

DRIVERS OF ISRAELI SECURITY STRATEGY

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A thesis submitted to Johns Hopkins University in conformity with the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Global Security Studies

Baltimore, Maryland
May, 2015

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to identify the drivers of Israeli national security strategy and to identify whether or not Israel has a coherent, long-term security strategy. Understanding what drives Israeli strategy is vital for understanding how Israel will act in the future, and will help to predict potential causes of conflict in the Middle East and to shape US policy. Specifically, this thesis analyzes what factors influenced Israeli action in Egypt, Lebanon, and Gaza using an analysis of previous literature, and the writings, policies, and speeches of Israeli leaders. The conclusions drawn in this portfolio may help to predict future strategic Israeli action in the region.

The first chapter shows that the combination of three factors – the legacy of the Yom Kippur War, the balance of power, and US pressure and incentives – all heavily influenced Israel’s strategy to make peace with Egypt. Israel has enjoyed nearly 40 years of peace with Egypt, and despite the two political revolutions in Egypt, peace with Egypt has formed the foundation of Israeli security in the region. The second chapter analyzes Ariel Sharon’s decision to unilaterally withdraw from Gaza in 2005, concluding that a combination of internal and external factors influenced his decision, and that demographic pressures and a distrust of Palestinian leadership were the most influential factors. Israel’s unilateral action in Gaza set a precedent for how Israel chooses to approach problems it sees as unsolvable with a Palestinian partner, and it is likely that Israel will continue to act unilaterally in the future to protect its interests. The third chapter demonstrates how public opinion drives Israeli security strategy in Lebanon by examining the 1982 Israel-Lebanon war and the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war, concluding

that poor domestic opinion constrains leaders' actions and operational effectiveness, but does not stop the war from happening altogether.

This portfolio concludes that Israel is more sensitive to internal rather than to external pressures, and that Israel's desire to avoid Israeli casualties is a major driver of Israeli security strategy.

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Thesis Readers: Dr. Ariel Roth, Dr. Michael Vlahos

Preface

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank her Johns Hopkins professors and advisors for their useful critiques, especially her advisor Dr. Hill who challenged her to reach further and dig deeper. She is grateful for the support of her family, and for their encouragement and belief in her and her work. She is also thankful for her mother Regina Harrington, who set an example of the value of hard work and perseverance for her from a very young age. She is especially thankful for her husband Jonathan Satria for his unwavering support and encouragement.

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Introduction

The Middle East is a highly complex part of the world and Israel is at the center of it. Since its creation, Israel has fought wars of force and of ideology to justify and defend its very existence in the Middle East. Israel is one of the most complicated and dynamic countries in the world, facing severe and diverse threats to its national security on multiple fronts. To combat the numerous threats to its national security, Israel needs a robust security strategy to guide its military operations and political actions in order to ensure its continued survival. As a result, Israel has become the strongest and most technologically advanced military in the region and a key strategic ally of the United States. This thesis seeks to identify the drivers of Israeli national security strategy and to identify whether or not Israel has a coherent, long-term national security strategy. Understanding what drives Israeli national security strategy is vital for understanding how Israel will conduct itself in the future, which could help to predict potential causes of conflict in the region and help to shape US policy towards Israel and in the region in general. The cases explored in this thesis carry valuable lessons beyond the cases they describe by identifying what motivates and drives Israel to act in certain ways. Understanding Israel's historical security calculus in Egypt, Lebanon, and Gaza specifically will help to predict future strategic Israeli actions with those states and the non-state actors they host in the wake of change and political upheaval across the Middle East. Israel is a close ally of the US and any American policy in the Middle East will be influenced by our special relationship with Israel. Because of this special relationship, Israel's actions in the Middle East often have ramifications for how the US is perceived or held accountable by actors in the region -- this thesis will help US Policymakers to

better anticipate Israeli strategic actions. This thesis will examine three cases of strategic behavior on Israel's part, examine in detail what motivated those behaviors, and draw conclusions from those choices about what drives Israeli strategic behavior so that current policymakers can derive expectations from those drivers.

This thesis contains three chapters. The first two examine how various factors influenced Israel's decision to pursue bilateral negotiations with Egypt and unilateral action in Gaza, respectively. The third chapter examines how public opinion affects Israel's military strategy and operations in Lebanon once a war is already underway. The expected findings are the identification of specific drivers of strategy in Egypt, Gaza, and Lebanon.

The first chapter explores the driving factors behind Israel's decision to pursue the 1979 bilateral peace treaty with Egypt. This treaty was chosen because it represents an interesting example of Israeli bilateral negotiations that produced a successful and lasting outcome. The lessons derived from this chapter reveal why Israel decided to pursue a bilateral strategy and sign a peace treaty with Egypt – these lessons are valuable because they may predict when Israel will choose to pursue or forgo a strategy of bilateralism again in the future. This chapter argues that four specific factors including the legacy of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the issue of balance of power in the region, US influence and pressure, and economics, all had a significant impact on Begin's decision to sign a peace treaty with Egypt. First, existing scholarship on the Camp David Accords and the strategy behind the Peace treaty will be examined. Then, a number of factors will be analyzed in the context of various statements by then Israeli Prime Minister Menachim Begin as an indicator for how they may have influenced his strategy, with a special focus

on Begin's 20 March 1979 Statement to the Knesset on the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty¹ and the 22 March 1979 Summary of the Debate on the Treaty with Egypt, also addressed to the Knesset.² These specific primary documents were selected because they lay out Begin's reasons for pursuing a peace treaty with Egypt and feature some debate about the plan among the Knesset members.

Israel has enjoyed nearly 40 years of peace with Egypt, and despite the two political revolutions in Egypt, peace with Egypt has formed the foundation of Israeli security in the region. By signing a peace treaty with Egypt, Israel isolated Egypt from the rest of the Arab world and ensured that it would never need to fight a unified Arab front again, thereby securing its survival in the region for generations to come. This research could help to predict how and when Israel will choose to undergo bilateral negotiations again in the future. The lesson learned is that when Israel does not have the upper hand in the balance of power, it may make concessions in order to ensure its security and may pursue a bilateral route as a result.

The second chapter examines the unilateral Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in 2005 and the weight of various internal and external factors behind the decision including demographic pressures, public opinion, the cost of securing the settlements, the status of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process, pressure from the US, and Israel's distrust of Palestinian leadership. Israel had invested millions of dollars in settlements and received

¹ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Statement to the Knesset by Prime Minister Begin on the Israel Egypt Peace Treaty. 20 March 1979. Available from: <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/MFADocuments/Yearbook3/Pages/247%20Statement%20to%20the%20Knesset%20by%20Prime%20Minister%20Beg.aspx> (accessed February 1, 2015).

² Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Closing Statement to the Knesset by Prime Minister Begin. 22 March 1979. Available from: <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/MFADocuments/Yearbook3/Pages/248%20Closing%20statement%20to%20the%20Knesset%20by%20Prime%20Mini.aspx> (accessed February 1, 2015).

a significant amount of internal backlash for disengaging from Gaza, making the disengagement seem counterintuitive to Israeli interests. This chapter argues that a combination of the internal and external factors listed above lead to Sharon's decision to withdraw and will demonstrate why Israel chooses to take strategic unilateral action rather than bilateral action. This case was chosen due to the interesting nature of the contradictory "dovish" actions taken by Ariel Sharon, a "hawk" from the Israeli right. First, existing scholarship on unilateralism and why states choose to pursue it will be examined, and then Israeli unilateral action and Sharon's strategy more specifically will be explored. Then, both internal and external factors will be analyzed in the context of Sharon's various public statements and actions as indicators for how they may have influenced his strategy, with a specific focus on Sharon's 14 April 2005 letter to US President Bush³ and his 25 October 2004 address to the Knesset⁴. These primary documents were selected because they provide insight into Sharon's calculus for withdrawing from Gaza from Sharon himself.

Mere months after the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, HAMAS was democratically elected in Gaza's first elections. Ever since, the Gaza Strip has been used as a base for rocket strikes against Israel, and Israel has been involved in numerous counter-terrorism operations and campaigns against HAMAS, resulting in severe infrastructure damage and significant civilian casualties in Gaza. Militant and terrorist groups in the Gaza Strip

³Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Exchange of Letters between PM Sharon and President Bush. Available from: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/mfadocuments/pages/exchange%20of%20letters%20sharon-bush%2014-apr-2004.aspx> (accessed January 30, 2014).

⁴The Knesset. PM Ariel Sharon's Address to the Knesset Prior to the Vote on the Disengagement Plan, 25 October 2004. Available from: <http://www.knesset.gov.il/docs/eng/sharonspeech04.htm> (accessed January 30, 2014).

⁵Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Exchange of Letters between PM Sharon and President Bush.

remain a grave and perpetual security issue for Israel, and Israeli deterrence has not been effective in stopping the rocket attacks from happening all together. This research may help to predict future unilateral Israeli action vis-à-vis the Palestinians, which has important ramifications for the Mid-East Peace Process and for Israeli security in the Levant.

The final chapter of this thesis explores how public opinion affected military operations and strategy in Lebanon once the wars were already underway and will demonstrate how public opinion drives Israeli strategy. This chapter argues that poor domestic opinion constrains leaders' actions and operational effectiveness, but does not stop the war from happening all together. Three specific factors through which public opinion affects the conduct of war are examined including losses, elections, and leaders through two case studies, the 1982 and 2006 wars in Lebanon. Rather than studying how public opinion influences the initial onset of a war, or the leadership's decision to go to war, this chapter will instead focus on how public opinion affects war once the war has already begun. While the conditions that lead to the onset of war are important, there are too many other factors such as issues of regional balance, and other environmental, economic and military strategic issues to isolate public opinion's role. Rather, public opinion plays an important role in determining the course of the rest of the war once the war has already started. The sources examined for this research consist of secondary sources that describe historical accounts of these wars.

