter 1984), pp. 34–50.

34. My graduate student, Mr. Reuven Robert, was acting mayor of Kiryat Shemonah in 1981. He described to me in detail how the leadership of the Galilee organized a lobby for military action.

Chapter 2

1. See Gideon Biger, "The Awali Line: A Historic Zionist Line?" *Ha'Aretz*, 23 Aug. 1983; idem, "Geographic and Political Issues in the Process of Determining Palestine's Northern Border during the Mandate," in *The Lands of Galilee*, ed. Avshalom Shmueli, Arnon Sofer, Nurit Kliot (Haifa: University of Haifa Press, 1983), vol. 1, pp. 424–43. See also David Ben Gurion *Memoirs*, vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1976), pp. 84–86; Michael Bar-Zohar, *Ben Gurion*, vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1976), pp. 109–10; Dan Kurzmen, *Ben Gurion—Prophet of Fire* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), p. 120; David Ben Gurion and Itzhak Ben-Zvi, *The Land of Israel in Past and Present* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 1980), p. 46.

2. Barry Rubin, *The Arab States and the Palestine Conflict* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1981), pp. 45, 138. The quest for such an alliance was clearly spelled out in a letter from David Ben Gurion to his son, Amos, dated 27 July 1937: "The Christians in Lebanon would hardly

be able to survive without a neighboring Jewish state, and we too are interested in an alliance with Christian Lebanon" (*Memoirs* [Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1974], vol. 4, p. 331).

3. See Itamar Rabinovich, *The War for Lebanon, 1970–1983* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984), pp. 21–22.

4. The details of the Lutski mission are reported by Gil Sadan in a Jewish Telegraphic Agency telegram of 7 March 1983. Sadan summarized research by a graduate student at the Hebrew University.

5. The entire episode is related in detail by Benni Morris in *Jerusalem Post Magazine*, 1 July 1983.

6. Quoted in Moshe Sharett, *Yoman Ishi* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1978), vol. 8, pp. 2397–98. For a good English translation of these passages see Jonathan Randal, *The Tragedy of Lebanon* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1983), pp. 189–195.

7. Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, pp. 2398–2399.

8. *Ibid.* One vehicle of continual contacts between the Israeli government and elements in Lebanon was the clergy, who were permitted to travel back and forth to and from Israel. See Randal, *The Tragedy of Lebanon*, p. 187.

9. On this issue see Bar-Zohar, *Ben Gurion*, vol. 3, pp. 1321, 1323–24, 1327, 1329, 1332, 1341, 1350, 1357, 1362, 1397. See also Shimon Peres, *David's Sling* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970), pp. 284–86.

10. Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, pp. 2398–99.

11. See Malcolm H. Kerr, *The Arab Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), esp. pp. 117ff.

12. Alan Hart, *Arafat: Terrorist or Peacemaker?* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1984), pp. 201–16. Ehud Yaari, *Fateh* (Tel Aviv: Levin-Epstein, 1970), pp. 39–54. Moshe Shemesh, "The Representation of the Palestinians" (Ph.D. diss., London School of Economics, 1982): 138–44.

13. See analyses by this author, with Moshe Maoz, "On a Short Leash: Syria and the PLO" and "Israel and Syria: The Politics of Escalation," both in *Syria Under Assad*, ed. Moshe Maoz and Avner Yaniv (London: Croom-Helm, and New York, St. Martin's, 1986), pp. 157–178, 191–208. For a not dissimilar view from a Palestinian scholar see Rashid Khalidi, "The Asad Regime and the Palestinian Resistance," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 6, no. 4 (Fall 1984), pp. 259–266.

14. See Hart, *Arafat*, pp. 254–63, and Helena Cobban, *The Palestine Liberation Organization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), esp. pp. 36–57.

15. For an analysis of Israel's policy rationale by a well-informed Israeli officer, see Hanan Alon, *Countering Palestinian Terrorism in Israel: Toward a Policy Analysis of Countermeasures* (Santa Monica, Ca.: Rand Corporation, N-1567-FF, August 1980), pp. 68–88. On the genesis of this policy, see also Eitan & Goldstein, *Rafal*, pp. 103–9.

16. Some evidence supporting this is offered in Abu Iyad, *Palestinian sans Patrie* (Paris: Fayolle, 1978).

17. Alon, *Countering Palestinian Terrorism*, p. 50, table 6.

18. See Rabinovich, *The War for Lebanon*. This is also confirmed, somewhat unenthusiastically, by Walid al Khalidi in his (pro-Palestinian) analysis of the crisis in Lebanon, *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Studies in International Affairs, no. 38, Harvard Center for International Affairs, 1979).

19. This was fully understood by Israeli policy makers. Note, for example, the comment of Ezer Weizman on this issue: "We have always declared that we would hold sovereign states that sheltered the terrorists responsible for their guests. We took repeated action against such states to induce their governments to block terrorism. Lebanon, however, has no government: in the prevailing anarchy there is no one to clamp down on the terrorists." Ezer Weizman, *The Battle for Peace* (Jerusalem: Ma'ariv, 1981), p. 252.

20. The brutality involved in this escalating exchange led to a public debate in which Israeli doves defended the same type of 'counter city' strategy vis-à-vis Jordan and Egypt during

1967–1970 but disputed the morality of the same policy vis-à-vis Lebanon in 1977–1982. Israeli hawks predictably challenged this position. See Abba Eban, “Morality and Warfare,” *Jerusalem Post* 16 August 1981.

21. Dayan, *Avnei Derekh*, (Jerusalem: Yediot Ahronot, 1976) pp. 544–45. Dayan records only the more serious incidents. In fact there were numerous smaller events which were recorded by and dealt with on a local basis. For a detailed day by day record see Colonel (Ret.) Offer Ben-David, *HaMaaracha BiLevanon* (Technosdar, 1985), pp. 117–143.

22. See, for example, Richard Falk, “The Beirut Raid and the International Law of Retaliation,” *American Journal of International Law* 63 (1969).

23. Jullian Becker, *The PLO* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984), p. 94.

24. Dayan, *Avnei Derekh*, p. 545.

25. *Ibid.*

26. John K. Cooley, “The Palestinians,” in *Lebanon in Crisis*, ed. P. Edward Haley and Lewis W. Snider (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1979), pp. 29–30. The details of the Cairo Accord were first published by *Al Nahar* on 20 April 1970.

27. Dayan, *Avnei Derekh*, p. 546.

28. *Ibid.*

29. Cooley, “The Palestinians,” p. 31; Khalidi, *Conflict and Violence*, p. 43.

30. Dayan, *Avnei Derekh*, p. 548.

31. See Richard Deacon, *The Israeli Secret Service* (New York: Taplinger, 1977), chap. 18; Stewart Steven, *The Spymasters of Israel* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1980), chaps. 22–23.

32. Cooley, “The Palestinians,” p. 32; Khalidi, *Conflict and Violence*, pp. 43–44; Rabinovich, *The War for Lebanon*, p. 43.

33. Khalidi, *Conflict and Violence*, p. 69.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 80–81. Cobban, *The Palestine Liberation Organization*, pp. 58–60.

36. Cooley, “The Palestinians,” p. 32. The role of the hijack operation in Austria in the Egyptian-Syrian surprise is analyzed in Michael I. Handel, *Perception, Deception and Surprise: The Case of the Yom Kippur War*, Jerusalem Papers on Peace Problems, no. 19 (Jerusalem: Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, 1976), pp. 32, 57, 59. Handel points out that while affecting Israel’s conduct on the eve of the war, the PLO attack on 28 September was not consciously coordinated with the Egyptian-Syrian plan of deception.

37. For details of the U.S. approach, see Henry A. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1982), pp. 747–853, 935–78, 1032–1110. For details on the Israeli position see Dayan, *Avnei Derekh*, pp. 692–716; Itzhak Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut* (Tel Aviv: Ma’ariv, 1979), vol. 2, pp. 442–501. For details concerning the PLO position, see Cobban *The Palestine Liberation Organization*, pp. 58–60.

38. Dayan, *Avnei Derekh*, pp. 718–23. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, pp. 959–66, 1048.

39. See Howard M. Sachar, *Egypt and Israel* (New York: Marek Publishers, 1981), p. 235, as well as Avraham Sela, *Ahdut BeToch Perud* (Jerusalem: The Magness Press, 1983), pp. 120–39. Rabin’s domestic situation and the reasons for his rejection of Kissinger’s plan to open negotiations with Jordan are discussed at length in Gershon R. Kieval, *Party Politics in Israel and the Occupied Territories* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983), pp. 109–10.

40. On the dynamics of this process, see Avner Yaniv, “The PLO, the Middle East and the World”, *Middle East Review* 18, no. 1 (Fall 1985), pp. 51–60.

41. Cobban, *The Palestine Liberation Organization*, pp. 61–62. Arafat’s success in employing terrorism for the purpose of gaining international attention, and then reducing the frequency of terrorism to foster an image of respectability, is clearly reflected in a statistical/chronological analysis by Avraham Diskin, “Trends in Intensity Variation of Palestinian Military Activity: 1967–1978,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 16, no. 2 (June 1983): 335–48.

42. The author of this distinction between “basic” and “current” security (implying full-scale war versus low-level threats) was apparently Shimon Peres. See his article “Bitakhon

Shoteph and Bitakhon Yesodi" ("Basic Security and Current Security"), *Niv HaKvutza* (June 1954).

43. For a good discussion of the ideological split in Israel, see Rael J. Isaac, *Israel Divided* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

44. These risks and many more are listed and explained succinctly in an Israeli advocacy of an independent Palestinian state. See Mark A. Heller, *A Palestinian State: Implications for Israel* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), chap. 4.

45. See, for example, Walid Khalidi, "Thinking the Unthinkable: A Sovereign Palestinian State," *Foreign Affairs* 56 (July 1978), as well as Heller, *A Palestinian State*, pp. 138–39.

46. *Ma'ariv*, 5 Dec. 1975. Allon's views were identical. See Yigal Allon, *Communicating Vessels* (Tel Aviv: HaKibbutz HaMeuhad, 1980), pp. 147–68. Israel Galili, another influential member of the same cabinet, shared the views of Rabin and Allon without any qualms because he was certain that a Palestinian state would be "an irridentist force working against both Israel and Jordan; a provocative factor which, if allied to other negative forces in world affairs, would be a permanent danger to peace. Such a state would perpetuate the Arab-Israeli conflict and would serve as a constant base and springboard for the intensification of that conflict." (See *Jerusalem Post*, 26 July 1974). Shlomo Avineri, then Director General of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated the same thesis in an interview with the *New York Times*, on 15 May 1977. The pragmatic logic of this entrenched and so widely shared view was explained even more clearly by *Jerusalem Post* correspondent David Krivine. "The one group we won't talk with," Krivine wrote to *The Economist* on 10 July 1982, "is the PLO. But this is not because they are nasty people. The obstacle is the subject on the agenda. It can only be the creation of a Palestinian state on the West Bank and that we can't agree to." This view is also central in the attitudes of leading mainstream doves, such as former Chief of Staff Chaim Bar Lev and leader of the Democratic Movement for Change and subsequently the *Shinui* party, Amnon Rubinstein. See Chaim Bar Lev, "The Future of the Territories: Compromise or State?" *Migvan* (January 1980); Amnon Rubinstein, "The Third State Pitfall," in *The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the West Bank*, eds. Anne Sinai and Allen Pollak (New York: Association of American Academics for Peace in the Middle East, 1977), pp. 276–78.

47. Victor Shemtov, a leader of the left wing MAPAM and Minister of Health in Rabin's government, together with Major General (ret.) Aharon Yariv, former head of Military Intelligence and for a while Minister of Information in the same cabinet, as well as two other ministers (Moshe Kol of the Independent Liberal party and Avraham Ofer of Labor), published in 1974 a plea for a new approach toward the PLO. Instead of disqualifying it out-of-hand as a partner for negotiations, they advocated an accommodative formula (in the language of the security dilemma). It would make negotiations with the PLO conditional upon the latter's renunciation of terrorism, recognition of Israel, and consent for direct negotiations. Yariv later conceded that the "Yariv-Shemtov Formula" was little more than a tactical ploy. If their approach were adopted by the Israeli government, the PLO would most probably reject it and thus expose its own intransigence and relieve the mounting pressure on Israel to negotiate with it. Nevertheless, when the proposal was tabled for approval by the Rabin cabinet on 21 July 1974, the majority in the cabinet declined to adopt the "Yariv-Shemtov Formula" for fear that the PLO might, after all, accept it or seem to accept it, and thus leave Israel no option but to negotiate with it. Rabin's reasons were utterly pragmatic-strategic. The allegedly criminal nature of the PLO was a pretext for not negotiating with any Palestinians. (Author's interview with Aharon Yariv, as well as *Jerusalem Post*, 22 July 1974). For a published version of the Yariv-Shemtov Formula, see Aharon Yariv, "The Solution to the Problem and Its Price for Israel," in *Is There a Solution to the Palestinian Problem—Israeli Positions*, ed. Aluph Har-Even (Jerusalem: Van Leer, 1977), pp. 11–24. The Yariv-Shemtov idea was upheld by another former head of IDF military intelligence, Major General (ret.) Yehoshafat Harkabi. The latter argued the case for such a tactically accommodative approach in a book, published three years later under the title *Arab Strategies and Israel's Response* (New York: Macmillan, 1977). Harkabi reiterated the

same argument in *The Bar Kokhba Syndrome*, in which he also laments the total rejection of the proposal by mainstream political opinion in Israel.

48. Khalidi, *Conflict and Violence*, p. 90.

49. Avner Yaniv and Robert J. Lieber, "Personal Whim or Strategic Imperative: The Israeli Invasion of Lebanon," *International Security* 8, no. 2 (Fall 1983).

50. Rabinovich, *The War for Lebanon*, p. 43.

51. Khalidi, *Conflict and Violence*, pp. 47–66.

52. Randal, *The Tragedy of Lebanon*, p. 200. Zeev Schiff, "Junieh Station Does Not Answer," *Ha'Aretz*, 7 June 1985.

53. This argument is amplified in Yaniv and Lieber, "Personal Whim," and supported by the markedly unfriendly reporting (from the Israeli point of view) of Randal in *The Tragedy of Lebanon*, pp. 200–3.

54. For official statements concerning Israel's interest in Lebanon, see *Ma'ariv*, 5 January 1975, and *Ha'Aretz*, 25 September 1975.

55. Khalidi, *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*, p. 115.

56. Shimon Peres, *Tomorrow is Now* (Jerusalem: Mabat, 1978), pp. 86–87. See also Shmuel Seguev, "From the Good Fence to the Litani Operation," *Ma'ariv*, 21 April 1978.

57. Text of Hafez al Assad's interview with *Le Monde*, FBIS, V, Syria, 2 Aug. 1984, column H2.

58. *Ibid.*

59. For details see Reuven Ehrlich, *Syria and the Lebanese Crisis* (M.A. thesis, Tel Aviv University, June 1980): 16–21, as well as Adeed I. Dawisha, *Syria and the Lebanese Crisis* (London: Macmillan, 1979), pp. 130ff.