A ceasefire was established to end the 2006 war, but Israel and Hezbollah did not reach a peace settlement. Israel did not decisively win over Hezbollah in the 2006 war, and Hezbollah is arguably even stronger today in 2015 than it was before the 2006 war.

Another confrontation between Israel and Hezbollah is inevitable – it is only a matter of when. This research will help to predict how public opinion will affect Israel’s conduct in war with Lebanon in the future, which will ultimately have an affect on the outcome of the war and Hezbollah’s overall role in the region – a role that has expanded since the start of the Syrian conflict in 2011.

The analysis of the three cases studies explored in this thesis relies primarily on various public statements by Israeli leaders for insights into their strategy. What statesmen say in public may not always provide a complete picture of the reasons behind what they are doing, and it can be difficult to determine other personal motivations behind certain actions without first-hand access to the leaders or to other privileged information. Although public statements may not always provide a complete picture of a leader’s motivations, in the absence of other available archival sources and secondary analysis on these leaders’ strategies, their public statements provide the best possible insight into their motivation.

This thesis examines grand Israel strategy, encompassing both political and military strategy, which influence Israel’s overall national security strategy. Historically, three strategic pillars – early warning, deterrence, and decisive defeat – have formed the basis of Israeli national security strategy, which drive military and operational behavior.⁶ Since the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, countless wars between Israelis and Arabs have taken place and “the balance sheet, after more than 60 years of Israeli-Arab conflict, indicates that on the battlefield there has been no clear victor – neither Arab nor

⁶Freilich, Chuck. "From Decisive Defeat to Restraint." Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School, December 31, 2014. http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/24888/from_decisive_defeat_to_restraint.html (accessed February 22, 2015).

Israeli.”⁷ Israel has not achieved a decisive victory in any of its military operations since 1967, and early warning and deterrence have not effectively prevented wars with non-state actors from happening.

“Decisive defeat” as a strategy may actually have more to do with the idea of decisive defeat rather than the actual outcome of a war. Although the 1967 war was considered a decisive victory for Israel at the time, it created the conditions that lead to the next war in 1973 when Egypt reclaimed the Sinai. Even though the first war was “decisive”, it did not actually achieve a strategic, long-term goal of peace and stability in that it created a set of circumstances that lead to an additional war. The doctrinal insistence on “decisive defeat” has actually had a negative influence on Israeli strategic thinking in that it has lead to a series of counterproductive operations or other stop-gap measures. At this point, it is unclear what decisive victory for Israel would actually look like – when Israel appeared to achieve a decisive defeat of the Arab armies in 1967, both the short and long term consequences, were catastrophic to their long term strategy and ultimately set Israel on the course of continued war and conflict with other players in the Levant.

In the last decade, the very nature of warfare has changed and Israel has found itself engaged in smaller wars with asymmetric opponents such as Hezbollah and HAMAS. Some scholars argue that Israel’s strategy against hostile non-state groups “reflect the assumption that Israel finds itself in a protracted intractable conflict.”⁸ These scholars argue that the use of force in such a conflict is not intended to achieve any

⁷ Bregman, Ahron *Israel's Wars: A History Since 1947*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2002. 293.

⁸Inbar, Efraim and Shamir, Eitan. “‘Mowing the Grass’: Israel’s Strategy for Protracted Intractable Conflict”. *Journal of Strategic Studies*. Volume 37, Issue 1, 2014.

<http://www.tandfonline.com.proxy1.library.jhu.edu/doi/full/10.1080/01402390.2013.830972#abstract> (accessed February 22, 2015).

political goals, but rather that by “mowing the grass” with occasional large-scale operations, Israel will be able to deter those groups temporarily.⁹ To decisively defeat any of its asymmetric adversaries, Israel would most likely suffer and inflict significant casualties and economic losses, and would also undoubtedly lose a public opinion battle and risk losing international aid and political support. Furthermore, a decisive defeat of an adversary would not provide Israel with the end-all be-all solution it is seeking – it will only create more conflict. As a result of the costs associated with achieving a decisive victory, Israel has relied on deterrence and other stop-gap measures to further its goals – a strategy that works in the near term, but does not achieve lasting and permanent solutions to Israel’s numerous security dilemmas.

Some scholars, such as Yehezkel Dror, advocate for a new set of Israeli grand security strategy that incorporates a new set of security pillars:

Israel urgently needs a radically new political-security grand-strategy, much more innovative, comprehensive and long-term in nature than the important but still too limited steps that have been taken over the years to update and upgrade Israeli political-security doctrines...To assure its long-term existence and development, Israel must pioneer a largely novel grand-strategy anticipating and matching unprecedented threats and opportunities.”¹⁰

This thesis will examine Israel’s relentless drive for a strategic solution by beginning to address the bigger question of whether the three original military pillars of early warning, deterrence, and decisive defeat, are still valid, or whether Israel’s grand security strategy needs to be reassessed to better reflect the changing security environment.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Dror, Yehezkel. 2006. "A Breakout Political–Security Grand-Strategy for Israel." *Israel Affairs* 12, no. 4: 843-879. *International Security & Counter Terrorism Reference Center*, EBSCOhost (accessed March 2, 2015).

Egypt, Gaza, and Lebanon all represent complex security dilemmas for Israel and it is in Israel's national security interest to keep all of these fronts as stable as possible. In addition, Israeli actions in Egypt, Gaza, and Lebanon will have important implications for stability in the region as a whole. Although Israeli strategy will likely vary based on the unique circumstances of the situation, the factors that drive Israeli strategy identified in this study will help to predict how some of those situations play out in the future.

In post-revolutionary Egypt, the 1979 Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty has been upheld and Israel continues to cooperate with Egypt on a number of security and intelligence issues, especially regarding the rise of extremist influences in the Sinai. Egypt still remains one of the most powerful Arab countries in the Middle East from a military standpoint, and the US and Israel continue to view Egypt as a strategic partner in the region. In light of the insecurity and instability along Israel's northern border with Hezbollah in Lebanon and the various effects of the Syrian conflict, Israel will likely seek to keep its southern border with Egypt as stable and secure as possible. To ensure stability in the Sinai and along its southern border, Israel will need to do everything it can to maintain good relations with Egypt and uphold the integrity of the 1979 peace treaty.

Israel's future strategy in Gaza will have a significant impact on the well being of Palestinians living in Gaza as well as on the security of Israeli civilians and on the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process as a whole. As one of the most densely packed regions of the world with constant food and water scarcity issues, Gaza faces multiple severe humanitarian crises. Every time Israel stages a military operation in Gaza and causes collateral damage of civilian infrastructure, the humanitarian situation becomes more dire and the anti-Israel rhetoric employed by HAMAS and other extremists becomes more

influential and tempting to Gaza's general population. Too many Israeli missteps in Gaza will not only worsen the living conditions of the Palestinians and breed more extremism and violence towards Israel, it will also bring about condemnations from the international community which could have an effect on aid and support for Israel. Israel relies heavily on US financial and political support, and the US will not always be able to afford sacrificing its own public image to support a country that responds to the Gaza conflict disproportionately.

In Lebanon, Hezbollah continues to grow in size and political influence. As a proxy of Iran and Syria, Hezbollah continues to be heavily funded and armed by Israel's sworn enemies. During the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), the most powerful army in the Middle East, was not able to decisively defeat Hezbollah, ending the war with a ceasefire. Hezbollah capitalized on the fact that it was able to target Israel and cause mass hysteria and panic among the Israeli public. A war between Israel and Hezbollah is inevitable -- it is just a matter of which combination circumstances will be enough to spark the start of a new war. Once at war with Hezbollah, Israeli strategy will need to be carefully calculated to inflict crippling blows on key Hezbollah military infrastructure while concurrently avoiding making the situation any worse -- thousands of civilian Israeli and Lebanese lives are at stake.

With the collapse of authoritarian governments and the subsequent rise of instability and violent extremism, the Middle East is in a state of turmoil unlike any that has been experienced in recent history. Threats against Israel are evolving and expanding with the rise and influence of Islamism in the wake of ISIS' rapid rise to power in the Levant, the prospect of a Nuclear-armed Iran, Iran and Syria's continued use of proxies

like Hezbollah to fight the resistance against Israel, and spillover violence from southern Syria into northern Israel. It is more important now than ever to understand Israeli strategy in order to understand how Israel may cope with the rapidly changing dynamics and security environment of the Middle East. By understanding the strategy behind historical Israeli unilateral and bilateral action, this thesis will help to predict how Israel may act unilaterally and will help to identify opportunities for bilateral engagement in the future.

As the most powerful military in the Middle East, Israel is a crucial actor in determining stability in the Levant and is a key and strategic ally of the US. As an ally of the US, Israeli actions will have an affect on US goals and objectives in the region, whether or not the US endorses or approves Israeli action. Since the summer of 2014, the relationship between Israel and the US has become increasingly tense. As the US has progressed toward a Nuclear deal with Iran through the P5 + 1 talks, Israel has repeatedly expressed their condemnation of any plan that is “too soft” on Iran. In February 2015, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu staged a highly controversial visit to the US Congress to make a speech on Iran, undermining US diplomatic initiatives. Days ahead of the Israeli elections, in an effort to secure votes from the Israeli far-right, Netanyahu made a series of hardline comments about Israeli security, stating that as long as he serves as prime minister of Israel, there will not be an independent Palestinian nation. Netanyahu’s statements negated his earlier statements on the Peace Process and on his belief in a two-state solution, infuriating the Obama administration.¹¹ If the relationship between the US

¹¹ Booth, William. “Netanyahu says no Palestinian state if he wins”, *The Washington Post*, March 16, 2015,

and Israel continues to deteriorate, the likelihood of Israel taking unilateral action towards Iran without engaging the US will become a very real possibility. Israeli unilateral action towards Iran will not only undermine US diplomatic efforts and goals, it will jeopardize the image of US political power.

US policymakers need to be aware of what drives Israeli strategy and the ramifications Israeli strategy has on US policy in the region. Although the US may not be able to significantly influence Israeli strategy, whether it is through unilateral action or bilateral means, this thesis will help to anticipate and predict Israeli action by identifying historical drivers of Israeli strategy and the lessons learned from those cases.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/on-final-day-of-campaign-netanyahu-says-no-palestinian-state-if-he-wins/2015/03/16/4f4468e8-cbdc-11e4-8730-4f473416e759_story.html (accessed March 21, 2015).

Chapter One

A Lasting Peace: Drivers of Israeli Security Strategy in Pursuing the 1979 Peace Treaty with Egypt

In 1979, Israel signed a historic and unprecedented peace treaty with Egypt, the Arab world's most populous and powerful country, ceding its complete control of the strategically significant Sinai Peninsula and the vast oil and natural gas resources present there. Egypt's signing of the Peace treaty with Israel was seen as a betrayal of Arab solidarity and the Palestinian cause by the rest of the Arab world, Sadat was ultimately assassinated by Egyptian soldiers for his willingness to make peace with Israel. Nearly 40 years after the signing of the treaty, and despite two political revolutions in Egypt, Israel and Egypt both still adhere to the stipulations of the treaty and the main tenets of the treaty remain largely intact. Despite the changes brought about by the "Arab awakening" in 2011, Israel's peace treaty with Egypt remains one of the foundational pillars of Israel's national security strategy in the Middle East. Given Israel's win over Arab forces in the 1973 Yom Kippur War and the vast energy resources available to Israel in the Sinai, why did Israel find itself compelled to make peace with Egypt? What were the main drivers behind the strategy to pursue a bilateral peace deal with Egypt?

This paper examines the weight of different drivers of the Israeli strategy to sign a peace treaty with Egypt and argues that while there were many different factors involved, some were more influential than others. First, existing scholarship on the Camp David Accords and the strategy behind the Peace treaty will be examined. Then, a number of factors will be examined in the context of various statements by then Israeli Prime Minister Menachim Begin as an indicator for how they may have influenced his strategy,

with a special focus on Begin's 20 March 1979 Statement to the Knesset on the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty¹² and the 22 March 1979 Summary of the Debate on the Treaty with Egypt, also addressed to the Knesset.¹³

It is inevitable that Israel will need to make difficult decisions regarding its relationship with Egypt in the future, especially as the political and security situation in Egypt remains in flux. This research may help to predict what factors could influence Israeli strategy and actions vis-à-vis Egypt in the future, actions that could have a profound impact on the region during a time when peace and stability are already so tenuous. In addition, the lessons derived from this chapter will reveal why Israel decided to pursue a bilateral strategy and sign a peace treaty with Egypt and may predict when Israel will chose to pursue or forgo a strategy of bilateralism again in the future.

Background

In June 1967, following heightened tensions between Israel and its Arab neighbors since the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, Israel launched preemptive strikes and ground incursions into Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, vastly expanding its territory within only six days of war. Israel enjoyed a decisive military victory over its adversaries, and took over the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip.¹⁴

¹² Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Statement to the Knesset by Prime Minister Begin on the Israel Egypt Peace Treaty. 20 March 1979. Available from: <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/MFADocuments/Yearbook3/Pages/247%20Statement%20to%20the%20Knesset%20by%20Prime%20Minister%20Beg.aspx> (Accessed February 1, 2015).

¹³ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Closing Statement to the Knesset by Prime Minister Begin. 22 March 1979. Available from: <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/MFADocuments/Yearbook3/Pages/248%20Closing%20statement%20to%20the%20Knesset%20by%20Prime%20Mini.aspx> (Accessed February 1, 2015).

¹⁴ Oren, Michael B. 2002. *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

On October 6, 1973, Arab military forces launched a surprise attack when they stormed over the 1967 ceasefire lines with Israel -- Egyptian soldiers crossed the Suez Canal into the Sinai Peninsula, and hundreds of Syrian tanks simultaneously pushed through the Israeli-occupied Golan heights into northern Israel.¹⁵ The Egyptians and Syrians “dealt Jerusalem a major blow [and] it was the first time in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict that Arabs were not totally defeated on the battlefield.”¹⁶ Many scholars credit the surprise attack to an Israeli intelligence failure – Israeli intelligence viewed Sadat as “intellectually low-level, narrow-minded and lacking independent political thinking; a mediocre statesman” and many military leaders did not believe Egypt would “consider going to war until it could strike Israel’s interior.”¹⁷ Although Israel was eventually able to win the war, many Israelis considered the war a failure because of the significant number of casualties and the inability of the IDF to achieve a crushing military victory over the Arabs.¹⁸ The 1973 surprise attack on Israel “had wide-ranging military, economic and political effects at both regional and global levels.”¹⁹ The direct financial cost of the war was estimated to be \$8-10 billion, and the subsequent Arab decision to impose an oil embargo on the West²⁰ to protest American support to Israel caused widespread damage to the global economy.²¹

¹⁵ Israeli, Ofer. "The 1973 War: Link to Israeli-Egyptian Peace." *Middle East Policy* 20, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 88-98. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed January 15, 2015).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹⁸ “Remembering the war in October,” *Al Jazeera Online*, October 7, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/specialseries/2013/10/remembering-war-october-2013107122612930786.html> (accessed January 19, 2015).

Israeli, “Link to Peace,” 89.

¹⁹ Israeli, “Link to Peace,” 91.

²⁰ “The 1973 Arab Oil Embargo: The Old Rules No Longer Apply,” *NPR*, October 16, 2013, <http://www.npr.org/blogs/parallels/2013/10/15/234771573/the-1973-arab-oil-embargo-the-old-rules-no-longer-apply> (accessed January 19, 2015)

²¹ Israeli, “Link to Peace,” 91.

On November 9, 1977, President Sadat delivered a speech to the People's Assembly in Egypt and declared that he "was ready to go anywhere in the world, even to Jerusalem, to deliver a speech and address the Knesset if this would help save the blood of his sons".²² Shortly thereafter, Israeli Prime Minister Menachim Begin invited Sadat to Israel, and Sadat made a historic speech to the Israeli Parliament, the Knesset, telling them "we really and truly welcome you to live among us in peace and security."²³ As a result, peace talks started in Israel that November and eventually led to the negotiations at Camp David and the historic signing of the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty, negotiated by United States President Jimmy Carter, in March 1979. Egypt, the most populous and powerful Arab nation, was the first country to sign a formal peace treaty with Israel. In 1980, relations between Egypt and Israel were normalized and the countries exchanged ambassadors. Following the stipulations of the peace treaty, Israel returned the entire Sinai Peninsula, including the Alma oilfields, to Egypt and dismantled its civilian settlements and military bases.²⁴ Sadat and Begin were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their historic efforts to achieve peace in the region.²⁵

Literature Review

This literature review will examine the existing scholarship on the Camp David Accords and explore existing research on Israeli strategy behind the negotiations and subsequent peace treaty with Egypt. In this review it becomes apparent that while several scholars offer insight into the negotiations at Camp David that ultimately lead to the

²² Ibid., 93.

²³ "On this Day: 19 November," *BBC Online*, http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/november/19/newsid_2520000/2520467.stm (accessed January 19, 2015).

²⁴ Israeli, "Link to Peace," 94.

²⁵ The Nobel Peace Prize. "The Nobel Peace Prize 1978: Award Ceremony Speech." http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1978/press.html (accessed January 19, 2015).

signing of the Peace Treaty, with a special focus on personality-driven aspects of the negotiations, few offer a macro-strategic view on Israeli incentives to pursue peace with Egypt.

In *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics*, William Quandt, a member of President Jimmy Carter's National Security Council and a participant in the negotiations that led to the peace treaty, writes from the American perspective and focuses on the role of the Carter in the success of the negotiations, crediting Carter's personal politics and diplomatic skill for the outcome of the negotiations.²⁶ According to Quandt, Carter generally acted as a mediator who delivered, explained, and when necessary, rectified disagreements between Begin and Sadat, rather than proposing his own ideas. Carter was under immense domestic pressure to broker a peace agreement in the Middle East and determined that any peace was better than no peace at all – even if it did not adhere entirely to American terms and goals. Moshe Dayan, who was the Israeli Defense Minister at the time of the Yom Kippur War, also credits Carter's negotiating skill with the outcome of the treaty in *Breakthrough: A Personal Account of the Egypt-Israel Peace Negotiations* stating that “the first nudge that set the wheels of the Israel-Arab peace negotiations moving came from Jimmy Carter, President of the United States”.²⁷

Stein also focuses on the personalities of the principals involved in the negotiations in *Heroic Diplomacy: Sadat, Kissinger, Carter, Begin and the Quest for Arab-Israeli Peace*, and examines how the different personalities interact in diplomatic

²⁶ Quandt, William B. 1986. *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution.