60. On 7 January 1976 Defense Minister Shimon Peres declared that a Syrian entry into Lebanon would not leave Israel indifferent (*Ma'ariv*, 8 Jan. 1976). A similar deterrent warning was issued by Prime Minister Rabin in an interview to the BBC two days later (*Ma'ariv*, 11 Jan. 1976). On 20 January 1976 Peres stated that "if the Syrian army invades Lebanon Israel will take the necessary defensive measures." On the same day an almost identical statement was issued by Foreign Minister Allon (*Ma'ariv*, 21 Jan. 1976). Allon reiterated the same position in a statement to the Knesset on 28 January 1976:

Israel cannot afford to remain indifferent to developments in the neighboring country to the north. The guiding principle of Israel's policy, which will continue to guide us in the future, is that Israel does not interfere in the internal affairs of her neighbors, as long as they remain internal affairs. . . . An invasion of Lebanon would constitute a serious blow to Israel's vital interests. . . . We are maintaining a close watch as to whether or not Syria abides by its assurances not to send its army into Lebanon and not to attempt to annex it. (Government Press Bulletin, 28 January 1976, p. 2).

61. See Handel, *Israel's Political-Military Doctrine*, p. 65.

62. For a lucid, comprehensive, and richly documented study of the 1970 crisis in Jordan, see Alan Dowty, *Middle East Crisis: U.S. Decision-Making in 1958, 1970 and 1973* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), esp. pp. 175–81.

63. Robert W. Stookey, "The United States," Edward P. Haley and Lewis W. Snider, eds., *Lebanon in Crisis* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1979), pp. 229–39.

64. See Yoel Marcus, "A Conversation with Rabin," *Ha'Aretz*, 3 Dec. 1974.

65. Dawisha, *Syria and the Lebanese Crisis*, pp. 80–81. On the "Banana Front" fear of the Israelis, see Zeev Schiff and Ehud Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), p. 14.

66. "Israel's View of the Lebanon Crisis," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 5, nos. 1–2 (Autumn 1975–Winter 1976): 190–91.

67. See Efraim Inbar, *Problems of Pariah States: The National Security Policy of the Rabin*

Government (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1981): 1790, as well as interview with Amos Eiran, a senior aide at the time, in *Jerusalem Post*, 23 Sept. 1983.

68. Stookey, "The United States," pp. 236–37.

69. "Syrian Military Intervention in Lebanon and its Consequences," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 6, no. 1 (Autumn 1976): 135.

70. "Shimon Peres Interviewed on Lebanese Situation," *FBIS*, V, Israel, May 1976, column I-4.

71. Randal, *The Tragedy of Lebanon*, pp. 195–96, 204, 222, 231, 233.

72. The best available account of the Syrian move, listing specific units and their deployment, is Ehrlich, *Syria and the Lebanese Crisis*, pp. 21–26.

73. Quoted in Reuven Aviran, "Operation Peace for the Galilee: A Crossroads in Syria's Involvement in the Lebanese Crisis," *Ma'arachot* (September 1983): 13. Chief of Staff Mota Gur advocated an agreement with Syria concerning south Lebanon. He thought this would further extend Syria's forces, while enhancing tranquillity along Israel's border. Consequently the IDF would be more free to concentrate on preparations for general war. Gur's advocacy was, however, overruled. See *Ma'ariv*, 21 March 1981.

74. For typical Israeli evaluations of the transient nature of Arab alliances, coalitions, confederations, and unions see Yair Evron and Yaacov Bar Simon-Tov, "Coalitions in the Arab World," *Jerusalem Journal of International Relations* 1, no. 2 (Winter 1975), as well as G. Ben Dor, "Federations in the Arab World," in *Federalism and Political Integration*, ed. Daniel J. Elazar (Ramat Gan: Turtledove, 1979), pp. 191–210.

75. Eiran interview in *Jerusalem Post*, 23 Sept. 1983.

76. Randal, *The Tragedy of Lebanon*, pp. 200–2, Schiff and Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, pp. 13, 16–19. Bavly and Salpeter date the Israeli contacts with the Chamounists even earlier, to the spring of 1975; see Dan Bavly and Elijah Salpeter, *Fire in Beirut* (New York: Stein & Day, 1985), pp. 44–45.

77. Yigal Allon's views are mentioned briefly in Michael Brecher (with Benjamin Geist), *Decisions in Crisis: Israel 1967, 1973* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 216. Peres states the case for alliances with minorities in *David's Sling*, pp. 284–86. For a firsthand account of contacts with Kurds, Iranians, and Ethiopians, see *Rafal*, pp. 73–78, 117–24. For a detailed discussion of the Israeli experience in this regard since the 1950s see Avner Yaniv, *Deterrence Without the Bomb: The Politics of Israeli Strategy* (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1986), pp. 48–54, 88–96, 152–157, 214–222.

78. Schiff and Yaari, *Israel's War in Lebanon*, p. 14. Also Shimon Schiffer, *Snow Ball: The Story behind the Lebanon War* (Tel Aviv: Idanim Publishers, 1984), p. 25, and Zeev Schiff, "Junieh Station Does Not Answer," in *Ha'Aretz Magazine*, June 7, 1985.

79. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, vol. 2, p. 494.

80. Schiff and Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, pp. 11–22; Randal, *The Tragedy of Lebanon*, pp. 200–4. *Time* magazine of 22 August 1977 estimated the cost of this Israeli aid at \$100 million. See also Amos Eiran interview in *Jerusalem Post*, 23 Sept. 1983.

81. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, vol. 2, p. 494. Interview with David Kimche.

82. For a detailed analysis of these developments in the U.S. position on the Palestinian question, see Ran Maron, *The Development of U.S. Policy on the Palestinian Issue, October 1973–November 1976* (Tel Aviv: Shiloah Center, March 1978); Abraham Ben Zvi, "The Carter Presidency and the Palestinian Question," in *The Wiener Library Bulletin* 33, new series, nos. 51–52 (1980): 55–56; Aryeh Yodfat and Yuval Ohana-Aron, *PLO Strategy and Politics* (London: Croom Helm, 1981); pp. 109–19; Bernard Reich, *The United States and Israel* (New York: Praeger, 1984), pp. 19–37; Steven L. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), chap. 8, esp. pp. 332, 335.

83. *Toward Peace in the Middle East: Report of a Study Group* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 1974).

84. *Los Angeles Times*, 5 July 1981.

85. These backstage dealings with the PLO are reported in detail in Pinhas Inbari, *Triangle on*

the Jordan: The Secret Contacts among USA, Jordan and the PLO (Jerusalem: Cana Publishing House, 1982), pp. 13–22.

86. Quoted in Reich, *The United States and Israel*, p. 36, and in Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1983), p. 94.

87. Zbigniew Brzezinski et al., “Beyond the Step by Step: Action Proposals,” *Foreign Policy* 19 (Summer 1975).

88. See Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, chap. 3; Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), pp. 273–76; Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983), pp. 159–256.

89. Hart, *Arafat*, pp. 431–32, Cobban, *Palestine Liberation Organization*, p. 85. Hart claims to have read a twenty-page document submitted by Arafat to Carter following the March resolution of the PNC.

90. See Uzi Benziman, *Prime Minister under Siege* (Jerusalem: Adam Publishers, 1981), pp. 48–93, as well as Moshe Dayan, *Breakthrough* (Jerusalem: Idanim, 1981) and Ezer Weizman, *The Battle for Peace* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981), pp. 18, 41, 286–87; Major General (ret.) Shlomo Gazit, *The Stick and the Carrot: The Israeli Administration in Judea and Samaria* (Tel Aviv: Zamora-Bitan Publishers, 1985), pp. 131–44. Gazit was Dayan’s right-hand man in setting up the Israeli military government. His well-informed and systematic account contains a lucid presentation of the views of Allon and Dayan on the question of the future of the West Bank. For all their differences they were in complete agreement that no foreign army should ever be allowed to set foot in the West Bank. This same view was also the *lowest* common denominator in the Labor party as a whole. See Yossi Beylin, *The Price of Union* (Tel Aviv: Revivim, 1985).

91. During Begin’s very first cabinet meeting he was confronted with the demands of two ministers (Sharon and Horowitz) to employ more force in Lebanon. Begin was not enthusiastic and indicated that in his view Rabin’s policy had been correct. See comments by former Chief of Staff Mordechai Gur in *Dapei Elazar*, no. 6 (Tel Aviv, Zmora Bitan, 1983), p. 79.

92. Weizman, *The Battle for Peace*, pp. 247–48.

93. Lewis W. Snider, P. Edward Haley, Abraham R. Wagner, and Nicki J. Cohen, “Israel,” Haley and Snyder, *Lebanon in Crisis*, pp. 95–97. NSC staffer at the time, William B. Quandt, recalls that the Carter administration interpreted Israel’s objections to an expanded UN role as a sign of Israeli intention to resort to military action against the PLO. This, Quandt adds, was seen “within the context” of “heightened Israeli suspicions” as regards Carter’s secret dealings with the PLO. See William B. Quandt, *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1986), pp. 93–94.

94. Weizman, *The Battle for Peace*, pp. 25–26.

95. Cobban, *Palestine Liberation Organization*, p. 90.

96. Howard M. Sachar, *Egypt and Israel* (New York: Marek Books, 1981), pp. 259–64; Carter, *Keeping Faith*, pp. 273–319. Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, pp. 101–11. See also Quandt *Camp David*, especially chapter 5.

97. See Martin Indyke, “*To the End of the Earth*”—*Sadat’s Jerusalem Initiative* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Middle East Papers, Modern Series, no. 1, 1984), pp. 9–11.

98. Arafat’s dismay is depicted in two sympathetic sources. See Mohammed Heikal, *Autumn of Fury: The Assassination of Sadat* (London: Corgi Books, 1983), p. 106; Alan Hart, *Arafat*, p. 434.

99. Cobban, *Palestine Liberation Organization*, pp. 93–94.

100. See p.45 above.

101. Weizman, *The Battle for Peace*, p. 248. Lieutenant General (ret.) Mordechai Gur, “Operation Litani,” in *The Lands of Galilee*, vol. 2, pp. 869–76. Gur was Chief of Staff of the IDF during the operation.

102. *Ibid.*, p. 253. Walid Khalidi’s contention that Israel’s purpose was to destroy the fragile understanding between Syria, the PLO, and the Phalange is not corroborated by Weizman’s account. See Khalidi, *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*, pp. 123–28.

103. Khalidi, *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*, pp. 131–37.

104. Ezer Weizman who, as Minister of Defense, was in charge of the operation minimizes this factor (*The Battle for Peace*, pp. 257–58). Dayan, however, candidly admits that the operation was not at all a success (*Breakthrough*, p. 107). Helena Cobban is apparently wrong in claiming that the invading Israeli force included 25,000 troops (*Palestine Liberation Organization*, p. 94). Khalidi is equally wrong in claiming that Israel's extensive use of artillery was a deliberate move against the Shi'ite population of south Lebanon (*Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*, pp. 128–29). The main motive was tactical and military, namely, to keep the number of Israeli casualties to the minimum (*The Battle for Peace*, p. 253, and Israel TV interview of Chief of Staff Gur recorded in Snider et al., "Israel," in Haley and Snyder, *Lebanon in Crisis*, pp. 102–3).

105. The Egyptian reaction was almost apathetic. Weizman offered General Gamasi, his Egyptian counterpart, a detailed briefing about the operation and the latter willingly accepted the offer (*The Battle for Peace*, p. 257).

106. Khalidi, *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*, p. 130, and Dayan, *Breakthrough*, p. 107. There is nothing in the accounts of Dayan, Brzezinski, Quandt, or Weizman to support Khalidi's theories about a tacit collusion between the United States and Israel. If anything, it appears that Operation Litani added strain to the already tense atmosphere in the Carter-Begin relations. Nevertheless, there is no evidence to support Randal's claim that Carter went as far as threatening to cut off aid (*The Tragedy of Lebanon*, p. 210).

107. Khalidi, *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*, pp. 137–39; Cobban *Palestine Liberation Organization*, pp. 95–96.

108. See "Relations with UNIFIL According to [Major General] Yanush Ben Gal," *Ha'Aretz*, 26 Oct. 1984. Ben Gal was OC Northern Command during Operation Litani. See also Nathan A. Pelcovits, *Peacekeeping on Arab-Israel Fronts*, SAIS papers in International Affairs, no. 3 (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 1984), pp. 18–19.

109. See Richard A. Gabriel, *Operation Peace for the Galilee* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984), p. 57.

110. Cobban, *Palestine Liberation Organization*, pp. 97–98.

111. See "Relations with UNIFIL According to Yanush Ben Gal," as well as Eitan, *Rafal*, p. 162.

112. The literature on the Israeli-Egyptian peace process is voluminous. Apart from the already mentioned biographies of President Carter, Secretary of State Vance, National Security Advisor Brzezinski, National Security Staffer William B. Quandt, Israeli Foreign Minister Dayan, and Israeli Defense Minister Ezer Weizman, the best sources remain three works by well-informed Israeli journalists: Benziman, *Prime Minister under Siege*; Yoel Marcus, *Camp David: The Road to Peace* (Tel Aviv: Shocken, 1979); Ehud Yaari, Zeev Schiff, and Eitan Haber, *The Year of the Dove* (New York: Bantam Books, 1979). For a concise chronicle of the peace process, see A. Klieman, "Israel," in *Middle East Contemporary Survey* (MECS), vol. 3, 1978–79, ed. Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, and Daniel Dishon (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1980), pp. 603–8.

113. Benziman, *Prime Minister under Siege*, p. 150.

114. For a detailed description of the background and deliberations in the Baghdad Summit, see Avraham Sela, *Unity amid Diversity* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1983), pp. 150–80.

115. *Al Hawadith* (London), 7–13 July 1978, quoted in Cobban, *The Palestine Liberation Organization*, p. 95.

116. See speech by Begin, quoted in *Ha'Aretz* of 28 June 1981, in which he mentions the PLO's use of balloons and gliders. See also Arnon Sofer, "Back to the Northern Border," *Monthly Review* 32, no. 4 (31 May 1985): 5.

117. See Lieutenant Colonel (ret.) Avraham Zohar, "The [Israeli] Navy in Operation SHELEG," *Ma'arachot* 285 (December 1982): 45.

118. Schiff and Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, pp. 79–83.

119. *Ibid.*; see also Klieman, "Israel," p. 615.

120. See Itamar Rabinovich, "Syria," in *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, vol. 1, 1976–77, ed. Colin Legum (New York: Holt and Meier, 1978), pp. 606–7.

121. See Moshe Maoz and Avner Yaniv, "On a Short Leash," in *Syria under Assad*, pp. 200–205.
122. Khalidi, *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*, p. 117.
123. Randal, *The Tragedy of Lebanon*, pp. 114–18, 118–25, 133–34, 135–38. Also Lewis W. Snider, "The Lebanese Forces: Their Origins and Role in Lebanon's Politics," *The Middle East Journal* 38, no. 1 (Winter 1984), esp. pp. 5–130.
124. *Ibid.*, pp. 212–16, Schiff and Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, pp. 25–26.
125. Schiff and Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, pp. 25–26.
126. Schiffer, *Snow Ball*, pp. 25–27; Schiff and Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, pp. 25–26.
127. Schiff and Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, p. 25.
128. Benziman, *Prime Minister under Siege*, pp. 48–53.
129. Reporting a talk with U.S. Ambassador Samuel Lewis to the Knesset Foreign Relations and Defense Committee early in May 1981, he had this to say:

Every time I read [Arthur D. Morse's Book *While Six Million Died*] . . . I am not ashamed that my eyes are filled with tears when I think how our people were left to themselves. The Germans murdered, but the world left us to our own devices. I want to tell you that we are a Jewish State, with our own experiences, and under no circumstances are we going to acquiesce in the Syrian's attempt to reduce the Christians in Lebanon in the 1980s to the status of the Jews in Europe in the 1940s. The Syrians along with terrorists are treating a civilian population just like the Nazis. They care nothing about men, women and children.