²⁷ Dayan, Moshe. 1981. *Breakthrough: A Personal Account of the Egypt-Israel Peace Negotiations*. 1 American ed. New York: Knopf. 17.

exchanges.²⁸ Stein credits Kissinger and Carter's effective use of the "American political baton" in helping Egypt and Israel to reach both interim agreements and a final peace treaty.²⁹

Conversely, Weitz focuses on Begin's role in the treaty and credits him with the success in *From Peace in the South to War in the North: Menachem Begin as Prime Minister, 1977-1983*.³⁰ Weitz argues that Begin was able to achieve peace because he was a "hawk" from the right wing and was able to frame the peace treaty as being in Israel's best interest, implying that an Israeli leader from the left would not have been able to garner the political support needed to achieve the same ends.³¹

Tuttle, in *Egypt's War for Peace* argues that Sadat was the main driver of the peace treaty and that he had a coherent strategy in pursuing peace with Israel. The 1973 Yom Kippur War, according to Tuttle, was actually meant as a stepping-stone to achieve peace with Israel through force because all other diplomatic measures had failed by forcing Israel to confront the conflict. Tuttle argues that "Sadat, realizing that peace was unattainable without foreign – particularly American – intervention, saw no option but to display military competence and regain Egyptian honor by force."³² However, "he sought recovery of lost territory and pride rather than Israel's destruction" and "Sadat was determined to see Egypt and Israel meet 'as equals, not as victor and defeated'".³³

²⁸ Stein, Kenneth W. 1999. *Heroic Diplomacy: Sadat, Kissinger, Carter, Begin, and the Quest for Arab-Israeli Peace*. New York: Routledge.

²⁹ Ibid., x.

³⁰ Weitz, Yechiam. 2014. "From Peace in the South to War in the North: Menachem Begin as Prime Minister, 1977-1983." *Israel Studies* 19, no. 1: 145-165. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed January 24, 2015).

³¹ Ibid.

³² Tuttle, Ian. "Egypt's War for Peace". 2008. *The History Teacher*. Vol. 42, No. 1 (Nov., 2008), pp. 57-94. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40543775> (accessed January 15, 2015).

³³ Ibid.

Telhami in *Israeli Foreign Policy: A Static Strategy in a Changing World* offers perhaps the most comprehensive insights into Israeli strategy behind the peace treaty with Egypt by discussing Israeli strategy on a macro scale. Telhami argues that the balance of power and the need for support from a superpower (i.e. the United States) were the major drivers of strategy in Israeli peacemaking with Egypt. According to Telhami, on the regional level Israel had sought to prevent collective Arab action, “the primary goal being the decoupling of Egypt, the most powerful Arab state, from the rest of the Arab world.”³⁴ In addition, because of “its size, its limited economic resources, and the antagonisms caused by the consequences of its founding, Israel could not be expected to survive long without continued, massive support from a major power.”³⁵

Contributions

These scholars discuss the intricacies of negotiations with insights into the personal politics between the three players. Sadat’s strategy is discussed in detail, but other than Telhami’s work, these scholars do not fully address Israel’s strategy in pursuing a bilateral peace treaty with Egypt. By exploring the strategy behind Israel’s pursuit of peace with Egypt, this research seeks to identify specific drivers that had the greatest effect on Israeli security strategy. Identification of these specific drivers can help to predict how Israel will adjust its strategy and posture itself in the dynamic, challenging, and unstable Levant environment. Based on the above literature review, this chapter will examine how Israeli strategy was driven by a number of factors: the legacy of the Yom

³⁴ Telhami, Shibley. “Israeli Foreign Policy: A Static Strategy in a Changing World.” *Middle East Journal*. Vol. 44, No. 3 (Summer, 1990), pp. 399-416. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4328140>. (accessed January 24, 2015). 400.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 403.

Kippur War, the desire to balance power in the region, US pressure and incentives, and economic factors.

Methodology

Now that knowledge on the existing literature on the negotiations and Israeli strategy have been established, this chapter attempts to determine which factors were most influential in Begin's strategy to pursue a peace treaty with Egypt. The desire to balance power in the region, the legacy of the Yom Kippur war, economic factors, and how pressure from the US informed Israel's strategy will be explored. The approach will be principally qualitative -- various public statements and actions by Begin will be examined as indicators for how they may have influenced his strategy, with a specific focus on Begin's 20 March 1979 Statement to the Knesset on the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty³⁶ and the 22 March 1979 Summary of the Debate on the Treaty with Egypt, also addressed to the Knesset.³⁷

The Legacy of the Yom Kippur War

Although Israel ultimately overcame the shock of the Arab surprise attack and won the Yom Kippur War, the war had a profound and pervasive psychological impact on Israel's sense of security and contributed to the existential threat that Israel could cease to exist in the Middle East. Leaders were attuned to the profound existential crisis felt by the Israeli public and this affect on the national psyche likely was a driver of Begin's strategy to make peace with Egypt.

The war was largely considered a failure in Israel due to the loss of life, the nature of the surprise attack, the inability of the IDF to achieve a crushing military victory over the

³⁶ Begin, 20 March 1979 Statement to Knesset.

³⁷ Begin, 22 March 1979 Statement to Knesset.

Arabs, and the swift loss of territory.³⁸ Despite overcoming the initial losses to win the war, “the Israeli public never really overcame the initial shock of the first few days and the heavy cost of the war” so much so that “the war left people dispirited and not fully conscious of the final victory on the battlefield”.³⁹ Israel lost around 2600 casualties within a span of three weeks – per capita, that number equals three times the death rate of American soldiers in Vietnam in 10 years.⁴⁰ Due to Israel’s mandatory conscription, the Israeli public and Israeli policymakers tend to be extremely casualty adverse. Leaders are under enormous pressure, especially in Israel—that pressure will be compounded by negative public opinion towards Israeli losses of any kind. Israel is known to have an exceptionally high sensitivity towards casualties, which is “due in part to Israeli society’s well-known tendency toward mass hysteria” and Israel’s mandatory military conscription.⁴¹

Due to pressure from the Israeli public in the weeks following the war, an investigatory Commission headed by the president of the Israeli Supreme Court was launched and “placed the blame firmly on Israel’s military.”⁴² The Commission cleared the country’s defense minister, Moshe Dayan, and the Prime Minister, Golda Meir, but the Israeli public was “not appeased”.⁴³ Demonstrations broke out and, due to public pressure, Prime Minister Meir resigned only nine days after the commission published its

³⁸ Israeli, “Link to Peace,” 89.

³⁹ Susser, Asher. 2014. "Israel's Place in a Changing Regional Order (1948-2013)." *Israel Studies* 19, no. 2: 218-238. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed January 24, 2015). 227.

⁴⁰ “Remembering the war in October,” *Al Jazeera Online*, October 7, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/specialseries/2013/10/remembering-war-october-2013107122612930786.html> (accessed January 19, 2015).

⁴¹ Harel, Amos and Issacharoff, Avi. 2008. *34 days: Israel, Hezbollah, and the War in Lebanon* Palgrave Macmillan.

⁴² “Remembering the war in October,” *Al Jazeera Online*.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

report.⁴⁴ As a result of the war, the public started to experience a “greater healthy skepticism toward state institutions and the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF).”⁴⁵ Israel began to restructure and diversify its intelligence community due to the massive intelligence failure of the surprise Arab attack and “began a process of political maturation”.⁴⁶ The intelligence failures of the Yom Kippur war drove Israel to reflect on what went wrong and to adopt better intelligence practices.

The Yom Kippur War also brought on an existential crisis among the Israeli public and Israeli leaders. In the first few days of the war when Israel experienced massive territory and casualty losses at the hands of the Syrians and Egyptians, Israeli leaders realized that Israel could actually be wiped off the map and that the destruction of the Jewish state of Israel was a real possibility. Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan “believed that the destruction of the Jewish state of Israel was a real possibility” and he told the Prime Minister Golda Meir “this is the end of the Third Temple”⁴⁷, a symbolic reference to the modern state of Israel.⁴⁸ Following the swift victory of the 1967 war, the Yom Kippur War marked the first time when Israel actually came to terms with its own vulnerabilities and the possibility of its own destruction.

Statements made by Begin in his 20 March 1979 Statement to the Knesset on the Peace Treaty with Egypt, although not explicit, articulate the legacy of the Yom Kippur war on his decision making to make peace with Egypt and prevent another war.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Efraim Inbar, “Remembering the 1973 War,” *Jerusalem Post*, October 1, 2013, <http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Op-Ed-Contributors/Remembering-the-1973-war-327600> (accessed January 19, 2015).

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Israeli, “The Link to Peace,” 89.

⁴⁸ Avner Cohen, “When Israel Stepped Back From the Brink,” *The New York Times*, October 3, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/04/opinion/when-israel-stepped-back-from-the-brink.html?_r=0 (accessed January 24, 2015).

The first and second temple were destroyed by the Babylonians around 586 BC and the Romans in 70 AD.

In presenting his case for a peace treaty with Egypt, Begin states:

It is a humane act of the first order. It is a paramount Jewish act. It is an immensely valuable Zionist deed. A peace treaty for the first time in the history of this country, for whose establishment in fact six million Jews gave their lives, all of whom could have been its citizens and residents - if. For which our sanctified heroes gave their lives. Without complaint. For which we have the mothers of our sons: and they do not utter complaint. Which was under danger in every war, for its survival, and the whole population was in danger of its life. We overcame in the past; in the future, too, we shall stand firm. But we do not want to arrive at that situation, so that we will be able to say to the whole house of Israel: Yes, there is a good hope in the heart that there will be peace.⁴⁹

In this statement, Begin acknowledges that the very survival of Israel “and the whole population was in danger of its life.” By making peace with Egypt, Israel would be able to avoid war and the subsequent grave risk to its very existence in the Middle East.

The Legacy of the Yom Kippur War undoubtedly had a significant impact on Begin’s desire and strategy to make peace with Egypt. The combination of territorial losses and casualties, intense political pressure exhibited by Meir’s resignation, the existential crisis created by the war, and Begin’s own war-weary statements to the Knesset to justify a peace treaty with Egypt, all demonstrate that the legacy of the Yom Kippur War was a major driving factor in Begin’s strategy to pursue a peace treaty with Egypt.

Balance of Power in the Middle East

The issue of balance of power in the Middle East was a crucial component of Begin’s strategy in pursuing peace with Egypt. The combined military power of the Arab countries, as shown by the 1973 war, represented a dire threat to Israel’s national security. According to Telhami, “Israel has tended to pursue a dual strategy” and “on the regional level, Israel has sought to prevent collective Arab action.”⁵⁰ By signing a peace treaty with Egypt, Israel was able to neutralize the most powerful and populous Arab country in

⁴⁹ Begin, 20 March 1979 Statement to Knesset.

⁵⁰ Telhami, “Israeli Foreign Policy,” 400.

the region and consequently breakup the Arab block of alliances, greatly enhancing Israel's security outlook.

Begin referred to the power imbalance among Israel and the Arab block in the Middle East multiple times in his speeches to the Knesset, demonstrating that it had a profound impact on his willingness to sign a peace treaty with Egypt and was a key driver in his overall strategy. A selection of his statements will be examined below.

First, Begin lays out some facts about Arab military power to argue that Israel will continue to face military threats from the Arabs in the future:

Such a situation did not exist heretofore. Within a few years, Saudi Arabia will have the F-16. Jordan has a good army: let us admit the truth. Syria has more tanks than Egypt. Syria has 2,800 tanks; the Egyptians have between 2,200 and 2,400. That is the kind of northeastern front we will have. We will not be frightened. If attacked, we shall launch a counterattack, and the God of Israel will be our help, and we will crush our enemies and maintain our liberty and our independence. But the danger is serious.⁵¹

Not only will Israel be outnumbered in terms of military armaments on all of its borders, but it will also be threatened by the alliances, pacts, and treaties shared among Arab countries that will spur Arab nations to assist each other in any aggression towards or defense from Israel:

Throughout the years we have had no defence pact or security pact with any country whatsoever. On the other hand, Egypt has signed dozens of such agreements with Israel's most brutal enemies, including Libya, including Iraq.

In addition, Begin speculates that without a treaty in place, another dual-front attack from Arab nations, such as the surprise attack from the northern and southern fronts by Syria and Egypt respectively in the Yom Kippur War, is likely to occur again:

And then what would Damascus do? It would call Cairo, and say: 'You have signed a mutual defence pact with us. Come and save us. How can you help us? Attack Israel, and so divert the Israeli troops from the northern front to the southern front.

⁵¹ Begin, 20 March 1979 Statement to Knesset.

Begin's desire to break up the Arab block is also clearly demonstrated by his lengthy discussion of the particulars related to the exchange of ambassadors with Egypt in an effort to normalize diplomatic relations between the two countries.⁵² According to Begin's statement, Egypt proposed having their ambassador in Cyprus to also serve as an ambassador to Israel – an offer swiftly rejected by Begin. Begin's insistence on exchanging ambassadors reveals his desire to break up the Arab block in that by normalizing diplomatic relations with Israel and publicly exchanging ambassadors, Egypt will further isolate itself from other Arab powers.

In his statements to the Knesset, Begin emphasizes the importance of taking advantage of Sadat's willingness to make peace with Israel before the circumstances or players change and peace is no longer possible:

I ask your leave, Mr. Speaker, to send from here, with the occurrence of all the Members of the House, greetings to the President of Egypt. Because with his courage - and courage was needed in the face of the pack of wolves all around, from Damascus to Baghdad! - he decided to come and talk peace with Israel.

The importance of Sadat's willingness to make peace, according to Begin's speech, is made even more important in the context of other Arab leaders in the region who seek Israel's destruction:

But I know that this call, too, for the time being will be as the voice of one calling to the wilderness. They will not come. The hour will come, it will arrive, when with them, too, we will conduct negotiations and sign peace. But in the foreseeable future I cannot say this is how things will transpire. This is a Baghdad front. This front convened in the capital of Aram-Naharayim and there was a decision which stated explicitly: that Israel must disappear from the map. This is a front of enmity.⁵³

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

In addition to balancing out power dynamics in the region, Begin also argued that Peace with Egypt will bring greater security to Israel by providing a framework for peace and pushing other countries to make peace with Israel once they are ready to negotiate:

So we want to give peace a chance - as the sabras say - with the largest and strongest of the Arab States. And if it succeeds - and with God's help it can succeed - then perhaps, perhaps this model will attract other neighbours as well.⁵⁴

All of the above statements demonstrate that the issue of balance of power in the region was a significant motivating factor in Begin's strategy to make peace with Egypt. In his statements to the Knesset, Begin's argues that if Israel does not sign a peace treaty with Egypt, a war of allied Arab partners, like the Yom Kippur War, is likely to happen again. In addition, Begin's statement argues that making peace with Egypt will serve two purposes – it will isolate Egypt from other Arab countries and break up the Arab alliance, and peace with Egypt could serve as a framework for peace with other countries.

Israel's desire to rectify the imbalance of power in the region was a major driver of Begin's overall strategy to pursue peace with Egypt, as exhibited by his lengthy discussion of the balance of power in his speeches to the Knesset. With the advantage of hindsight, history clearly reveals that Begin's strategy of rectifying the power imbalance between Israel and Arab countries did work in Israel's favor and significantly altered the power dynamics of the region. After the peace treaty with Egypt, "Israel has enjoyed the relative luxury of not having to fear a coordinate Arab military assault, which had obsessively preoccupied the leadership in the first 25 years of independence."⁵⁵ By isolating Egypt from the Arab block, "the remaining Arab confrontation states had no

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵ Susser, "Changing Regional Order," 228.

realistic military option...inter-state conventional war between Israel and the Arabs had become a thing of the past.”⁵⁶

US Influence, Pressure, and Incentives

The US played a pivotal role as negotiator in the Camp David accords and ultimately assisted in brokering peace between Israel and Egypt. This section will explore how US influence, pressure, and incentives were likely driving factors behind Begin’s willingness to sign a peace treaty with Egypt. In the absence of US influence, pressure, and incentives, Israel would likely not have sought a bilateral peace deal with Egypt on its own. In this section, US influence, pressure, and incentives will be analyzed for how they affected Begin’s willingness to sign a peace deal with Egypt with a focus on Israeli dependence on the US after the Yom Kippur War, pressure from the US, competition with Egypt over US support, and US incentives offered to Israel.

The outcome of the 1973 Yom Kippur War revealed a new Israeli dependence on US military assistance to counteract Soviet intervention in the region, which likely contributed to Israel’s willingness to make peace with Egypt under US pressure. During the Yom Kippur War, US president Nixon authorized Operation NICKEL GRASS⁵⁷, an aerial resupply operation to deliver weapons and supplies to Israel at the request of Prime Minister Golda Meir, after the Soviet Union began sending support to Syria and Egypt. With US military assistance, Israel was eventually able to respond and retaliate against the coordinated Egyptian-Syrian attack and was ultimately able to win the war. US aid during the final days of the war made it clear that “American financial assistance and

⁵⁶Ibid., 228.

⁵⁷ Air Mobility Command Museum. “Operation Nickel Grass.” http://amcmuseum.org/history/airlifts/operation_nickel_grass.php (accessed January 27, 2015).

weapons, and Washington's deterrence of Soviet interference, were now essential to Israel's security."⁵⁸ Because of the influence of the USSR in arming Arab nations, Israel relied on US support to counteract Soviet intervention and aid in the region, which in turn made Israel more likely to acquiesce to US pressure.

Israel was under a significant amount of pressure from the US to make peace in the years following the 1973 Yom Kippur War due to the crippling effects of the 1973 oil embargo imposed by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) as a result of US assistance to Israel during the war. The oil embargo caused chaos and price shocks throughout the global economy, and Washington in particular "was subject to damaging economic warfare"⁵⁹. The White House accurately concluded that "the status quo [in the Middle East] would be dangerous" and started to pressure Israel into negotiations with the Arabs to return lands seized in the 1967 war.⁶⁰ Washington's economic and security interests "now appeared to be best served by an active effort to promote some progress in negotiations toward a peace deal between Israel and the Arabs, even at the risk of conflict with its closest ally in the region."⁶¹ Due to the damaging economic affects of US assistance to Israel during the war and the subsequent oil embargo, as well as Israel's new dependency on the US to counteract USSR intervention and influence in the region, Israel was under a considerable amount of pressure to appease the US by agreeing to negotiations with Egypt.