Quoted by Dan Margalit in *Ha'Aretz*, 13 May 1981. On this point see also Schiff and Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, p. 25, and Shiffer, *Snow Ball*, p. 28.

130. Schiffer, *Snow Ball*, pp. 27, 31.
131. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
132. *Ibid.*, pp. 24–25.
133. Schiff and Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, pp. 11–19, and interview with Kimche in *Los Angeles Times*, 31 July 1983. Zeev Schiff argued later that Kimche was in dispute with his boss, Hofi, who cautioned against unwarranted faith in the Phalange. See Schiff, "Junieh Station Does Not Answer," *Ha'Aretz* June 7, 1985. Kimche, however, described Schiff's allegation as "Kishkush" (Hebrew for "utter nonsense") in an interview with the author.
134. This was the view of General Rafael Eitan, the Chief of Staff. See Schiffer, *Snow Ball*, pp. 38–39.
135. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
136. Schiff and Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, p. 29.
137. The missile crisis is described in detail in both Schiffer, *Snow Ball* (pp. 40–43), and Schiff and Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, pp. 32–35. For the U.S. position, see Reich, *The United States and Israel*, pp. 96–97.
138. According to Schiff and Yaari (*Israel's Lebanon War*, pp. 287–88), the Reagan administration maintained a link with Yasser Arafat which was based on Robert Ames of the White House staff and Johnny Abdu, Chief of Lebanese Military Intelligence. The State Department and the U.S. Embassy in Beirut were not aware of this. In the PLO only Abu Jihad was a partner to Arafat's secret. It is thus very doubtful that the Israeli government knew about it. But they nevertheless had very distinct suspicions in this regard. As Israel Radio Political Affairs correspondent Shimon Schiffer puts it in *Snow Ball*, "Members of the Reagan Administration indirectly hinted to terrorist leaders that in the future 'there will be something to talk about.' This did not escape the attention of Egypt and Saudi Arabia which pressed the United States to recognize the moderate elements in the PLO. The possibility that the United States will open a dialogue with the PLO was considered in Jerusalem to be devastating." It was therefore perceived in Jerusalem to be imperative, Schiffer concludes, "to create in the United States a recognition that there was no escape from fighting the PLO and uprooting it" (p. 67). Sharon's words during a pro-war rally on 16 June 1982 strongly support Schiffer's comment: He "hoped there was a way to avert the danger

and prevent an explosion. But they [presumably the United States] tried to dictate to us a Palestinian state, an utterly unacceptable proposition." See *Ma'ariv*, 17 July 1982.

139. Schiff and Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, p. 27.

140. Hart, *Arafat*, p. 442.

141. Schiff and Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, p. 37.

142. Mr. Reuven Robert, Acting Mayor of Kiryat Shemonah in July 1981, was subsequently my graduate student at the Department of Political Science at the University of Haifa. Reuven recalled vividly how Begin, on a visit to Kiryat Shemonah during the mini-attrition, stated categorically that 'this [the shelling] can't go on.' Robert also informed the author of a decision by all mayors of the north to lobby the government for a decisive action against the PLO.

Chapter 3

1. Zeev Schiff and Ehud Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), p. 38.

2. Ezer Weizman, *The Battle for Peace* (Jerusalem: Ma'ariv, 1981), p. 304.

3. Quoted in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 9 June 1983.

4. These words were used by a close aide of Begin in an interview with the author when Sharon's appointment to the post of minister of defense was announced.

5. Eitan Haber and Zeev Schiff, *Israel Army and Defense—A Dictionary* (Tel Aviv: Zmora-Bitan-Modan, 1976), p. 521.

6. *Ibid.*

7. Dan Margalit, *Commando 101* (Tel Aviv: Moked, 1968).

8. Moshe Sharett, *Yoman Ishi* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1978), pp. 39–72.

9. Dayan, *Avnei Derekh*, pp. 115–16, as well as Shabtai Teveth, *Moshe Dayan* (Tel Aviv and Jerusalem: Shocken Press, 1972), pp. 392–400.

10. Dayan, *Avnei Derekh* (Jerusalem: Yediot Ahronot, 1976), p. 173, and Teveth, *Dayan*, pp. 427–28.

11. Dayan, *Avnei Derekh*, pp. 281–82.

12. Quoted by Weizman in *The Battle for Peace*, p. 120.

13. Haber and Schiff, *Dictionary*, p. 521.

14. Itzhak Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut* (Tel Aviv: Ma'ariv, 1979), vol. 1, p. 118.

15. Haber and Schiff, *Dictionary*, p. 521.

16. Weizman, *The Battle for Peace*, p. 120.

17. Haber and Schiff, *Dictionary*, pp. 521–22.

18. The entire episode and the relevant documents are quoted in Aryeh Avneri, *The Liberal Connection* (Tel Aviv: Zmora-Bitan Publishing, 1984), pp. 97–101.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 125–35.

20. Dayan, *Avnei Derekh*, p. 661.

21. See Yoram Peri, *Between Battles and Ballots* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 125–27. For detailed critiques by Sharon's rivals in the IDF command, see Avraham Adan, *On Both Banks of the Suez* (Jerusalem: Idanim, 1979). Hanoch Bar Tov, *Dado: 48 Years and Twenty Days* (Tel Aviv: Ma'ariv, 1978), vol. 2.

22. Peri, *Between Battles and Ballots*, pp. 117–18.

23. Weizman, *The Battle for Peace*, p. 120.

24. Dan Bavly and Eliahu Salpeter, *Fire in Beirut* (New York: Stein and Day, 1984), pp. 70–71.

25. Weizman, *The Battle for Peace*, p. 342.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

28. This reconstruction of Begin's and Sharon's reasoning before the war has been corroborated primarily in a series of interviews with officials of different ranks who were privy to the

planning process. Some of the elements of this thinking are mentioned in verbatim minutes of Sharon's talk with Habib on 4 December 1981 as quoted in FBIS, 28 May 1985, Ib, as well as in an extensive interview Sharon gave to Oriana Falaci. See *Washington Post*, 29 Aug. 1982. Also useful were Schiff and Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, pp. 42–44; Shai Feldman and Heda Rechnitz-Kijner, *Deception, Consensus and War: Israel in Lebanon*, Tel Aviv University, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, paper no. 17 (October 1984), pp. 10–24; Shlomo Nakdimon, "Sharon Takes Over," a summary of research in progress by Aryeh Na'or, former secretary of the cabinet and a close confidant of Begin, *Yediot Ahronot Magazine*, 31 May 1985; Orit Shochat, "Hoze HaMedina," a reconstruction of Sharon's concept, *Ha'Aretz* magazine, 7 June 1985; as well as Rafael Eitan with Dov Goldstein, *Raful: A Soldier's Account* (Tel Aviv: Ma'ariv, 1985), pp. 205ff.

29. Addressing a meeting of IDF officers on 29 October 1957, Dayan, then Chief of Staff of the IDF, summarized his basic philosophy in the following terms:

I absolutely identify with the thesis which views Israel's power as a detonator. Differently stated—Israel is not merely a Jewish state whose existence is morally justified as such but has such a potential that if someone wishes to force on us things which are detrimental to our existence—there will be an explosion which will shake up wider areas, and realizing this such elements in the international system will do their utmost to prevent damage to us. This will not be motivated by sympathy for the Jews and for Israel but by the realization that we are such a state with such a power that if anyone tries to harm us—the explosion will do damage to others too. This is not a constructive thesis. It is a thesis advocating that we should be a kind of biting beast, capable of developing a crisis beyond our borders and expanding it to far wider areas. (*Avnei Derekh*, p. 356).

Sharon's version of this concept was stated during an interview after the 1967 war in which he said, among other things:

If our superiority is to be real and as such reflected in the enemy's inferiority, it has to be demonstrated every day. Superiority is not a weapon which you obtain irrevocably in one move; it has to be perpetually recalled. We cannot take the "minutes as read" concerning any damage done to us by the enemy whether it is big or small. (Geulah Cohen, "Tête-à-tête with General Sharon," *Ma'ariv*, 15 December 1967).

30. Schiff and Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, pp. 82–84.

31. This preventive streak in Israeli thinking is the theme of my article "Moral Fervor vs. Strategic Logic: A Note on the Rationale of the Israeli Invasion of Lebanon," *Middle East Review* 15, no. 3–4 (Spring–Summer, 1983). That this loomed large in the planning of the war was confirmed by Rafael Eitan (not to be confused with Raful), Begin's Special Advisor on Terrorism. See *Ha'Aretz*, 22 March 1985.

32. This was confirmed by Colonel (ret.) Eli Geva in an interview with the *Washington Post* published on 20 April 1985.

33. Shimon Schiffer, *Snow Ball: The Story behind the Lebanon War* (Tel Aviv: Idanim Publishers, 1984), p. 85.

34. Schiff and Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, p. 46.

35. *Ibid.* This point was confirmed by Fadi Freim, former Commander of the Lebanese Forces, in an interview with the author.

36. The link between the PLO and the Fahd Plan is described in detail by Alan Hart, *Arafat: Terrorist or Peacemaker?* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1984), pp. 445–47. The critical importance of the possibility that the United States would be lured into recognizing the PLO on Israeli policy was confirmed emphatically by David Kimche in an interview with the author. Sharon stated this in public: "On the eve of Operation SHELEG when the PLO's influence was at its peak even in the eyes of the United States, there was a distinct danger that UN Resolution 242 would be modified as demanded by the PLO. Instead of talking about refugees the resolution would refer to the 'realization of the rights of the Palestinian people.' Operation Peace for the Galilee which

liquidated the PLO as a significant military and political force, also removed this menace [of a change in UN Resolution 242].” Ariel Sharon, “The Palestinian Problem—The Lie and the Menace,” *Yediot Ahronot*, July 26–27, 1985. Lieutenant General Eitan states the same in almost identical terms in *Rafal*, p. 284. The Carter administration, as pointed out above, suspected Begin’s government of such thoughts. See note 93 in chapter 2 above.

37. Herzog described this battle as the most complicated in the history of Arab-Israeli wars. See Chaim Herzog, *The Arab-Israeli Wars* (New York: Random House, 1982), pp. 158–59. See also Trevor N. Dupuy, *Elusive Victory* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), pp. 258–63.

38. Schiff and Yaari, *Israel’s Lebanon War*, p. 48; Schiffer, *Snow Ball*, p. 78.

39. Schiff and Yaari, *Israel’s Lebanon War*, pp. 45–46.

40. *Ma’ariv*, 3 June 1983.

41. Schiffer, *Snow Ball*, p. 71.

42. Feldman and Rechnitz-Kijner, “Deception,” p. 26.

43. *Ma’ariv*, 3 June 1983. According to another source Begin was not yet resolved to exploit the opportunity and call the country to war. On the same day Begin and Saguy met UN Deputy Secretary General Brian Urquhart, the author of the July 24, 1981, ceasefire agreement, who said “I was in the process of telling the Prime Minister [that] the incident was not a breach of the ceasefire. Saguy interrupted to say it was. . . . I lost my temper and asked General Saguy not to interfere in the talk with Begin.” He accused Saguy in Begin’s presence of “misinforming the Prime Minister.” Begin, according to Urquhart, listened and then said, “You’re absolutely right, Mr. Urquhart. I believe you and I am very sorry for what General Saguy has said. I know those people [the PLO raiding party] came from Jordan” (quoted in Hart, *Arafat*, p. 449). If the report is accurate Begin was not merely being disloyal to his subordinate but, indeed, admitting that there was no breach of the ceasefire and that therefore there was no cause for an Israeli retaliation. If so the report in *Ma’ariv* misrepresents what Begin did. It would seem that he allowed Sharon to raise the issue in the cabinet but went along with the idea himself of sending Saguy to Washington. Indeed, a detailed report on the same event in *Time*, 1 Feb. 1982, confirms that Begin did not support Sharon’s request for permission to invade.

44. Schiffer, *Snow Ball*, p. 76.

45. Schiff and Yaari, *Israel’s Lebanon War*, p. 46.

46. *Ma’ariv*, 3 June 1983.

47. *Ibid.* On Arafat’s increasingly difficult position at this time, see Hart, *Arafat*, pp. 450–51.

48. *Ma’ariv*, 3 June 1983.

49. Feldman and Rechnitz-Kijner, “Deception,” p. 28.

50. Haig’s words are quoted in Claudia Wright’s report in the Chicago-based *In These Times*, 14 Sept. 1982. The dissenting votes in the cabinet were cast by Deputy Prime Minister Ehrlich and Minister of Energy Berman. See Avneri, *The Liberal Connection*, p. 308.

51. See Irving Janis, *Victims of Groupthink* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1972).

52. Quoted in Avneri, *The Liberal Connection*, pp. 308–9.

53. *Ibid.*

54. *Ibid.*, pp. 309–10.

55. Upon his retirement from the IDF in 1972, Sharon joined Ehrlich’s Liberal party. It was not long until he and Ehrlich became bitter political foes. See *ibid.*, pp. 118–45.

56. Feldman and Rechnitz-Kijner, “Deception,” p. 28.

57. *Ha’Aretz*, 25 June 1982.

58. Schiff and Yaari, *Israel’s Lebanon War*, p. 117.

59. See Avner Yaniv and Robert J. Lieber, “Personal Whim or Strategic Imperative: The Israeli Invasion of Lebanon,” *International Security* 8, no. 2 (Fall 1983).