Israel was also threatened by Egypt's increasingly close relationship with Washington and sought to appease the US accordingly. Although Sadat's peace

⁵⁸ Israeli, "Link to Peace," 91.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 90.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

initiatives were welcome to the Israelis, they “posed a real dilemma for Israel’s relations to the United States.”⁶² A bilateral agreement between Egypt and Israel would “simultaneously neutralize Egypt as a military threat and cause division in the Arab world” but “on the other hand, the agreement would result in closer US-Egyptian ties that could lead to a weakening of the US commitment to Israel.”⁶³ Israel feared that Egypt would be regarded as more cooperative and useful to US interests than Israel, and that Israel would be viewed as a liability. In fact, when President Carter first took office, many US policymakers did view Israel as a strategic liability in the region rather than as a strategic asset.⁶⁴ The Israeli Defense Minister at the time, Weizman, noted that “US interests lay closer to Egypt’s than to [Israel’s] so that it would not be long before Israeli negotiators would have to cope with the dual confrontation as they faced a Washington/Cairo axis.”⁶⁵ In other words, Israel needed to find a way to appease the US by making peace with Egypt on its own terms, rather than wait and risk Egypt becoming a closer ally to the US, which would cause Israel to have less leverage in the outcome of the negotiations. The Egyptians were “clearly aware of this strategic tension” and saw Egyptian competition with Israeli for alliance with the US as ‘the most important leverage’ that Egypt held in the negotiations that the ‘secret weapon that Israel feared most.’⁶⁶ In addition, a “failure in negotiations would likely lead to strained US-Israeli relations and, given Sadat’s objectives and determination, to closer US-Egyptian ties.”⁶⁷ During the Camp David Accords, Begin reportedly told Carter that there had to be two

⁶² Telhami, “Israeli Foreign Policy,” 411.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 410.

⁶⁵ Weizman, Ezer. 1981. *The Battle for Peace*. Toronto; New York: Bantam Books.

⁶⁶ Telhami, “Israeli Foreign Policy,” 412.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

agreements – one between Israel and the US and one between Egypt and Israel – and that the one between the US and Israel had to take precedence,⁶⁸ underscoring the strategic value and importance Israel placed on its relationship with the US. Egypt's close relationship with the US was a strategic threat to Israel, and Israel sought to mediate that threat by seeking closer ties with Washington and acquiescing to US pressure to start negotiations.

In exchange for making peace with Egypt, the US offered a number of military and financial incentives to Israel, which probably bolstered Begin's willingness to make peace with Egypt. At the time of the signing of the Israel-Egypt peace treaty, Israel had the greatest military burden per capita of any country in the world, with military spending comprising around one-third of its overall budget.⁶⁹ The US promised Israel \$2-3 billion annually in economic aid as Israel continued to progress towards a peace deal with Egypt, which helped to alleviate some of Israel's budget woes.⁷⁰ In addition, the US offered Israel continuous arms benefits including the "state of the art F-15 fighter jet".⁷¹ Washington also "promised Israel access to oil in the event of another war" and even guaranteed Israel "US protection in any incident involving Soviet intervention."⁷² Without US aid and promises of US protection, Israel's rate of military spending would likely have had a crippling effect on its economy and its overall security posturing. Israel had become dependent on US aid and assistance during the Yom Kippur war, and would

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Crittenden, Ann. "Israel's Economic Plight." *Foreign Affairs*. Vol. 57, No. 5 (Summer, 1979), pp. 1005-1016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20040268> (accessed January 15, 2015).

⁷⁰ Ibid., 1012-1013.

⁷¹ Israeli, "Link to Peace," 91.

⁷² Ibid.

do everything it could to maintain it. Without US aid at that time, Israel's very existence and survival in the region could not have been guaranteed.

In Begin's statements to the Knesset, he does not explicitly state US pressure and influence as motivating factors for seeking peace with Egypt. It is possible that Begin did not address US pressure in his speeches because he was trying to convince members of the Knesset to vote for ratification of the treaty and therefore wanted to frame the peace treaty to be in Israel's interests alone. In fact, Begin's fellow Knesset members interrupted his speech, calling him an "American slave" and a "foreign agent", suggesting that Begin purposely sought to *avoid* any mention of the US' influence on Israel's decision to sign the treaty in order to garner as much Israeli support for the treaty as possible.⁷³ However, despite the fact that he doesn't explicitly mention it in his address to the Knesset, US pressure, influence, and incentives were probably significant motivating factors in pursuing peace with Egypt given the circumstances outlined above.

Israeli dependence on the US after the Yom Kippur war and the subsequent US pressure, influence, and incentives offered had a significant impact on Begin's strategy to sign a peace deal with Egypt. In the absence of US pressure and aid, Israel would likely not have been able to sustain itself militarily in the region and it would have faced severe existential threats given the Arab alliances and intervention by the USSR. The Yom Kippur War had made Israel aware of its own vulnerabilities, and Israel did not have the means to face such a war again without US support. Therefore, US pressure, influence, and incentives were probably some of the most important drivers of Begin's overall strategy in pursuing peace with Egypt.

⁷³ Begin, 20 March 1979 Statement to Knesset.

Economic Factors

By signing a peace treaty with Egypt and subsequently withdrawing from the Sinai, Israel incurred some significant costs but also experienced some economic advantages. In this section, the price Israel paid in making peace with Egypt as well what Israel gained from the peace treaty will be examined using statements from Begin to analyze how these costs and benefits contributed to his overall strategy.

Israel incurred some significant costs in withdrawing from the Sinai as part of its peace treaty with Egypt. The treaty obliged Israel to surrender the off-shore Alma oilfields in the Sinai, which meant that Israel gave up the last of its domestic sources of oil.⁷⁴ At the time, the Alma oilfields produced as much as 30,000 barrels a day, comprising approximately 20% of Israel's domestic oil needs at the time.⁷⁵ Giving up these oilfields as part of the disengagement from the Sinai cost Israeli about \$1 billion per year.⁷⁶ In addition, Israel was forced to give up the 14 separate Jewish Settlements that it had established in the Sinai desert during the interwar periods, which were originally built to act as a security buffer between Israel and Egypt.⁷⁷ Israel also had to transplant its IDF facilities from the Sinai to the Negev inside Israel proper, in addition to evacuating, relocating, and compensating the settlers. Overall, the entire evacuation and relocation cost to the Israeli government was approximately \$7.75 billion.⁷⁸ Although these were

⁷⁴ "Israel returns oil fields in Sinai Desert to Egypt," *The Chicago Tribune*, November 26, 1979, <http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1979/11/26/page/50/article/israel-returns-oil-fields-in-sinai-desert-to-egypt> (accessed February 1, 2015).

⁷⁵ Crittenden, "Israel's Plight," 1014.

⁷⁶ Israeli, "Link to Peace," 94.

⁷⁷ Jewish Virtual Library. "Israel-Egypt Relations: The Yamit Evacuation." <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Peace/yamit.html> (accessed February 1, 2015).

⁷⁸ Thein, Ben "Learning from Past Experience: Sinai to Gaza," *The Washington Institute*, May 25, 2004, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/learning-from-past-experience-sinai-to-gaza> (accessed February 1, 2015).

significant costs to Israel, the Sinai was “of no importance in the Revisionist tradition” a “branch of Zionism supporting Israeli control over Biblical Palestine, including the West Bank and part of Jordan”, which made it relatively easy to give up from an ideological standpoint.⁷⁹ Although Begin mentioned that Israel would be leaving the oil wells that Israel “dug and labored over in the Sinai”⁸⁰ in his speech to the Knesset, he does so in the context of explaining that he has asked Egypt to commit to selling Israel its natural gas at a fair market price to make up for the loss of the oilfields. Otherwise, Begin does not specifically mention any of these other costs in his speech to the Knesset, possibly because he wanted to convince the Knesset to agree to his peace treaty with Egypt and therefore wants to minimize the impact of the financial cost of withdrawing from the Sinai.

In spite of the massive cost of withdrawing from the Sinai Peninsula, Israel reaped a number of important economic benefits from signing a peace treaty with Egypt. Benefits included access to Egypt’s natural gas through normalized trade relations, strategic access to the Suez Canal and the Gulf of Aqaba, and a reduction in overall military spending, all of which likely influenced Israel’s willingness to make peace with Egypt and trumped the cost of doing so.

Although Israel agreed to cede the Alma oilfields in the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt as part of the peace treaty agreement, it benefitted from new access to Egypt’s vast natural gas reserves through normalized trade relations in which Israel could purchase

⁷⁹ Tuttle, “War for Peace,” 61.

⁸⁰ Begin, 20 March 1979 Statement to Knesset.

natural gas from Egypt at the regular market price.⁸¹ In his speech to the Knesset, Begin names energy security through access to Egypt's natural gas as an important reason to seek peace with Egypt. Israel, according to Anais Antreasyan, "by reason of its history in the region, was from its establishment preoccupied with energy security: procuring adequate supplies was a major consideration in its choice of strategic alliances."⁸² Due to the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran and the sudden Iranian hostility towards Israel, Israel's options for purchasing gas from its neighbors became even more limited than before. Begin cites the 1979 Islamic Revolution as being a significant threat to Israel's energy security, noting to the Knesset that "Persia cut off its oil supply – not even one drop of oil" to Israel.⁸³ Although the US promised Israel oil supplies for the next five years, Begin states:

America itself is today facing an energy crisis. The fact is that many large airlines have already today cancelled dozens of flights because of the energy shortage. The White House has dropped its temperature in a manner to set an example for the citizens of the US. And there will be more restrictions soon... There are liable to be those in the USA who, when difficulties arise there, will say: "We have lowered the temperature at home, we cannot go out for a drive on Sunday - and we are giving oil to Israel?" ... So we want to be certain that we are doing everything possible to get the oil from other sources.