60. Schiff and Yaari, *Israel’s Lebanon War*, pp. 47–48.

61. Michael Howard, *The Causes of War*, 2nd ed., enlarged (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 47–48.

62. Weizman, *The Battle for Peace*, p. 121.

63. This brief discussion is based on Feldman and Rechnitz-Kijner, "Deception," pp. 29–32, as well as Yaniv and Lieber, "Personal Whim," and Nakdimon, "Sharon Takes Over."
64. Feldman and Rechnitz-Kijner, "Deception," p. 36.
65. See Herzog, *The Arab-Israeli Wars*, pp. 349–51.
66. *Ma'ariv*, 3 June 1983.
67. This point is made by this author also in Yaniv and Lieber, "Personal Whim."
68. Richard A. Gabriel, *Operation Peace for the Galilee* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984), p. 158.
69. For details see Feldman and Rechnitz-Kijner, "Deception," pp. 29–40.
70. *Washington Post*, 29 Aug. 1982.
71. A similar thesis is central to the argument of Feldman and Rechnitz in "Deception."
72. For details see Daniel Shimshoni, *Israeli Democracy* (New York: The Free Press, 1982), pp. 418ff. The growing restiveness of the Israeli public and the attributes of this mood of protest have been analyzed in detail by Sam Lehman-Wilzig of Bar Ilan University. See by the latter "The Israeli Protester," *The Jerusalem Quarterly* 26 (1982), pp. 127–138, as well as "Conflict as Communication: Public Protest in Israel, 1950–1982," in Stuart Cohen and Eliezer Don-Yehia, eds., *Conflicted Consensus in Jewish Public Life* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1986).
73. Dayan, *Avnei Derekh*, pp. 727–28.
74. Zeef Schiff and Eitan Haber, *October Earthquake: Yom Kippur 1973* (Tel Aviv: University Publishing Project, 1974).
75. Judging by the words of Yuval Ne'eman, the problem began from the fact that Begin, contrary to all previous prime ministers, felt obliged to run the war at the cabinet level with the active participation of all ministers. Begin's predecessor, argued Ne'eman, had made all critical decisions in a caucus of three to four ministers. See Yuval Ne'eman, "The Voice of Revival," *Jerusalem Post*, 15 March 1985.
76. See Begin's election speech, quoted in *Ha'Aretz*, 28 June 1981, as well as the report by Dan Margalit in *Ha'Aretz*, 24 June 1981.
77. For an analysis of the heterogeneity of attitudes on such issues in all of Israel's parties, see my article (with Fabian Pascal) "Hawks, Doves and Other Birds of a Feather," *British Journal of Political Science* (April 1980). For a detailed historical account of the debate between Labor hawks and Labor doves, see Yossi Beylin, *The Price of Union: The Labor Party up to the Yom Kippur War* (Tel Aviv: Revivim, 1985).
78. For Sarid's views from the very beginning of the war, see Amnon Barzilai, "Outside the Consensus: Yossi Sarid—A Testimonial," *Ha'Aretz*, June 25, 1982.
79. See Michael Bar-Zohar, *Ben Gurion: A Biography* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1976), vol. 3, p. 1599.
80. Abba Eban, "Return to Reason," *Jerusalem Post*, 13 Feb. 1984. For another authoritative presentation of this labor view see Shimon Peres, "Strategy for a Transition Period," *International Security* 2, no. 3 (Winter 1978), pp. 4–12.
81. *Ibid.*
82. Feldman and Rechnitz-Kijner, "Deception," p. 42.
83. Schiffer, *Snow Ball*, p. 94. Translation in *ibid.*, pp. 42–43. According to an Israel television investigation broadcast on the third anniversary of the war, "the opposition leaders Peres, Rabin and Shahal guessed what were Sharon's intentions, anticipated his moves and their consequences but voted [in the Knesset] for the war and justified it when it began." Heda Boshes, the *Ha'Aretz* television review editor, wondered when this was reported whether the Labor leaders "were caught by panic, were lacking leadership and conviction or, worse still, sought to protect their public image." Nor could Boshes be blamed for ex post facto judgement. Already on the second day of the war, *Ha'Aretz* carried an analysis by Dan Margalit presenting Labor's attitude as pervasively ambiguous and governed more by domestic political considerations than by the party leadership's "real" views concerning the war.
84. Schiffer, *Snow Ball*, p. 94.

85. Ibid.
86. The entire sequence is recorded in Feldman and Rechnitz-Kijner, "Deception," pp. 43–46. Their interpretation, however, does not pay as much attention as seems due to the impact of Labor's equivocation.
87. Ibid., pp. 61–65.
88. See, for example, a lecture on the topic by General Benjamin Peled, CO of the IAF in Louis Williams, ed., *Military Aspects of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Tel Aviv: University Publishing Projects, 1975). See also Bar Tov, *Dado: 48 Years and Twenty Days*, pp. 2–93.
89. See Peri, *Between Battles and Ballots*, p. 273.
90. Mentioned in Gabriel, *Operation Peace for the Galilee*, p. 68.
91. This view was echoed by Prime Minister Begin when he addressed a large gathering of officers in August 1982. World War II and its thirty to forty million victims, Begin reportedly argued, could have been avoided had France and Russia not waited until it became a "war of no choice." Of the six wars Israel has fought since independence, [he continued], three had been forced upon it: the 1948 war; the 1969–70 war of attrition, and the 1973 war. These, Begin calculated, cost the highest casualties. By contrast, in 1956 and 1967 Israel could have refrained from starting the war. The 1982 war belonged in the category of "wars of choice." "A free, sovereign, peace-loving nation which hates war and cares about security must create conditions in which war, if it becomes necessary, should not be a war of "no alternative." The condition must be such—and their creation depends on human action and wisdom—that one should emerge from war to victory with the least possible casualties." Quoted in Bavly and Salpeter, *Fire in Beirut*, pp. 164–65. Excerpts are also available in *New York Times*, 2 Aug. 1982.
92. Something along the lines of this thesis was propounded by Brigadier General Dov Tamari during a lecture at Haifa University on January 20, 1984. For years considered one of the IDF's most brilliant and thoughtful officers, he was to be promoted to Major General and appointed Head of IDF Training Command. Sharon, however, forced him to retire without promotion upon assuming office in 1981, presumably because Tamari was independent-minded and a long-standing (and influential) critic of Sharon's ideas. From then on Tamari was totally removed from any position of responsibility. Tamari refrained from publishing this paper, but I have a copy of the transcript on file.
93. *Ha'Aretz*, 9 July 1982.
94. Ran Edelist interviewing Tamari in *Monitin*, nos. 66, 68 (1983).
95. The letter was published without comment by the Hebrew language daily *Yediot Ahronot*. A not dissimilar critique with specific reference to the performance in Lebanon was voiced by Col. (ret.) Imanuel Wald in "Lessons Which Were Not Learnt." *Ha'Aretz*, 13 May 1986.
96. For an illuminating analysis of this experience, see Brigadier General Haim Benyamini, "The Six-Day War, Israel 1967: Decisions, Coalitions, Consequences: A Sociological View," in *Israeli Society and Its Defense Establishment*, ed. Moshe Lissak (London: Frank Cass, 1984), pp. 64–82.
97. Shabtai Teveth, *Moshe Dayan* (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1971), p. 464.
98. *BaMachaneh* (IDF Weekly), 25 Feb. 1983, p. 7, as quoted by Gabriel, *Operation Peace for the Galilee*, pp. 189–190.
99. Quoted in Feldman and Rechnitz-Kijner, "Deception," p. 52. On this point see also Zvi Lanir, "Political Goals and Military Objectives in Israel's Wars," Aharon Yariv et al., *War by Choice* (Tel Aviv: HaKibbutz HaMeuhad for the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, 1985), esp. pp. 148–51.
100. Colonel (ret.) Me'ir Pa'il, "The Israeli Defense Forces: A Social Aspect," *New Outlook* (January 1975): 40–44.
101. Tamari, in the *Monitin* interview cited above, challenges this critique. "The mental ability, the potential talent, the individual motivation," he said, "have not become worse though many argue that it has. Ever since I remember the IDF there were excellent officers, mediocrities and poor officers at all levels, from second lieutenants to generals. This is still the situation today. Let us not elevate all those who served in the past to superb level of performance out of nostalgic excitement."
102. Quoted in Gabriel, *Operation Peace for the Galilee*, p. 186.

103. *Ibid.*, pp. 20ff., 197–205, 82–112. The most celebrated example is the two-day halt of General Einan in the approach to Ein Zhalta.

104. Tamari, in the *Monitin* interview, offers a sardonic and picturesque description of this situation, describing the general staff “kibitzers” in HQ Northern Command as “Senior Citizens sitting around with an expression suggesting that the burden of the war was entirely on their shoulders.” The rest of what is said here is based on numerous talks with officers and men who took part in the war, as well as on Joseph Walter, “Operation Peace for the Galilee: Where Was the General Staff?” *Ma’ariv*, 7 June 1985.

105. See Teveth, *Moshe Dayan*, pp. 366, 376ff., 409–14.

106. From my interviews with participants.

107. For an evaluation of these traits in Sharon’s conduct, see Mati Golan, “Lo Yashar, Lo Mukhshar” (“Neither Honest nor Gifted”), *Ha’Aretz*, 29 January 1985.

108. For this Sharon was accused by Colonel (ret.) Ran Cohen, a paratrooper but currently also a left-wing member of the Knesset, of actual murder. Cohen obviously tried to draw Sharon to file a libel suit and turn the trial into an arena where Sharon could be nailed down. But Sharon simply ignored Cohen’s accusations, although they were published in *Ha’Aretz* on 12 April 1984.

109. Quoted in Gabriel, *Operation Peace for the Galilee*, p. 184.

110. Geva’s words are quoted in *Washington Post*, 20 April 1985. For Eitan’s version see *Rafal*, pp. 282–95.

111. For examples of protest in the papers immediately after Geva’s resignation became known, see article by Yaakov Hasdai (a retired paratrooper colonel himself) in *Yediot Ahronot*, 30 July 1982; and interview with Eli Geva himself in *Yediot Ahronot*, 27 July 1982; Y. Erez in *Ma’ariv*, 26 July 1982; an interview with Major General (ret.) Joseph Geva (Eli Geva’s father) in *Ma’ariv*, 27 July 1982; Zeev Schiff in *Ha’Aretz*, 30 July 1982.

112. Geva interview in *Washington Post*, 20 April 1985; Nakdimon, “Sharon Takes Over”; Eitan, *Rafal*, pp. 266–81.

113. Claudia Wright, “Israeli Attack No Surprise to Pentagon,” *In These Times*, 14 September 1982.

114. *Washington post*, 29 Aug. 1982. Sharon indicated awareness of the presence of the U.S. armada on 16 June. See *Ha’Aretz*, 17 June 1982.

115. Television interview with Lewis, quoted in *Washington Post*, 24 May 1985, *New York Times*, 26 May 1985, and *Ha’Aretz*, 24 May 1985.

116. Schiff and Yaari, *Israel’s Lebanon War*, pp. 62–77. The account was confirmed in an interview I held with a senior Israeli official who was present at the talks.

117. Steven L. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 412.

118. Interview with NSC staff.

119. *New York Times*, 1 March 1984.

120. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, p. 413.

121. Hart, *Arafat*, pp. 455–56; Helena Cobban, *The Palestine Liberation Organization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 123–24.

122. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, p. 414, and Rashid Khalidi, *Under Siege: PLO Decision Making During the 1982 War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 114–116.

123. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, p. 414.

124. Moshe Maoz and Avner Yaniv, “On a Short Leash: Syria and the PLO,” in Maoz and Yaniv, eds., *Syria under Assad: Domestic Constraints and Regional Risks* (London: Croom-Helm, and New York: The St. Martin’s Press, 1986), pp. 191–208.

125. See interview with Sharon, *Los Angeles Times*, 1 April 1984, and interview with Lebanese Ambassador to United States in *Washington Post*, 1 March 1984. On the discrete but important French role see Rashid Khalidi, *Under Siege*, pp. 121–127.

126. *New York Times*, 7 July 1982.

127. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, p. 416.

128. For a critical analysis of the role of the media in the Lebanon war, see Joshua Moravchik,

“Misreporting Lebanon,” *Policy Review* 23 (Winter 1983), pp. 11–66. For even more elaborate treatment of the same theme, see Zeev Chafetz, *Double Vision* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1985) as well as Trevor N. Dupuy and Paul Martell, *Flawed Victory: The Arab-Israeli Conflict and the 1982 War in Lebanon* (Fairfax, VA: Hero Books, 1986), esp. pp. 167–175.

129. For details of the battle see Gabriel, *Operation Peace for the Galilee*, pp. 151–54. The accusation was published in the form of an article in *Ha’Aretz*, 12 April 1984, by Colonel (ret.) Ran Cohen, a paratrooper and a left-wing politician. Sharon, however, declined to sue Cohen for libel.

130. Quoted by Hart, *Arafat*, p. 456. Arafat’s dramatic recollections, quoted as they are by Hart in a strongly pro-PLO book, are clearly at variance with the equally pro-PLO account of Rashid Khalidi that the Israeli pressure had no serious impact and that the PLO leadership took the bombings in their stride. See *Under Siege*, pp. 171–174.

131. *Ibid.*, pp. 453–54.

132. Gabriel, *Operation Peace for the Galilee*, p. 117.

133. *Ibid.*, pp. 157–58. Details of the IAF action on that day were disclosed by IAF deputy commander in a radio interview on 6 June 1983, the first anniversary of the war. See Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 7 June 1983. This account, which suggests a far smaller Israeli military effort than reported at the time, is corroborated by the firsthand account of Dupuy and Martell. See note 128 above.

134. *New York Times*, 13 Aug. 1982.

Chapter 4

1. This section is based primarily on the excellent account of Zeev Schiff and Ehud Yaari, *Israel’s Lebanon War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), pp. 230ff, and on Moshe Maoz and Avner Yaniv, “The Syrian Paradox,” in *Syria Under Assad*, ed. Maoz and Yaniv (London: Croom-Helm, and New York: The St. Martin’s Press, 1986).

2. From my interview with Fadi Frem, at that time Commander of the Lebanese Forces.

3. Schiff and Yaari, *Israel’s Lebanon War*, pp. 287–88.

4. As early as 1976 the author was told by Major General Avraham Tamir that the latter had just returned from Paris where, among other things, he had dined with Sarkis.

5. Based on the report in *Jerusalem Post* throughout the period from September 16 to September 29.

6. The upper echelon of the IDF was so outraged that one Brigadier General asked for leave while others declared in a large meeting that Sharon “had lost their confidence.” See Shai Feldman and Heda Rechnitz-Kifjer, “*Deception, Consensus and War: Israel in Lebanon*,” Tel Aviv University, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, paper no. 17 (October 1984), pp. 59–60; Schiff and Yaari, *Israel’s Lebanon War*, p. 281; Dan Bavly and Eliahu Salpeter, *Fire in Beirut* (New York: Stein and Day, 1984), p. 170.

7. The impression Peace Now left on the Western media was always far greater than what it left on the Likud government which, according to Weizman, never changed a decision because of their demonstrations. See Ezer Weizman, *The Battle for Peace* (Jerusalem: Ma’ariv, 1981), p. 282. For a detailed account of the movement’s activities concerning the Lebanon War, see Mordechai Bar-On, *Peace Now—A Profile* (Tel Aviv: HaKibbutz HaMeuhad, 1985), pp. 54–67.

8. *Jerusalem Post*, 26–28 September 1982.

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*, 11 February 1983.

11. *Ibid.*, 25 November 1982.

12. Quoted in Schiff and Yaari, *Israel’s Lebanon War*, pp. 283–84.

13. *Jerusalem Post*, 9 February 1983.

14. *Ibid.*, 11 February 1983.

15. Lally Weymouth, “Ariel Sharon on the U.S. in Lebanon,” *Los Angeles Times*, 1 April 1984. Sharon made the same point two days after signing of the May 17 accord with Lebanon in a speech to a women’s convention. See *Jewish Press*, 20 May 1983.

16. Lally Weymouth, "The Real Story of Our Lebanon Debacle," *Washington Post*, 18 March 1984.

17. *Ibid.*, quoting an unnamed U.S. official.

18. Weymouth, "Ariel Sharon."

19. This is based on the sources quote in notes 15–18 above, as well as on Schiff and Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, pp. 288–89.

20. Interview with NSC staff.

21. On June 16, 1982, ten days after the beginning of the Israeli invasion, Kissinger published an article in the *Washington Post* titled "From Lebanon to the West Bank to the Gulf," in which he endorsed the "strategic rationale" of the Israeli attack on the grounds that "no sovereign state can tolerate indefinitely the buildup along its borders of a military force dedicated to its destruction and implementing its objectives by periodical shelling and raids." He also stated that

one of the principal casualties of the Lebanese crisis had been the Western illusion—especially prevalent in Europe but also rife too in the middle levels of our government—in all recent administrations—that the key to Middle East peace are various formulae to 'moderate' the PLO. It was always a mirage. The colossal effort needed to induce Israel to accept the PLO as a negotiating partner would have forced us to expend all our capital on procedure before substance was reached—even on the highly dubious assumption that it was achievable at all."

Further, Kissinger argued, the results of the Israeli invasion, although they involved the use of U.S.-made weapons "and stake American interest" without prior consultation, "were congruent with the interest of the peace process in the Middle East." Lebanon "can be another testing ground for proving that radical Arab regimes and Soviet backing offer no solution to any of the central issues of concern to the area." Above all, he concluded, the "Lebanese crisis creates an opening for American diplomacy to overcome the deadlock in the autonomy talks between Egypt and Israel. The United States must demonstrate that its proposed course in Lebanon is motivated by its concern to bring about a just peace in the area and not only to remove a threat to Israel's northern border." The timing of the article's appearance and Kissinger's warm endorsement of Shultz in particular and the Reagan administration in general suggest that his opinions influenced the authors of the policy discussed in these pages. It also appears, however, that the middle echelons of the U.S. government, that is, the state department, ignored the part of the article that dealt with the PLO.

22. See Steven L. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 418–23.

23. Weymouth, "The Real Story." The author met Bazil in Washington at about the same time. Bazil did not mention Arens's message, but the tenor of his talk was identical. What he feared most was that "the Israelis would get fed up with Lebanon and simply take off."

24. Weymouth, "The Real Story."

25. The entire sequence is described in detail in Schiff and Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, pp. 290–92. Parts of it are corroborated in Weymouth, "Ariel Sharon," and "The Real Story." The rest of the information was obtained in an interview with a member of the NSC Middle East staff.

26. Interviews with an NSC official and with senior Israel diplomat in Washington.

27. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, pp. 422–23.

28. *New York Times*, 3 February 1983. In September–October 1984 the author taught a course on Middle East politics under the auspices of the National Security Studies Program at Georgetown University. The lectures were held regularly at the Pentagon, and the students were all U.S. military officers. One of them, a Marine Corps Major, had served in Beirut. The details of the complex situation arising from the deliberate avoidance of direct communication between the IDF and the Marines are based largely on talks with this Marine officer. See also Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, pp. 424–24.

29. This profile of Arens and comparison of his style with that of Sharon is based on talks with Israeli officials at the Israeli Embassy in Washington.

30. This was clearly confirmed in all the discussions this author held with Israeli embassy officials in Washington and their American colleagues in the state department. Indeed, during a lecture I gave to forty congressional aides on Capitol Hill, one of the questions asked in different forms by some of the participants was, "How does one deal with Sharon?" or "What leads to worse results, ignoring Sharon (and facing his acrimonious rebuttals) or dealing with him and suffering from his uncivilized manner?"

31. See Alan Hart, *Arafat: Terrorist or Peacemaker?* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1984), pp. 458–61, and Helena Cobban, *The Palestine Liberation Organization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 126–36.

32. See, for example, *Washington Post* and *New York Times* of 10–20 February 1983.

33. Quoted in *New York Times*, 21 February 1983.

34. This is one of the most important points in this author's article (with Robert J. Lieber), "Reagan and the Middle East," *The Washington Quarterly* 6, no. 4 (Fall 1983). See also Adam M. Garfinkle, "Sources of the al-Fatah Mutiny," *Orbis* 27, no. 3 (Fall 1983), esp. pp. 623–631.

35. *New York Times*, 10 April 1983.

36. Interview with a ranking member of the NSC Middle East Staff.

37. *Los Angeles Times*, 11 May 1983.

38. Interview with NSC staff.

39. *Los Angeles Times*, 11 May 1983.

40. *Jerusalem Post*, 11 May 1983.

41. For text of the agreement, see Appendix. I am indebted to Mr. Reuven Robert, Acting Mayor of Kiryat Shemonah in 1982–3, for providing me with the signed original version of the text of the treaty.

42. *Jerusalem Post*, 11 May 1983.

43. On the secret U.S.-Israeli understanding, see *New York Times*, 18 May 1983.

44. Sharon's view has been cited above (see pp. 319–320). Itzhak Rabin, the former Prime Minister, made a similar statement on several occasions. See, for example, *Jerusalem Post*, 29 May 1983.

45. See *Time*, 23 May 1983.

46. Reported from Rome, by Livia Rokach to *Al Fajer*, 6 May 1983.

47. Reported by Thomas L. Freedman in *New York Times*, 18 May 1983.

48. Reported in *Los Angeles Times*, 11 May 1983.

49. *Ibid.*

50. Interview with President Gemayel by Thomas L. Freedman, *New York Times*, 17 May 1983.

51. For reactions in the Arab world, at least in Amin Gemayel's perception, see *ibid.*, as well as *New York Times*, 19 May 1983, *Washington Post*, 18 May 1983.

52. *Time*, 23 May 1983.

53. For a detailed and well-informed analysis by a Druze economic historian, see Kais Firru, "The Syrian Economy under the Assad Regime," in *Syria Under Assad*, ed. Maoz and Yaniv, pp. 36–68.

54. *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 10 June 1983. According to one of the American participants in this dinner at the Jerusalem Sheraton, Rabin was indeed shocked and could not conceal it (interview).

55. See, for example, "Sharon: Negotiators Gave in Too Much," *Jerusalem Post*, 15 May 1983, and also David Shipler's report in *New York Times*, 16 May 1983.

56. Cf. Peres' criticism of the entire policy in the Knesset Foreign Relations and Security Committee on 15 May, when the committee was asked to approve the draft of the agreement. *Jerusalem Post*, 16 May 1983.

57. *Jerusalem Post*, 11 May 1983, and interview with David Kimche, Director General of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, in *Los Angeles Times*, 21 July 1983. The author heard such an evaluation of Jebel Barouq by an Israeli General even as late as the summer of 1984 (interview).

58. For such views, see *Middle East Policy Survey*, 20 May 1983.
59. *New York Times*, 16 May 1983.
60. This summary of Syrian reactions is based on reports in *Jerusalem Post*, 17 May, 1983
61. *New York Times*, 19 May, 1983.
62. See Moshe Maoz and Avner Yaniv, "The Syrian Paradox" in *Syria Under Assad*, ed. Maoz and Yaniv, pp. 251–263.
63. Patrick Seale, "Jordan and Syria Make Up to Counter Israeli Strategy," in *The Observer*, 31 July 1983.
64. This argument was suggested by Western diplomats in Damascus and quoted by Thomas L. Freedman, *New York Times*, 4 July 1983.
65. For a detailed analysis of the Syrian position on all these questions on the eve of the Lebanon-Israel agreement, see Yaniv and Lieber "Reagan and the Middle East."
66. See *New York Times*, 18 and 20 May, 1983.
67. Quoted in *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 21 May 1983, and *The Times*, 21 May 1983.
68. *Washington Post*, 23 May 1983.
69. *Jerusalem Post*, 22 May 1983.
70. *Ibid.*, 29 May 1983.
71. *Ibid.*, 13, 19, 20 May 1983.
72. *New York Times*, 22 May 1983.
73. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 21 May 1983.
74. *Jerusalem Post*, 24 May 1983.
75. *New York Times*, 26 May 1983.
76. *The Times*, 27 May 1983.
77. *The Guardian*, 27 May 1983.
78. *Washington Post*, 31 May 1983.
79. Minister of Communications Zippori and Deputy Prime Minister Levy as quoted by *The Guardian* and the *Jerusalem Post*, respectively, on 27 May 1983.
80. *Near East Report*, 27 May 1983.
81. *New York Times*, 28 May 1983.
82. *Ibid.*, 19 May 1983; *Jerusalem Post*, 29 May 1983.
83. See *The Guardian*, 2 June 1983.
84. See John K. Cooley, "Syria Links Pullout to Guaranteed Access to Water," *Washington post*, 8 June 1983.
85. *Jerusalem Post*, 8 June 1983.
86. *Washington Post*, 2 June 1983; *The Guardian*, 2 June 1983; *Jerusalem Post*, 3 June 1983; *The Guardian*, 6 June 1983; *Jerusalem Post*, 6 June 1983.
87. *Washington Post*, 2 June 1983.
88. The enormous complexity of effecting a retreat was demonstrated by epic retreats such as Napoleon's from Russia, Britain's and France's from the German army on French territory in both world wars, the retreat from empire of the British, French, Dutch, and Belgians, and of course the American retreat from Vietnam. The most important common denominator in all these cases is the tormenting struggle for a point of equilibrium between the pole of stampede and the pole of self-defeating determination to hold on. Finding this point of equilibrium is a supreme test of leadership, judgment, and discipline.
89. *Los Angeles Times*, 18 May 1983.
90. For a more detailed discussion of this theme see Avner Yaniv, *Deterrence Without the Bomb: The Politics of Israeli Strategy* (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1986), esp. chap. 5.
91. See Schiff and Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, pp. 242–245, and *New York Times*, 14 July 1983.
92. For a detailed study of the Israeli Druze community, see G. Ben-Dor, *The Druzes in Israel* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1979). On Druze unrest in the late 1970s, see Avner Yaniv and Majid al Haj, "Uniformity or Diversity: A Reevaluation of the Arab Vote in Israel," in *The*

Elections in Israel, 1981, ed. Asher Arian (Tel Aviv: Ramot Publishing, 1984), and Rafik Halabi, "Israel's Minority in the Middle," *The New York Times Magazine*, 27 December 1981.

93. "Israeli Druzes Call for Army Crackdown Against Phalangists in Lebanon," *Jerusalem Post*, 20 July 1983.

94. See *New York Times*, 14 July 1983, as well as an excellent account in Schiff and Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, pp. 243–45. The violence in the Shouf was reported in detail throughout this period in all major newspapers.

95. See *Jerusalem Post*, 9 May 1983.

96. *Ibid.*, 17 May 1983.

97. *Ibid.*, 2 June 1983.

98. *Ibid.*, 3 June 1983.

99. *Ibid.*, 9 June 1983.

100. *Ibid.*, 15 July 1983.

101. *Ibid.*, 31 May 1983.

102. *Ibid.*, 29 May 1983.

103. Dov Yermiya, *My War Diary: Lebanon June 5–July 1, 1982* (Boston: South End Press, 1984).

104. See *Jerusalem Post*, 1 June 1983.

105. *Ibid.*, 5 June 1983.

106. *Ibid.*, 22 June 1983.

107. *Ibid.*, 26 June 1983.

108. *Ibid.*, 15 June 1983.

109. This profile of Arens is based on extensive talks with his subordinates in the Washington Embassy and back in Israel. For a press profile of Levi as Chief of Staff, see *HaOlam HaZeh*, no. 2489, 15 May 1985.

110. Weizman, *The Battle for Peace*, p. 127.

111. *Washington Post*, 19 June 1983.

112. *Jerusalem Post*, 1 July 1983.

113. See Moshe Dayan, *Avnei Derekh* (Jerusalem: Yediot Ahronot, 1976), pp. 118ff, and Edward N. Luttwak and Dan Horowitz, *The Israeli Army 1948–73* (Cambridge, Mass.: Abt Books, 1983), chap. 4.

114. See pp. 202–203 below.

115. See p. 135 above.

116. *Jerusalem Post*, 21 August 1983.

117. See p. 163 above.

118. See *Sunday Times*, 12 June 1983.

119. *Ibid.*

120. *Jerusalem Post*, 11 May 1983.

121. See pp. 164–165 above.

122. *Jerusalem Post*, 8 and 13 May 1983.

123. *Ibid.*

124. *Jerusalem Post*, 12 May 1983.

125. *Ibid.*, 9 May 1983.

126. *Ibid.*, 17 May 1983.

127. *Ibid.*, 2 June 1983.

128. *Ibid.*, 3 June 1983.

129. *Ibid.*, 8 June 1983.

130. *Ibid.*, 9 June 1983.

131. *Ibid.*, 12 June 1983.

132. *Ibid.*, 13 June 1983.

133. *Los Angeles Times*, 13 June 1983.

134. *New York Times*, 16 June 1983.

135. *Jerusalem Post*, 15 June 1983.
136. *Ibid.*, 16 June 1983.
137. *Ibid.*, 28 June 1983.
138. *Ibid.*, 14 July 1983.
139. Cf. Lally Weymouth, "Israel's Point Man in Lebanon: Low Profile Casts a Big Shadow," *Los Angeles Times*, 31 July 1983.
140. *Middle East Policy Survey*, 1 July 1983.
141. *Jewish Week*, 17 June 1983.
142. *Ibid.*
143. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 24 June 1983.
144. *Jerusalem post*, 28 June 1983.
145. *Ibid.*
146. See *Jerusalem post*, 29 June 1983, and *New York Times*, 4 July 1983.
147. For analyses and speculations concerning the whole bizarre affair, see *Middle East Policy Survey*, 1 July 1983; *New York Times*, 1 July 1983; and *Jerusalem Post*, 1 July 1983.
148. *Washington Post*, 4 July 1983.
149. *Jerusalem Post*, 3 July 1983; *New York Times*, 14 July 1983; and *Middle East Policy Survey*, 15 July 1983.
150. *Washington Post*, 9 July 1983.
151. Interviews; see also *Middle East Policy Survey*, 15 July 1983, and *New York Times*, 6 July 1983.
152. *New York Times*, 14 July 1983.
153. *Middle East Policy Survey*, 15 July 1983.
154. For vivid descriptions of the growing anarchy in mid-July 1983, see *Jerusalem Post*, 17 July 1983, and *New York Times*, 23 July 1983.
155. See *New York Times*, 29 July 1983, 3 August 1983; *Jerusalem Post*, 3 and 5 August 1983.
156. *Jerusalem Post*, 1 August 1983; *The Economist*, 6 August 1983.
157. For details see *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 7 August 1983.
158. *New York Times*, 17 August 1983.
159. *New York Times*, 6 August 1983.
160. Interviews.
161. See *Jerusalem Post*, 12 August 1983, and *Los Angeles Times*, 17 October 1983.

Chapter 5

1. *Jerusalem Post*, 12 August 1983, and *Los Angeles Times*, 17 October 1983.
2. *Jerusalem Post*, 31 July 1983.
3. See *Middle East Policy Survey*, 15 July 1985.
4. *Jerusalem Post*, 12 August 1983.
5. *New York Times*, 3 October 1983.
6. *Daily Telegraph*, 12 September 1983; *Jerusalem Post*, 23 September 1983.
7. *Jerusalem Post*, 13 and 26 September 1983; *The Economist*, 8 October 1983.
8. "Stay Out of Shouf, Israel Tells Syria," *Los Angeles Times*, 5 September 1983; "Israel Determined to Stay Out of the Chouf," *The Times*, 12 September 1983; "Israel's 'Red Line' in the Chouf," *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 18 September 1983; "Red Lines," editorial in the *Jerusalem Post*, 20 September 1983.
9. See this author's article (with Moshe Maoz) "On a Short Leash: Syria and the PLO," in *Syria Under Assad*, ed. Maoz and Yaniv (London: Croom-Helm, 1985), pp. 191–208. Also Garfinkle, "Sources of the al-Fatah Mutiny," pp. 631–640.
10. *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 14 and 29 September, quoting verbatim threats by Arens and Chief of Israeli Military Intelligence, Major General Ehud Barak.