Clearly, Begin did not want Israel to rely on the US' promise of access to oil resources because he feared that the US would eventually succumb to domestic pressure over rising oil prices and would be forced to cut off foreign oil aid to Israel. Instead, Begin thought it was important to find alternate sources – such as natural gas from Egypt – to enhance Israel's overall energy security outlook. Access to these natural gas resources through

⁸¹ In his 20 March speech to the Knesset, Begin states that because Israel will be withdrawing from the oil fields in the Sinai, Israel asked Egypt to "give us a commitment that it would sell us, at market prices, a certain amount of oil: 2.5 million tons."

⁸² Anais Antreasyan. "Gas Finds in the Eastern Mediterranean". *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Spring 2013), pp. 29-47. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jps.2013.42.3.29>. 42.

⁸³ Begin, 20 March 1979 Statement to Knesset.

normalized trade relations with Egypt was therefore likely a significant driving factor behind Begin's overall strategy to reach a peace agreement with Egypt.

Thanks to the peace treaty with Egypt, Israel was also able to gain strategic and unrestricted access to the Suez Canal and the Gulf of Aqaba. Previously, Israel had been subjected to naval blockades in both the Suez Canal and the Gulf of Aqaba, restricting its ability to engage in secure commerce or other naval activity from Israel's southern port of Eilat.⁸⁴ By securing Israeli naval and commercial passage through these waterways, Israel could develop more efficient shipping routes for its imports and exports, which would benefit Israel's economy and likely had some bearing on the overall strategy to make peace with Egypt.

By signing a peace treaty with Egypt, Israel also benefited in a reduction of military spending. The direct financial cost of the Yom Kippur war for Israel, in which Egypt was an aggressor, was \$8-10 billion.⁸⁵ By signing a peace treaty with Egypt, and subsequently eliminating Egypt and a unified Arab block as a threat, Israel would be able to spend less of its overall budget on military-related expenditures. In fact, defense expenditure did decline "impressively, enabling Israel to gradually advance into a new era of prosperity and technological achievement, which would not have been possible without the peace with Egypt."⁸⁶ Defense spending as an overall percentage of Israel's total GDP (Gross Domestic Product) declined from 30.3% in 1975 to just 6.6% in 2009.⁸⁷

⁸⁴Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Egypt Reimposes a Naval Blockade on the Straits of Tiran – 23 May 1967." Available from: <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/MFADocuments/Yearbook1/Pages/4%20Egypt%20Reimposes%20a%20Naval%20Blockade%20on%20the%20Straits.aspx> (Accessed February 1, 2015).

⁸⁵ Israeli, "Link to Peace," 91.

⁸⁶ Susser, "Changing Regional Order," 228.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Although Begin sites the balance of power as being a key driving factor behind the peace treaty with Egypt,⁸⁸ the direct economic advantages of reducing military expenditures are not explicit in his speech and rather are only implied.

Although there were some costs involved in withdrawing from the Sinai, including the ceding of oil fields and settlements, economic benefits derived from making peace with Egypt outweighed the initial costs and likely had an impact on Begin's strategy to seek a peace deal with Egypt. Israeli policymakers like Begin probably decided that the long-term economic advantages Israel was gaining through a peace deal with Egypt outweighed the upfront costs it incurred by withdrawing from the oilfields and the settlements in the Sinai. Although the financial losses imparted by the withdrawal were significant, those losses were off set by the financial incentives offered by the US in exchange for making peace with Egypt and likely had a significant impact on Begin's willingness to reach a peace agreement with Egypt. However, considering the large amount of economic losses Israel experience upfront in signing a peace treaty with Egypt and withdrawing from the Sinai, economic benefits from the peace treaty were probably secondary in Begin's calculus to more important primary factors like the balance of power and US pressure and incentives.

Conclusion

The Israeli-Egyptian Peace treaty was a watershed moment in the history of the Middle East because it drastically altered the nature of Arab-Israeli war. Since the signing of the Peace Treaty in 1979, and the subsequent neutralization and isolation of Egypt from other Arab countries, there has been no unified Arab war against Israel. By signing a peace treaty with Egypt, Israel ultimately achieved its strategic goal of making Israel

⁸⁸ See previous section in discussion about balance of power for more info.

more secure in the Middle East and ensuring its survival for generations to come. Despite two political revolutions in Egypt and instability and political revolution throughout the Arab world, the Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty has withstood the test of time.

The key findings of this research are that the combination of three factors -- the legacy of the Yom Kippur War, the balance of power, and US pressure and incentives -- heavily influenced Begin's strategy to make peace with Egypt. The Yom Kippur War had a significant impact on Begin's strategy to make peace with Egypt due to the psychological toll of the losses Israel experienced in that war -- Israel was so shocked by the surprise Arab attack that it never really recovered despite eventually winning the war. For similar reasons, the issue of balance of power was also incredibly influential on Begin's decision to make peace with Egypt -- Israel simply couldn't afford to face a war on two fronts again and risk being wiped off of the map. To avoid another war, Egypt had to be neutralized and isolated from other Arab countries. US pressure and incentives were also a major influencing factor on Begin's strategy given Israel's new dependency on the US as a superpower to counteract the influence of the USSR and US aid -- a bilateral peace deal would likely not have happened in the absence of US influence. Economic factors were found to be secondary to the other three factors in Begin's calculus given the significant cost to Israel to withdraw from the Sinai. Although Israel experienced some economic advantages as a result of the peace treaty, they were long-term advantages and did not outweigh the costs in the short term. By seeking to understand the factors that influenced Israel to make peace with Egypt in 1979, we are left with an increased understanding of how these factors could be replicated or what factors could influence Israel's strategy to pursue peace with other states or actors in the future.

The Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty was meant to be a framework for peace between Israel and other Arab nations including Jordan, the Palestinians, and Syria. The only other Arab nation that ended up making peace with Israel was Jordan in 1994⁸⁹ – Syria has a “cold peace” with Israel, and a lasting, final-status peace agreement has yet to be reached between Israel and the Palestinians. The distinct personalities involved in the Israeli-Egyptian peace could explain why this peace treaty has not been replicated with other Arab nations. While all of the factors discussed above were without a doubt drivers of Begin’s strategy to make peace with Egypt, the personalities and personal goals of Sadat, Begin, and Carter also had a crucial role to play in the outcome.

The Israeli-Egyptian Peace treaty has been a tenet of Israeli security strategy in the Middle East for nearly forty years. Despite decades of conflicts and wars with non-state actors like Hezbollah, HAMAS, and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), Israel has not faced a conventional interstate war since the signing of the peace treaty with Egypt. The threat of a coordinated Arab attack on Israel was eliminated when Egypt signed the peace treaty with Israel. After the first political revolution in Egypt and the fall of Mubarak in the spring of 2011, Israel kept quiet, waiting to see how the revolution would play out and what affect it would have on the long standing peace treaty.⁹⁰ Although there were numerous threats towards Israel from the Muslim Brotherhood-led Egyptian government that Egypt would take whatever measures it thought necessary against Israel, the Peace Treaty remained intact.⁹¹ Since the fall of Muhammad Morsi’s

⁸⁹“On this Day: 26 October,” *BBC Online*, http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/october/26/newsid_3764000/3764162.stm (accessed February 7, 2015).

⁹⁰ Harel, Amos. “What will become of Israel if Mubarak falls?” *The Guardian*. February 9, 2011. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/feb/09/israel-mubarak-islamist-egypt-security> (accessed February 21, 2015).

⁹¹Wittes, Tamara. “The Egypt-Israel peace test”. *Al Jazeera*. May 20, 2013.

Muslim Brotherhood government in the summer of 2013, Israel has allied itself more closely to the military Egyptian government led by Abdel Fattah al Sisi.⁹² Israel and Egypt reportedly cooperate on a number of security and counterterrorism issues and operations, especially regarding the control over militants in the Sinai.⁹³ In early 2015, an extremist group in the Sinai pledging allegiance to ISIS staged terrorist attacks across the Sinai, demonstrating that cooperation over Sinai security has become more critical now than ever.⁹⁴ As a result of the attack, Egypt officially entered the fight against ISIS in mid-February 2015, staging military operations against ISIS targets.⁹⁵ In the wake of political instability and the rise of ISIS, a stable and powerful partner like Egypt remains a crucial component of Israel's overall security strategy. Arab states are starting to ally against ISIS and if Israel seeks opportunities to join the fight, Israel would seek to benefit not just by degrading ISIS, but by cooperating with other Arab states against a shared enemy, Israel could improve Israeli-Arab relations, which could ultimately lead to greater stability in the region.

Since 2013, US-Israeli relations have become strained over a number of key issues in the Middle East such as the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran, failed Mid-East

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/05/201351312123626397.html>
(accessed February 21, 2015).

⁹² Smadar Perry, "Al-Sisi is not Israel's friend, he's a partner" *Ynet News*, August 13, 2014, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4557901,00.html> (accessed February 8, 2015).

⁹³ Lynch, Sarah. "Israel, Egypt getting along great these days." *USA Today*. May 14, 2014. <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2014/05/14/israel-egypt-relations/9073415/> (accessed February 14, 2015).

Entous, Adam and Charles Levinson. "Israelis, Egyptians Cooperate on Terror." *Wall Street Journal*. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887324085304579010990544276768> (accessed February 14, 2015).

⁹⁴ "27 Killed in Egypt's Sinai attacks, ISIS affiliate claims responsibility." *Russian Television News*. January 30, 2015. <http://rt.com/news/227675-egypt-sinai-isis-attacks/> (accessed February 21, 2015).

⁹⁵ Dergham, Raghida. "Egypt Joins the Military Effort against ISIS." *Huffington Post*. February 20, 2015. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/raghida-dergham/egypt-joints-the-military_b_6722816.html (accessed February 21, 2015).