11. On 6 September 1983, two days after the IDF redeployment, David Kimche arrived in Beirut and assured Gemayel of Israel's continued interest in the spirit of the May 17 accord. See *The Economist*, 10 September 1983.
12. "Israeli Support for the Druze Angers America," *The Daily Telegraph*, 13 September 1983.
13. [IDF Chief of Staff General] "Levi: We'll Act to Stop Massacre of Christians," *Jerusalem Post*, 15 September 1983.
14. *New York Times*, 15 September 1983.
15. *Washington Post*, 15 September 1983, reports in detail IDF demonstrative excursions across the Awali with a view to signaling to the Druzes that they should not cross the Beirut-Sidon highway westward or even approach it too closely.
16. Abba Eban, "Bad Advice from Good Friends," *Jerusalem Post*, 4 November 1983. The same point was made by this author (with Robert J. Lieber) in "Reagan and the Middle East," *The Washington Quarterly* 6, no. 4 (Fall 1983).
17. *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 21 October 1983.
18. Interview with one of the main architects of this policy.
19. Interview.
20. *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 21 October 1983.
21. Interview with the NSC staff and a *New York Times Magazine* interview with MacFarlane published on 26 May 1985.
22. David Zucchini, "An Israeli Office Still Sits Above Beirut, Watching," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 1 December 1983.
23. *New York Times*, 6 November 1983.
24. *Jerusalem Post*, 31 October 1983; for warnings of "partition," see statement made by Chairman of the Knesset Foreign Relations and Security Committee Eliyahu Ben-Elissar on 31 October 1983 in *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 1 November 1983.
25. *Boston Globe*, 26 October 1983. From the U.S. point of view, Weinberger's aberration backfired. Faced with Israeli indignation and Jewish-American charges that the life of the injured Marines had been put in unnecessary risk, the State Department issued a warm expression of gratitude for Israel's offer of help. See *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 25 October 1983.
26. Dayan's article was published for the first time in 1955, then again in 1959, and then revised slightly and restated once again shortly before his death. It is definitely the most lucid explanation of Israeli thinking on this critical question. See, for the latest version, Moshe Dayan, "Peulot HaTagmul" ("The Reprisals"), in *Zahal BeKheilo*, ed. Ya'akov Erez and Ilan Kphir (Tel Aviv: Revivim, 1982), vol. 1, pp. 99-109. For a detailed analysis of the logic of this thesis and its historical genesis, see Yaniv, *Deterrence Without the Bomb*, esp. chap. 2, "Deterrence Comes of Age, 1949-1956."
27. See *New York Times*, 7 November 1983.
28. *Ibid.*, 9 November 1983.
29. See Michael Brecher, *Decisions in Crisis: Israel, 1967, 1973* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 1-15.
30. *New York Times*, 7, 8, and 9 November 1983.
31. *Jerusalem Post*, 20 November 1983.
32. See *Toronto Star*, 6 February 1983.
33. *New York Times*, 10 February 1983.
34. *Jerusalem Post*, 1 March 1984.
35. *New York Times*, 6 March 1984.
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Jerusalem Post*, 5 March 1984.
38. *Washington Post*, 26 May 1984.
39. *The Observer*, 8 July 1984.
40. *Washington Post*, 26 July 1984.

41. *Ibid.*, 19 August 1984.
42. *New York Times*, 23 August 1984.
43. *Los Angeles Times*, 27 August 1983.
44. *New York Times*, 23 September 1984.
45. *Washington Post*, 25 September 1984.
46. For an evaluation of the growth of Syrian power, see this author's volume (with Moshe Maoz), *Syria Under Assad*. In April–May 1949 Syrian ruler Hosni Za'im offered Israeli Prime Minister Ben Gurion a peace treaty and a military alliance. His main reason for doing so was apparently a fear that the Jordanian and Iraqi Hashemite rulers were seeking to incorporate Syria into their domain as part of a union of the Fertile Crescent. See Gershon Rivlin and Elhanan Orren, eds., *The War of Independence: Ben Gurion's Diary*, vol. 3 (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense, 1982), p. 993.
47. For details, see *Wall Street Journal*, 5 October 1984.
48. *Washington Post*, 11 October 1984.
49. See Claudia Wright, "The Donkey on the Minaret," *The New Statesman*, 5 October 1984.
50. *New York Times*, 20 October 1984.
51. See report on Abdul Khalim Khaddam's visit to Amin Gemayel in *New York Times*, 2 November 1984.
52. *New York Times*, 21 December 1984.
53. *New York Times*, 15 and 16 November 1984.
54. See A. E. Norden, "South Bank Tragedy," *Jerusalem Post*, 4 January 1985.
55. This brief discussion of the Shia is based primarily on four sources: Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), esp. chaps. 1 and 5; Ruhola Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Dissertations of Imam Khomeini*, trans. and annot. Hamid Algar (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981); Roger M. Savory, "The Problem of Sovereignty in an Ithna Ashari ('Twelver') Shi'i State," in *Religion and Politics in the Middle East*, ed. Michael Curtis (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 1981), esp. pp. 131–34, and Fouad Ajami, "Lebanon and its Inheritors," *Foreign Affairs*, 63, no. 4 (Spring, 1985), pp. 778–799.
56. The quotation is from *Washington Post*, 7 December 1982. The gathering of 100 Mukhtars was reported in *Ha'Aretz*, 18 June 1982.
57. *Washington Post*, 27 January 1983.
58. *Ibid.*
59. *Christian Science Monitor*, 8 February 1983.
60. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 25 February 1983; *The Guardian*, 18 February 1983; *Jerusalem Post*, 16 February 1983.
61. See Robert Fisk, "Smiling Colonel Pays a Call," *The Times*, 4 March 1983.
62. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 4 April 1983. This interpretation dates the Israeli confrontation with the Shi'ites seven months earlier than in Fouad Ajami's delightful analysis *The Vanished Imam: Musa al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 200–204.
63. *Ibid.*, as well as record of radio interview with Israeli Chief of Military Intelligence, General Barak in *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 1 June 1984.
64. For a somewhat sketchy and atmospheric description, see *The Times*, 12 April 1983.
65. *Jerusalem Post*, 29 August 1983.
66. *New York Times*, 7 December 1983.
67. See Clinton Baily, "Facing a Wounded Tiger," *Jerusalem Post*, 15 March 1985, and *Christian Science Monitor*, 3 September 1983.
68. See *New York Times*, 7 October 1983; *Jerusalem Post*, 6 October 1983; *The Times*, 13 October 1984.
69. *Jerusalem Post*, 18 October and 2 November 1983.
70. *Al Fajer*, 21 October 1983.
71. *Jerusalem Post*, 24 October 1983.
72. *Ibid.*, 1 December 1983.

73. On the SLA, see *Jerusalem Post*, 23 March 1984; *New York Times*, 5 April 1984.
74. See *New York Times*, 31 December 1984, and 2 September 1984.
75. *Washington Post*, 15 August 1985; *New York Times*, 2 September 1984.
76. *Jerusalem Post*, 19 February 1984; *The Times*, 23 February 1984; *Jerusalem Post*, 3 April 1984; and interviews.
77. *Jerusalem Post*, 28 February 1984.
78. *New York Times*, 21–23 September 1984.
79. *New York Times*, 12 November 1984.
80. Shlomo Avineri in *Los Angeles Times*, 20 January 1985.
81. According to Haim Barkai of the Hebrew University the direct cost of the “Lebanon Affair” was \$1.5 and the indirect cost was \$5 billion. See Haim Barkai, “Reflections on the Economic Cost of the Lebanon War,” *The Jerusalem Quarterly* 37 (1986), pp. 95–106. According to Gad Ya’akobi, one of Labor’s leading economists and a minister in various governments, the war cost \$4.5 billion in its first two-and-a-half years (*Jerusalem Post*, 1 April 1984). A Bank of Israel report quoted by *Ha’Aretz* on 1 June 1985 put the estimate at a lower cost. The war itself cost, according to BOI, \$900 million in direct outlays. According to other sources the war cost about \$1 billion in munitions, fuel, and equipment stocks, and about \$1 billion in lost earnings in industry as a result of reserve duty of employees. According to an Israeli Treasury leak to the press, the total direct cost of the war had by then risen to \$1.3 billion. See *Jerusalem Post*, 22 March 1985. Zvi Eshet, Financial Adviser to the IDF chief of staff, estimated the direct costs at \$700 million, the loss to GNP at \$800 million, and the costs of the three-year occupation at \$650 million. The total would therefore seem to have been \$2,150 million. See interview with Eshet in *Yediot Ahronot Magazine*, 31 May 1985. The same report also carries an interview with the Director of the Israeli Ministry of Defense Rehabilitation Division, who offers a summation of casualty and injury figures. See also *Washington Post*, 7 June 1985.
82. *Jerusalem Post* of 5 February 1984 estimated the number of demonstrations at around 50,000. On the Grunzweig murder see p. 159 above.
83. *Ibid.*, 27 September 1983, reports a meeting of a Peace Now delegation with Minister of Defense Arens.
84. *Ibid.*, 19 April 1984.
85. *Ibid.*, 16 and 23 January 1984.
86. *Ibid.*, 23 October 1984, 10 June 1984, and 17 February 1985. On the first anniversary of the invasion, in June 1983, Peace Now had succeeded in rallying an estimated 100,000 people. On the June 1984 anniversary, they drew only several hundred.
87. Quoted by *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 21 February 1984.
88. *Ibid.*, 1 November 1983.
89. *Jerusalem Post*, 10 January 1986.
90. This was disclosed before the elections, in a private meeting of Labor party supporters at which the author was present, by none other than Moshe Shahal, Labor’s campaign manager and later Minister of Energy.
91. *Jerusalem Post*, 14 February 1985.
92. *Ibid.*, 17 February 1985.
93. “Israeli Town Fears Pullout Will Bring Back Rockets,” *Los Angeles Times*, 5 February 1985.
94. *Los Angeles Times*, 20 January 1985. Avineri exaggerated somewhat. On 25 January 1984, there was a small demonstration of worried Galileans in Rosh HaNikra. See *Jerusalem Post*, 26 January 1984.
95. *Jerusalem Post*, 12 September 1983.
96. *Ibid.*, 3 October 1983.
97. *The Daily Telegraph*, 26 October 1983.
98. *Jerusalem Post*, 4 November 1983.
99. *Ibid.*, 13 January 1984.

100. *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 16 February 1984.
101. *Jerusalem Post*, 8 March 1984.
102. *Ibid.*, 9 March 1984.
103. *Ibid.*, 1 April 1984.
104. *Ibid.*
105. *Ibid.*, 16 May 1984.
106. *Ibid.*, 3 May 1984.
107. *Ibid.*, 13 June 1984.
108. *New York Times*, 20 February 1985.
109. *Jerusalem Post*, 9 January 1985.
110. *New York Times*, 9 November 1983.
111. See *Los Angeles Times*, 27 July 1984.
112. *Jerusalem Post*, 2 October 1983.
113. For a more detailed evaluation of the Arab-Israeli arms race, see Mark A. Heller et al., *The Middle East Military Balance* (Tel Aviv: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, 1984), esp. pp. 259–307. See also Yaniv, *Deterrence Without the Bomb*, chap. 5.
114. The grant for the Lavi project was offered by Secretary of State Shultz, with full presidential approval, as a means of clearing the atmosphere in U.S.-Israeli relations on the eve of the secretary's shuttle leading to the May 17 accord. Shultz was confronted by two policy options. One, supported by Philip Habib and the State Department bureaucracy, was to force Israel to acquiesce in U.S. demands. The other, which was stated in a detailed document, was authored at NSC and suggested that a Lavi gesture would work particularly well since Arens was eager to pursue it personally. Interview with NSC staff.
115. A glimpse of this is offered in *Jerusalem Post*, 2 April 1984.
116. On the deep-seated Israeli fear of a surprise attack, see Yigal Allon, *The Making of Israel's Army* (London: Valentine and Mitchell, 1970), pp. 50–51. See also Yoav Ben-Horin and Barry Posen, *Israel's Strategic Military Doctrine* (Santa Monica, Cal.: The Rand Corporation, 1981).
117. See Ezer Weizman, *The Battle for Peace* (Jerusalem: Ma'ariv, 1981), p. 154.
118. The author participated in some policy discussions on this in which such absurd views were expressed with complete earnestness.
119. See *The Times*, 5 January 1984, and *Jerusalem Post*, 5 January 1984.
120. See *Financial Times*, 9 December 1983.
121. See *New York Times*, 11 January 1984.
122. See profile and interview with General Levi in *HaOlam HaZeh*, 15 May 1985.
123. Hirsh Goodman, "Planning to Get Out," *Jerusalem Post*, 30 March 1984.
124. *New York Times*, 8 September 1984.
125. *Jerusalem Post*, 8 December 1984.
126. *New York Times*, 8 September 1984.
127. *Ibid.*
128. *Ibid.*
129. *Jerusalem Post*, 18 November 1983.
130. *Ibid.*
131. *Ibid.*, 3 December 1983.
132. See *New York Times*, 7 January 1984.
133. *Ibid.*, 9 January 1984.
134. *Jerusalem Post*, 5 and 11 January 1984; *The Guardian*, 11 January 1984.
135. *Ma'ariv*, 6 February 1984.
136. Arens's answer to members of the Knesset Foreign Relations and Security Committee on January 1984, quoted in *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 14 February 1984.
137. Asher Wallfish, "The Voice of the Revival," *Jerusalem Post*, 15 March 1985.
138. *Ibid.*
139. *Jerusalem Post*, 20 January 1984.

140. See *ibid.*, 6 March 1984, for a short interview with Deputy Prime Minister Levi, among the leading proponents of something like a Zaharani solution.

141. For some of the arguments against the Litanî-Nabatiyeh idea see A. E. Norden, "The Risks of Redeployment," *Jerusalem Post*, 24 December 1983.

142. This view of Shamir's became clear later on. See "Cabinet Seen Backing Rabin's Pull-Back Plan," *Jerusalem Post*, 14 January 1985.

143. See *New York Times*, 8 April 1984.

144. See *The Economist*, 14 January 1984.

145. *Jerusalem Post*, 17 February 1984; *New York Times*, 26 February 1984.

146. *Jerusalem Post*, 26 February 1984.

147. Cf. summaries of public presentations by Clinton (Itzhak) Baily, a Tel Aviv University expert on the Shia (who also served as adviser in south Lebanon) in *Jerusalem Post*, 23 December 1984.

148. See *Jerusalem Post*, 26 February 1984.

149. See pp. 228–229 above.

150. See Moshe Sharett, *Yoman Ishi* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1978), pp. 874, 931, 1117, 1189.

151. See Moshe Dayan, *Breakthrough* (Jerusalem: Idanim, 1981), p. 171.

152. See Itzhak Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut* vol. I (Tel Aviv: Ma'ariv, 1979), pp. 97–98, 101, 137.

For a systematic analysis of the attitudes of key Israeli policy makers toward the UN, see Michael Brecher, *The Foreign Policy Systems of Israel: Setting, Images, Processes* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 257–66, 332–43, 366–67.

153. *Jerusalem Post*, 28 October 1984.

154. See Henry A. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1982), chaps. 21, 23.

155. *New York Times*, 14 January 1985; *Jerusalem Post*, 20 March 1985.

156. *Jerusalem Post*, 28 February 1985.

157. See *Los Angeles Times*, 21 January 1985, quoting a *Ha'Aretz* poll. A resume of PORI polls over time, more or less confirms these trends:

Positions Concerning the Lebanon War (in %)

| | <i>Justify the War</i> | <i>Justify Driving the PLO 40 kms from Border</i> | <i>Do Not Justify</i> |
|----------------|------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| July 1982 | 66 | 24 | 5 |
| October 1982 | 45 | 37 | 9 |
| December 1982 | 34 | 49 | 10 |
| January 1984 | 31 | 38 | 27 |
| September 1984 | 20 | 50 | 24 |

Source: PORI poll as published by *HaAretz*, 7 June, 1985.

158. *Jerusalem Post*, 20 September 1983.

159. *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 25 October 1984.

160. *Jerusalem Post*, 31 October 1984.

161. *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 27 December 1984.

162. *Boston Globe*, 21 October 1984.

163. *Jerusalem Post*, 29 November 1984.

164. *Ibid.*, 21 December 1984.

165. Reported in *ibid.*, on 30 December 1984.

166. Ibid.
167. *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 31 December 1984.
168. Cf. *The Economist*, 5 January 1985.
169. *Jerusalem Post*, 30 December 1984.
170. Ibid., 14 January 1985, and *Koteret Rashit* ("Headline"), 30 January 1985, p. 8.
171. *New York Times*, 16 January 1985.
172. *Jerusalem Post*, 16 January 1985.
173. Ibid.
174. Ibid., 13 March 1985.
175. *Jerusalem Post*, 22 March 1985.
176. *New York Times*, 4 March 1985.
177. *Jerusalem Post*, 19 February 1985.
178. See pp. 244–245 above.
179. See p. 274 above.
180. *Jerusalem Post*, 28 February 1985.
181. Ibid., 21 February 1985, and *Los Angeles Times*, 16 February 1985.
182. For a glimpse into the predisposition of the south Lebanese in this regard, see John Kiffner, "Israeli Pullout: New Attacks Are Feared," *New York Times*, 31 January 1985.
183. *Jerusalem Post*, 3 February 1985.
184. Ibid., 19 February 1985.
185. *New York Times*, 2 February 1985; *Jerusalem Post*, 25 February 1985.
186. Ibid.
187. Ibid., 2 February 1985.
188. According to Peres the IDF was once again surprised by this since, owing to the tension with the Shi'ites, it became almost impossible to penetrate them for intelligence purposes. See *Jerusalem Post*, 14 March 1985.
189. *Jerusalem Post*, 21 February 1985.
190. *Jerusalem Post*, 12 March 1985.
191. Ibid., 5 March 1985.
192. *New York Times*, 23 March 1985.
193. *Jerusalem Post*, 15 March 1985.
194. Ibid., 25 February 1985.
195. See *New York Times*, 20 February–10 March 1985.
196. Ibid., 4 March 1985.
197. *Jerusalem Post*, 3 March 1985.
198. Ibid., 12 March 1985.
199. *New York Times*, 22 March 1985.
200. *Jerusalem Post*, 19 February 1985.
201. *New York Times*, 19 May 1985.
202. *Ha'Aretz*, 17 May 1985.
203. Zeev Schiff, "Gambles in the Security Belt," *Ha'Aretz*, 17 May 1985. *The Washington Post* of 7 June 1985 reported a threat by Nabih Berri that the Shi'ites would not allow Israel to retain the security belt and would carry the fight against the Israelis across the border into the Galilee.
204. *The Times*, 28 February 1985.

Chapter 6

1. See for example a detailed report in *Ha'Aretz* of 30 May 1985 about a press conference in Beirut in which prominent Shi'ite leaders vow never to allow the return of the PLO to the south of Lebanon.

2. Recorded in FBIS, vol. 5, Ib, 28 May 1985.

3. Ibid.

4. See pp. 7-13 above. A week before the completion of the withdrawal Rabin reiterated categorically his position that Israel would never accept a Palestinian state in the West Bank, not even if PLO recognizes the Jewish state and renounces terrorism. See *Ha'aretz*, 27 May 1985.

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Appendix

Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of Lebanon and the Government of the State of Israel

The Government of the Republic of Lebanon and the Government of the State of Israel:

Bearing in mind the importance of maintaining and strengthening international peace based on freedom, equality, justice, and respect for fundamental human rights;

Reaffirming their faith in the aims and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and recognizing their right and obligation to live in peace with each other as well as with all states, within secure and recognized boundaries;

Having agreed to declare the termination of the state of war between them;

Desiring to ensure lasting security for both their States and to avoid threats and the use of force between them;

Desiring to establish their mutual relations in the manner provided for in this Agreement;

Having delegated their undersigned representative plenipotentiaries, provided with full powers, in order to sign, in the presence of the representative of the United States of America, this Agreement;

Have agreed to the following provisions:

ARTICLE 1

1. The Parties agree and undertake to respect the sovereignty, political independence, and territorial integrity of each other. They consider the existing international boundary between Lebanon and Israel inviolable.
2. The Parties confirm that the state of war between Lebanon and Israel has been terminated and no longer exists.
3. Taking into account the provisions of paragraphs 1 and 2, Israel undertakes to withdraw all its armed forces from Lebanon in accordance with the Annex of the present Agreement.

ARTICLE 2

The Parties, being guided by the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of international law, undertake to settle their disputes by peaceful means in such a manner as to promote international peace and security, and justice.

ARTICLE 3

In order to provide maximum security for Lebanon and Israel, the Parties agree to establish and implement security arrangements, including the creation of a Security Region, as provided for in the Annex of the present Agreement.

ARTICLE 4

1. The territory of each Party will not be used as a base for hostile or terrorist activity against the other Party, its territory, or its people.
2. Each Party will prevent the existence or organization of irregular forces, armed bands, organizations, bases, offices, or infrastructure, the aims and purposes of which include incursions or any act of terrorism into the territory of the other Party, or any other activity aimed at threatening or endangering the security of the other Party and safety of its people. To this end all agreements and arrangements enabling the presence and functioning on the territory of either Party of elements hostile to the other Party are null and void.
3. Without prejudice to the inherent right of self-defense in accordance with international law, each Party will refrain:
 - a. from organizing, instigating, assisting, or participating in threats or acts of belligerency, subversion, or incitement, or any aggression directed against the other Party, its population, or property, both within its territory and originating therefrom, or in the territory of the other Party.
 - b. from using the territory of the other Party for conducting a military attack against the territory of a third state.
 - c. from intervening in the internal or external affairs of the other Party.
4. Each Party undertakes to ensure that preventive action and due proceedings will be taken against persons or organizations perpetrating acts in violation of this Article.

ARTICLE 5

Consistent with the termination of the state of war and within the framework of their constitutional provisions, the Parties will abstain from any form of hostile propaganda against each other.

ARTICLE 6

Each Party will prevent entry into, deployment in, or passage through its territory, its airspace and, subject to the right of innocent passage in accordance with international law, its territorial sea, by military forces, armament, or military equipment of any state hostile to the other Party.

ARTICLE 7

Except as provided in the present Agreement, nothing will preclude the deployment on Lebanese territory of international forces requested and accepted by the Government of Lebanon to assist in maintaining its authority. New contributors to such forces shall be selected from among states having diplomatic relations with both Parties to the present Agreement.

ARTICLE 8

1. a. Upon entry into force of the present Agreement, a Joint Liaison Committee will be established by the Parties, in which the United States of America will be a participant,

and will commence its functions. This Committee will be entrusted with the supervision of the implementation of all areas covered by the present Agreement. In matters involving security arrangements, it will deal with unresolved problems referred to it by the Security Arrangements Committee established in subparagraph c. below. Decisions of this Committee will be taken unanimously.

- b. The joint Liaison Committee will address itself on a continuing basis to the development of mutual relations between Lebanon and Israel, *inter alia* the regulation of the movement of goods, products and persons, communications, etc.
 - c. Within the framework of the Joint Liaison Committee, there will be a Security Arrangements Committee whose composition and functions are defined in the Annex of the present Agreement.
 - d. Subcommittees of the Joint Liaison Committee may be established as the need arises.
 - e. The Joint Liaison Committee will meet in Lebanon and Israel, alternately.
 - f. Each Party, if it so desires and unless there is an agreed change of status, may maintain a liaison office on the territory of the other Party in order to carry out the above-mentioned functions within the framework of the Joint Liaison Committee and to assist in the implementation of the present Agreement.
 - g. The members of the Joint Liaison Committee from each of the Parties will be headed by a senior government official.
 - h. All other matters relating to these liaison offices, their personnel, and the personnel of each Party present in the territory of the other Party in connection with the implementation of the present Agreement will be the subject of a protocol to be concluded between the Parties in the Joint Liaison Committee. Pending the conclusion of this protocol, the liaison offices and the above-mentioned personnel will be treated in accordance with the pertinent provisions of the Convention on Special Missions of December 8, 1969, including those provisions concerning privileges and immunities. The foregoing is without prejudice to the positions of the Parties concerning that Convention.
2. During the six-month period after the withdrawal of all Israeli armed forces from Lebanon in accordance with Article 1 of the present Agreement and the simultaneous restoration of Lebanese governmental authority along the international boundary between Lebanon and Israel, and in the light of the termination of the state of war, the Parties shall initiate, within the Joint Liaison Committee, *bona fide* negotiations in order to conclude agreements on the movements of goods, products and persons, and their implementation on a non-discriminatory basis.

ARTICLE 9

1. Each of the two Parties will take, within a time limit of one year as of entry into force of the present Agreement, all measures necessary for the abrogation of treaties, laws, and regulations deemed in conflict with the present Agreement, subject to and in conformity with its constitutional procedures.
2. The Parties undertake not to apply existing obligations, enter into any obligations, or adopt laws or regulations in conflict with the present Agreement.

ARTICLE 10

1. The present Agreement shall be ratified by both Parties in conformity with their respective constitutional procedures. It shall enter into force on the exchange of the instruments of ratification and shall supersede the previous agreements between Lebanon and Israel.

2. The Annex, the Appendix, and the Map attached thereto, and the Agreed Minutes to the present Agreement shall be considered integral parts thereof.
3. The present Agreement may be modified, amended, or superseded by mutual agreement of the Parties.

ARTICLE 11

1. Disputes between the Parties arising out of the interpretation or application of the present Agreement will be settled by negotiation in the Joint Liaison Committee. Any dispute of this character not so resolved shall be submitted to conciliation and, if unresolved, thereafter to an agreed procedure for a definitive resolution.
2. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 1, disputes arising out of the interpretation or application of the Annex shall be resolved in the framework of the Security Arrangements Committee and, if unresolved, shall thereafter, at the request of either Party, be referred to the Joint Liaison Committee for resolution through negotiation.

ARTICLE 12

The present Agreement shall be communicated to the Secretariat of the United Nations for registration in conformity with the provisions of Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Done at Khaldeh and Kiryat Shmona this seventeenth day of May, 1983, in triplicate in four authentic texts in the Arabic, Hebrew, English, and French languages. In case of any divergence of interpretation, the English and French texts will be equally authoritative.

For the Government of the
Republic of Lebanon

For the Government of the
State of Israel

Witnessed by:

For the Government of the
United States of America

ANNEX SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS

1. *Security Region*
 - a. A Security Region in which the Government of Lebanon undertakes to implement the security arrangements agreed upon in this Annex is hereby established.
 - b. The Security Region is bounded, as delineated on the Map attached to this Annex, in the north by a line constituting "Line A," and in the south and east by the Lebanese international boundary.
2. *Security Arrangements*

The Lebanese authorities will enforce special security measures aimed at detecting and preventing hostile activities as well as the introduction into or movement through the

Security Region of unauthorized armed men or military equipment. The following security arrangements will apply equally throughout the Security Region except as noted:

- a. The Lebanese Army, Lebanese Police, Lebanese Internal Security Forces, and the Lebanese auxiliary forces (ANSAR), organized under the full authority of the Government of Lebanon, are the only organized armed forces and elements permitted in the Security Region except as designated elsewhere in this Annex. The Security Arrangements Committee may approve the stationing in the Security Region of other official Lebanese armed elements similar to ANSAR.
- b. Lebanese Police, Lebanese Internal Security Forces, and ANSAR may be stationed in the Security Region without restrictions as to their numbers. These forces and elements will be equipped only with personal and light automatic weapons and, for the Internal Security Forces, armored scout or commando cars as listed in the Appendix.
- c. Two Lebanese Army brigades may be stationed in the Security Region. One will be the Lebanese Army Territorial Brigade stationed in the area extending from the Lebanese-Israeli boundary to "Line B" delineated on the attached Map. The other will be a regular Lebanese Army brigade stationed in the area extending from "Line B" to "Line A." These brigades may carry their organic weapons and equipment listed in the Appendix. Additional units equipped in accordance with the Appendix may be deployed in the Security Region for training purposes, including the training of conscripts, or, in the case of operational emergency situations, following coordination in accordance with procedures to be established by the Security Arrangements Committee.
- d. The existing local units will be integrated as such into the Lebanese Army, in conformity with Lebanese Army regulations. The existing local civil guard shall be integrated into ANSAR and accorded a proper status under Lebanese law to enable it to continue guarding the villages in the Security Region. The process of extending Lebanese authority over these units and civil guard, under the supervision of the Security Arrangements Committee, shall start immediately after the entry into force of the present Agreement and shall terminate prior to the completion of the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon.
- e. Within the Security Region, Lebanese Army units may maintain their organic anti-aircraft weapons as specified in the Appendix. Outside the Security Region, Lebanon may deploy personal, low- and medium-altitude air defense missiles. After a period of three years from the date of entry into force of the present Agreement, the provision concerning the area outside the Security Region may be reviewed by the Security Arrangements Committee at the request of either Party.
- f. Military electronic equipment in the Security Region will be as specified in the Appendix. Deployment of ground radars within ten kilometers of the Lebanese-Israeli boundary should be approved by the Security Arrangements Committee. Ground radars throughout the Security Region will be deployed so that their sector of search does not cross the Lebanese-Israeli boundary. This provision does not apply to civil aviation or air traffic control radars.
- g. The provision mentioned in paragraph e. applies also to anti-aircraft missiles on Lebanese Navy vessels. In the Security Region, Lebanon may deploy naval elements and establish and maintain naval bases or other shore installations required to accomplish the naval mission. The coastal installations in the Security Region will be as specified in the Appendix.
- h. In order to avoid accidents due to misidentification, the Lebanese military authorities will give advance notice of all flights of any kind over the Security Region according to procedures to be determined by the Security Arrangements Committee. Approval of these flights is not required.

- i. (1) The forces, weapons, and military equipment which may be stationed, stocked, introduced into, or transported through the Security Region are only those mentioned in this Annex and its Appendix.
- (2) No infrastructure, auxiliary installations, or equipment capable of assisting the activation of weapons that are not permitted by this Annex or its Appendix shall be maintained or established in the Security Region.
- (3) These provisions also apply whenever a clause of this Annex relates to areas outside the Security Region.

3. *Security Arrangements Committee*

- a. Within the framework of the Joint Liaison Committee, a Security Arrangements Committee will be established.
- b. The Security Arrangements Committee will be composed of an equal number of Lebanese and Israeli representatives, headed by senior officers. A representative of the United States of America will participate in meetings of the Committee at the request of either Party. Decisions of the Security Arrangements Committee will be reached by agreement of the Parties.
- c. The Security Arrangements Committee shall supervise the implementation of the security arrangements in the present Agreement and this Annex and the timetable and modalities, as well as all other aspects relating to withdrawals described in the present Agreement and this Annex. To this end, and by agreement of the Parties, it will:
 - (1) Supervise the implementation of the undertakings of the Parties under the present Agreement and this Annex.
 - (2) Establish and operate Joint Supervisory Teams as detailed below.
 - (3) Address and seek to resolve any problems arising out of the implementation of the security arrangements in the present Agreement and this Annex and discuss any violation reported by the Joint Supervisory Teams or any complaint concerning a violation submitted by one of the Parties.
- d. The Security Arrangements Committee shall deal with any complaint submitted to it not later than 24 hours after submission.
- e. Meetings of the Security Arrangements Committee shall be held at least once every two weeks in Lebanon and in Israel, alternately. In the event that either Party requests a special meeting, it will be convened within 24 hours. The first meeting will be held within 48 hours after the date of entry into force of the present Agreement.
- f. *Joint Supervisory Teams*
 - (1) The Security Arrangements Committee will establish Joint Supervisory Teams (Lebanon-Israel) subordinate to it and composed of an equal number of representatives from each Party.
 - (2) The teams will conduct regular verification of the implementation of the provisions of the security arrangements in the Agreement and this Annex. The teams shall report immediately any confirmed violations to the Security Arrangements Committee and ascertain that violations have been rectified.
 - (3) The Security Arrangements Committee shall assign a Joint Supervisory Team, when requested, to check border security arrangements on the Israeli side of the international boundary in accord with Article 4 of the present Agreement.
 - (4) The teams will enjoy freedom of movement in the air, sea, and land as necessary for the performance of their tasks within the Security Region.
 - (5) The Security Arrangements Committee will determine all administrative and technical arrangements concerning the functioning of the teams including their working procedures, their number, their manning, their armament, and their equipment.

- (6) Upon submission of a report to the Security Arrangements Committee or upon confirmation of a complaint of either Party by the teams, the respective Party shall immediately, and in any case not later than 24 hours from the report or the confirmation, rectify the violation. The Party shall immediately notify the Security Arrangements Committee of the rectification. Upon receiving the notification, the teams will ascertain that the violation has been rectified.
 - (7) The Joint Supervisory Teams shall be subject to termination upon 90 days notice by either Party given at any time after two years from the date of entry into force of the present Agreement. Alternative verification arrangements shall be established in advance of such termination through the Joint Liaison Committee. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Joint Liaison Committee may determine at any time that there is no further need for such arrangements.
- g. The Security Arrangements Committee will ensure that practical and rapid contacts between the two Parties are established along the boundary to prevent incidents and facilitate coordination between the forces on the terrain.
4. It is understood that the Government of Lebanon may request appropriate action in the United Nations Security Council for one unit of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to be stationed in the Sidon area. The presence of this unit will lend support to the Government of Lebanon and the Lebanese Armed Forces in asserting governmental authority and protection in the Palestinian refugee camp areas. For a period of 12 months, the unit in the Sidon area may send teams to the Palestinian refugee camp areas in the vicinity of Sidon and Tyre to surveil and observe, if requested by the Government of Lebanon, following notification to the Security Arrangements Committee. Police and security functions shall remain the sole responsibility of the Government of Lebanon, which shall ensure that the provisions of the present Agreement shall be fully implemented in these areas.
 5. Three months after completion of the withdrawal of all Israeli forces from Lebanon, the Security Arrangements Committee will conduct a full-scale review of the adequacy of the security arrangements delineated in this Annex in order to improve them.
 6. *Withdrawal of Israeli Forces*
 - a. Within 8 to 12 weeks of the entry into force of the present Agreement, all Israeli forces will have been withdrawn from Lebanon. This is consistent with the objective of Lebanon that all external forces withdraw from Lebanon.
 - b. The Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces will maintain continuous liaison during the withdrawal and will exchange all necessary information through the Security Arrangements Committee. The Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces will cooperate during the withdrawal in order to facilitate the reassertion of the authority of the Government of Lebanon as the Israeli armed forces withdraw.

APPENDIX

In accordance with the provisions of the Annex, the Lebanese Armed Forces may carry, introduce, station, stock, or transport through the Security Region all weapons and equipment organic to each standard Lebanese Armed Forces brigade. Individual and crew-served weapons, including light automatic weapons normally found in a mechanized infantry unit, are not prohibited by this Appendix.

1. Weapon systems listed below presently organic to each brigade in the Security Region are authorized in the numbers shown:

Tanks

- 40 tanks
- 4 medium-tracked recovery vehicles

Armored Cars

- 10 AML- 90/Saladin/etc.

Armored Personnel Carriers

- 127 M113A1/VCC-L, plus 44 M113 family vehicles

Artillery/Mortars

- 18 155MM towed howitzers (also 105MM/122MM)
- 12 120MM mortars
- 27 81MM mortars (mounted on M-125 tracked mortar carriers)

Anti-tank Weapons

- 112 RPG
- 30 anti-tank weapons (106MM recoilless rifle/TOW/MILAN)

Air Defense Weapons

- 12 40MM or less guns (not radar-guided)

2. Brigade Communications Equipment:

- 482 AN/GRC-160
- 74 AN/VRC-46
- 16 AN/VRC-47
- 9 AN/VRC-49
- 43 GRA-39
- 539 TA-312
- 27 SB-22
- 8 SB-993
- 4 AN/GRC-106

3. Brigade Surveillance Equipment:

- Mortar-locating radars
- Artillery-locating radars
- Ground-surveillance radars
- Night-observation devices
- Unattended ground sensors

4. In accordance with the provisions of the Annex, armored vehicles for the Internal Security Forces will be as follows:

- 24 armored wheeled vehicles with guns up to 40MM

5. In accordance with the provisions of the Annex, there will be no limitations on the coastal installations in the Security Region, except on the following four categories:

- Coastal sea surveillance radars: 5
- Coastal defense guns: 15 40 MM or less
- Coastal air defense guns: 15 40 MM or less (not radar-guided)
- Shore-to-sea missiles: None

6. The Lebanese Army Infantry Brigade and Territorial Brigade in the Security Region are each organized as follows:

| | | |
|---|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1 Brigade Headquarters and Headquarters Company | Off: 14 | Enl: 173 |
| 3 Infantry Battalions | Off: 31 ea | Enl: 654 ea |
| 1 Artillery Battalion | Off: 39 | Enl: 672 |
| 1 Tank Battalion | Off: 37 | Enl: 579 |
| 3 Tank Companies | | |
| 1 Reconnaissance Company | | |
| 1 Logistics Battalion | Off: 26 | Enl: 344 |
| 1 Engineer Company | Off: 6 | Enl: 125 |
| 1 Anti-Tank Company | Off: 4 | Enl: 117 |
| 1 Anti-Air Artillery Company | Off: 4 | Enl: 146 |
| TOTAL: 4,341 | Off: 223 | Enl: 4,118 |

AGREED MINUTES

- ART. 4.4 Lebanon affirms that Lebanese law includes all measures necessary to ensure implementation of this paragraph.
- ART. 6 Without prejudice to the provisions of the Annex regarding the Security Region, it is agreed that non-combat military aircraft of a foreign state on non-military missions shall not be considered military equipment.
- ART. 6 It is agreed that, in the event of disagreement as to whether a particular state is "hostile" for purposes of Article 6 of the Agreement, the prohibitions of Article 6 shall be applied to any state which does not maintain diplomatic relations with both Parties.
- ART. 8.1.b It is agreed that, at the request of either Party, the Joint Liaison Committee shall begin to examine the question of claims by citizens of either Party on properties in the territory of the other Party.
- ART. 8.1.h It is understood that each Party will certify to the other if one of its personnel was on official duty or performing official functions at any given time.
- ART. 8.2 It is agreed that the negotiations will be concluded as soon as possible.
- ART. 9 It is understood that this provision shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to agreements concluded by the Parties pursuant to Article 8, paragraph 2.
- ART. 11 It is agreed that both parties will request the United States of America to promote the expeditious resolution of disputes arising out of the interpretation or application of the present Agreement.
- ART. 11 It is agreed that the phrase "an agreed procedure for a definitive resolution" means an agreed third-party mechanism which will produce a resolution of the dispute which is binding on the Parties.

ANNEX

- PARA 1.b It is agreed that, in the portion of Jabal Baruk shown on the map attachment to the Annex, only civilian telecommunications installations, such as television facilities and radars for air traffic control purposes, may be emplaced. The restrictions on weapons and military equipment that are detailed in the Appendix to the Annex will also apply in that area.

ANNEX

- PARA 2.d The Government of Lebanon affirms its decision that the Territorial Brigade established on April 6, 1983, mentioned in subparagraph c., will encompass the existing local units which had been formed into a near brigade-sized unit, along

with Lebanese Army personnel from among the inhabitants of the Security Region, in conformity with Lebanese Army regulations. This brigade will be in charge of security in the area extending from the Lebanese-Israeli boundary to "Line B" delineated on the Map attachment to the Annex. All the Lebanese Armed Forces and elements in this area, including the Lebanese Police, Lebanese internal Security Forces, and ANSAR, will be subordinated to the brigade commander. The organization of the existing local units will be adapted, under the supervision of the Security Arrangements Committee, in conformity with the Table of Organization for the Territorial Brigade as shown in the Appendix.

ANNEX

PARA 2.g

1. An area extending from:
 - 33 degrees 15 minutes N
 - 35 degrees 12.6 minutes E; to
 - 33 degrees 05.5 minutes N
 - 35 degrees 06.1 minutes E; to
 - 33 degrees 15 minutes N
 - 35 degrees 08.2 minutes E; to
 - 33 degrees 05.5 minutes N
 - 35 degrees 01.4 minutes E;
 which is at present closed for civil navigation, will be maintained by Lebanon.
2. In order to prevent incidents, there will be continuous communications between the southern command of the Lebanese Navy and the Israeli Navy in order to exchange information concerning suspected vessels. The procedures for the above-mentioned exchange of information will be established by the Security Arrangements Committee.
3. The Lebanese Navy will act promptly in order to ascertain the identity of such suspected vessels. In emergency cases, there will be direct communications between vessels.

ANNEX

PARA 3.f

1. The Joint Supervisory Teams will carry out their functions in recognition of the fact that the responsibility for military, police, and other control operations rests with the Lebanese Armed Forces, police, and other authorized Lebanese organizations, and not with the teams.
2. If the Joint Supervisory Teams uncover evidence of a violation or a potential violation, they will contact the proper Lebanese authorities through the Security Arrangements Supervision Centers created pursuant to the Agreed Minute to paragraph 3.f.(5) of the Annex, in order to assure that Lebanese authorities take appropriate neutralizing and preventive action in a timely way. They will ascertain that the action taken rectified the violation and will report the results to the Security Arrangements Committee.
3. The Joint Supervisory Teams will commence limited activities as early as possible following the coming into force of the Agreement for the purpose of monitoring the implementation of the Israel Defense Forces withdrawal arrangements. Their other supervisory and verification activities authorized in the Annex will commence with the final withdrawal of the Israeli armed forces.
4. Joint Supervisory Teams will conduct daily verifications if necessary during day and night. Verifications will be carried out on the ground, at sea, and in the air.

5. Each Joint Supervisory Team will be commanded by a Lebanese officer, who will recognize the joint nature of the teams when making decisions in unforeseen situations, during the conduct of the verification mission.
6. While on a mission, the Joint Supervisory Team leader at his discretion could react to any unforeseen situation which could require immediate action. The team leader will report any such situation and the action taken to the Security Arrangements Supervision Center.
7. The Joint Supervisory Teams will not use force except in self-defense.
8. The Security Arrangements Committee will decide *inter alia* on the pattern of activity of the Joint Supervisory Teams, their weaponry and equipment, their mode of transport, and the areas in which the teams will operate on the basis of the rule of reason and pragmatic considerations. The Security Arrangements Committee will determine the overall pattern of activity with a view to avoiding undue disruption to normal civilian life as well as with a view to preventing the teams from becoming targets of attack.
9. Up to a maximum of eight Joint Supervisory Teams will function simultaneously.

ANNEX

PARA 3.f.5

1. Two Security Arrangements Supervision Centers will be set up by the Security Arrangements Committee in the Security Region. The exact locations of the Centers will be determined by the Security Arrangements Committee in accord with the principle that the Centers should be located in the vicinity of Hasbaya and Mayfadun and should not be situated in populated areas.
2. Under the overall direction of the Security Arrangements Committee, the purpose of each Center is to:
 - a) Control, supervise, and direct Joint Supervisory Teams functioning in the sector of the Security Region assigned to it.
 - b) Serve as a center of communications connected to the Joint Supervisory Teams and appropriate headquarters.
 - c) Serve as a meeting place in Lebanon for the Security Arrangements Committee.
 - d) Receive, analyze, and process all information necessary for the function of the Joint Supervisory Teams, on behalf of the Security Arrangements Committee.
3. Operational Arrangements:
 - a) The Centers will be commanded by Lebanese Army Officers.
 - b) The Centers will function 24 hours a day.
 - c) The exact number of personnel in each Center will be decided by the Security Arrangements Committee.
 - d) Israeli personnel will be stationed in Israel when not engaged in activities in the Centers.
 - e) The Government of Lebanon will be responsible for providing security and logistical support for the Centers.
 - f) The Joint Supervisory Teams will ordinarily commence their missions from the Centers after receiving proper briefing and will complete their missions at the Centers following debriefing.
 - g) Each Center will contain a situation room, communications equipment, facilities for Security Arrangements Committee meetings, and a briefing and debriefing room.

ANNEX

PARA 3.g

In order to prevent incidents and facilitate coordination between the forces on the terrain, "practical and rapid contacts" will include direct radio and telephone communications between the respective military commanders and their staffs in the immediate border region, as well as direct face-to-face consultations.

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POLITICS, STRATEGY, AND THE ISRAELI EXPERIENCE IN LEBANON

AVNER YANIV

“Indeed, beyond the specific problem in south Lebanon, beyond the Palestinian issue, beyond the larger issue of Arab-Israeli relations, the Israeli disposition to assume the worst and thus eschew more imaginative action is nurtured by the continuing state of anarchy not only in the Middle East but in most of the wide and complex world that lies beyond it. The Iran-Iraq war; the tensions in the Gulf area; the continuing struggle between Somalis and Ethiopians; the violent antics of Colonel Mu’ammar Qadhafi in North and Saharan Africa...and the increasingly menacing specter of a nuclear holocaust owing to the chronic East-West conflict—all these contemporary instances of violent struggle virtually make certain that the Israelis, like most of the human race, will continue to feel pervasively insecure and will respond to the security dilemma precipitately as they have done since the inception of the Jewish state and as the rest of the world has done since time immemorial.”

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