Peace Process negotiations, and excessive Israeli use of force in Gaza. As US-Israeli relations become more tense, Israel will need to rely more on its other strategic alliances – such as those with Egypt and Jordan – to ensure its security in the region and less on the US. Although alliances with Egypt and Jordan will not solve Israel’s other security dilemmas -- such as the prospect of a Nuclear-armed Iran -- those alliances will ensure that Israel does not encounter any additional threats emanating from Egypt and Jordan’s domains.

Chapter Two

In Like a Lion, Out like a Lamb: How Internal and External Pressures Influenced Israel's Unilateral Disengagement from Gaza

In 2004 Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, the “father of the settlements” who had planned and helped establish 64 Israeli Settlements in the West Bank, announced Israel’s plans to unilaterally withdraw from its 21 Settlements in the Gaza Strip.⁹⁶ The Settlements were dismantled and all Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) security elements departed Gaza in 2005 and by 2006, HAMAS was democratically elected in Gaza’s first elections. Since HAMAS’ election in 2006, the Gaza Strip has been used as a base for rocket strikes against Israel, and Israel has been involved in numerous counter-terrorism operations and campaigns against HAMAS, resulting in severe infrastructure damage and significant civilian casualties. Today’s Gaza Strip is tragic humanitarian and security crisis— Gaza is one of the most densely populated and poorest places on earth, and militant and terrorist groups in the Gaza Strip remain a grave and perpetual security issue for Israel. Given HAMAS’ ascendancy to power after the Israeli withdrawal, Ariel Sharon’s plan for unilateral disengagement from Gaza remains an anomaly – why would an Israeli “Hawk” infamous for his military operations and alleged war crimes as a military commander in Lebanon take such a seemingly “Dovish” approach to Gaza? What factors were most influential in Sharon’s strategy for the unilateral Israeli withdrawal from Gaza?

⁹⁶ Cook, Jonathan. “The legacy of Ariel 'the bulldozer' Sharon”, *Al Jazeera*, January 11, 2014, from <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/01/ariel-bulldozer-sharon-dies-2014189155907953.html> (accessed February 14, 2014).

Lazaroff, Tovah. “Sharon: The Life of a Lion” *Jerusalem Post*, January 12, 2014, <http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Op-Ed-Contributors/Sharon-The-life-of-a-lion-337867>, (accessed March 8, 2014).

This paper examines the weight of different internal and external factors on Sharon's calculus to unilaterally withdraw from the Israeli Settlements in Gaza and argues that while there were many different factors involved, some were more influential than others. First, existing scholarship on unilateralism why states choose to pursue it will be examined, and then a focus on Israeli unilateral action and Sharon's strategy more specifically. Next, both internal and external factors will be examined in the context of various public statements and actions by Sharon as an indicator for how they may have influenced his strategy, with a specific focus on Sharon's 14 April 2005 letter to US President Bush⁹⁷ and Sharon's 25 October 2004 address to the Knesset⁹⁸. For internal pressures, the cost of securing the settlements, demographic pressures, and public opinion will be examined; for external pressures, the status of the Peace Process, pressure from the US, and Israel's distrust of their Palestinian counterpart in furthering negotiations and achieving a peaceful outcome will all be explored.

This research is intended to provide insight into some of the drivers behind Israeli security strategy and will demonstrate why Israel chooses to take strategic unilateral action rather than bilateral action. It is inevitable that Israel will need to make difficult decisions regarding the Peace Process and their relationship with Palestinians in the future -- this research may help to predict when Israel will choose to pursue unilateral actions in the future, actions which could have many profound impacts on the Israeli-

⁹⁷ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Exchange of Letters between PM Sharon and President Bush, April 14, 2004, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/mfadocuments/pages/exchange%20of%20letters%20sharon-bush%2014-apr-2004.aspx>,(accessed January 30, 2014).

⁹⁸ The Knesset. PM Ariel Sharon's Address to the Knesset Prior to the Vote on the Disengagement Plan, 25 October 2004. <http://www.knesset.gov.il/docs/eng/sharonspeech04.htm>, (accessed February 8, 2014).

⁹⁹ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Exchange of Letters between PM Sharon and President Bush.

Palestinian Peace Process. By exploring the specific factors that influenced Israel's strategy to unilaterally withdraw from Gaza in 2005, this research may also reveal factors that are not just relevant and influential in the Israeli context, but can also be applied more broadly to other global political situations in which unilateralism is applied.

Background

Israeli Settlements in the Gaza Strip were first established by the Israeli Labor government in the 1970s, and eventually grew to 21 total settlements.¹⁰⁰ In 1981 when Israel signed a peace treaty with Egypt, the Israeli settlements in the Sinai were evacuated and destroyed and many of those settlers moved to Gaza.¹⁰¹ Israeli settlements comprised about 18 percent of the total 363 square kilometers of the Gaza strip, and the settlements were dispersed throughout the Gaza strip, often surrounded by much denser Palestinian populations and urban areas.¹⁰² The Gaza settlements ranged “from religious communities...to non-religious communities...to mixed communities...”¹⁰³ Their economies were mostly based on agriculture, as well as some local industry.¹⁰⁴

The first Palestinian *Intifada*, or uprising, started on December 7, 1987 near the Jebaliya refugee camp in Gaza when four Palestinians were killed and eight others seriously injured after an Israeli military vehicle struck a car carrying Palestinian day laborers in Israel. This event sparked mass uprisings against the Israeli occupation throughout the West Bank and Gaza. In an attempt to mediate the violence of the first Palestinian *Intifada*, Israel and the Palestinians signed the Oslo Peace Accords in 1993.

¹⁰⁰ “The Gaza Strip: History of Jewish settlement”, Jewish Virtual Library
http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Peace/gaza_settlements.html, (accessed February 8, 2014).

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² See appendix A (map of Gaza Settlements)

¹⁰³ “The Gaza Strip: History of Jewish settlement”, Jewish Virtual Library.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

The Oslo Peace Accords granted the Palestinians right to self-government of the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank. The Accords also created the Palestinian Authority (PA), and Yasser Arafat was appointed as its leader. Ironically, the Accords caused “invalidation by all parties to the conflict”¹⁰⁵ because they “brought power to an outside leadership [the PLO] that had not stepped foot inside the territories for almost three decades¹⁰⁶, which promised to end the popular struggle against the occupation rather than lead it.”¹⁰⁷ A period of brief calm in the Gaza Strip, after the Oslo Peace Accords were signed and the Palestinian Authority “assumed control over about 80 percent of the area”.¹⁰⁸ However, violence in Gaza escalated after the start of the second Palestinian *Intifada* in 2000, which started when Ariel Sharon visited the temple mount in Jerusalem, an act that was seen as provocative and sparked riots throughout the West Bank and Gaza.¹⁰⁹ The escalation of violence in Gaza “led Israel to impose stricter measures on Palestinians in the area, and to engage in frequent military operations to prevent terrorist attacks against soldiers and Jews living in the Gaza settlements as well as infiltrations to attack targets inside Israel.”¹¹⁰

In December 2003, Sharon announced the “Disengagement Plan”, a plan to withdraw from Gaza to “increase security of residents of Israel, relieve pressure on the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), and reduce friction between Israelis and Palestinians.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ King, Mary Elizabeth. “Palestine: Nonviolent Resistance in the Struggle for Statehood”, *Recovering Nonviolent History: Civil Resistance in Liberation Struggles*. Edited by Maceij Bartkowski. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013.

¹⁰⁶ Arafat and the PLO had been living in exile in Tunis, Tunisia.

¹⁰⁷ Chenoweth, Erica, and Maria J Stephan. 2011. *Why Civil Resistance Works: the Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*. New York: Columbia University Press.

¹⁰⁸ “The Gaza Strip: History of Jewish settlement”, Jewish Virtual Library.

¹⁰⁹ Goldenberg, Suzanne. “Rioting as Sharon Visits Islam Holy Site” *The Guardian*, September 28, 2000. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2000/sep/29/israel>, (accessed February 13, 2014).

¹¹⁰ “The Gaza Strip: History of Jewish settlement”, Jewish Virtual Library.

¹¹¹ Morley, Jefferson. “Israeli Withdrawal from Gaza Explained”, *The Washington Post*, August 10, 2005,

The plan was implemented on 15 August 2005, and tens of thousands of Israeli troops oversaw the evacuation of approximately 8,500 Israeli settlers across 21 settlements. Settlers were first given the option of leaving on their own by 17 August, after which they would be forcibly removed from their homes. Although the process was expected to take several weeks, it only took about a week for the settlements to be fully evacuated.¹¹² A total of 1,700 families were removed from the Gaza settlements, and were compensated for resettlement elsewhere in Israel and the West Bank at a cost of nearly \$900 million to the Israeli government.¹¹³

Literature Review

This literature review will explore the specific factors that influence states to take unilateral action, as well as existing research on Israeli unilateral action and Sharon's strategy in general and specifically in the Gaza withdrawal.

Why do states take unilateral actions?

Gordon and Cohen provide some insight into the factors that cause states to pursue unilateral action. Gordon and Cohen argue that resolutions reached through negotiations "require a certain degree of parity in order to work".¹¹⁴ If one side has all the power and there are no external checks and balances on their power, "then this powerful side is likely to dictate the terms of both negotiations and the terms of their outcome."¹¹⁵ Ultimately, a "wide gap in the power differential between the two parties leads to

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/08/10/AR2005081000713.html>, (accessed March 8, 2014).

¹¹² "The Gaza Strip: History of Jewish settlement", Jewish Virtual Library.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Gordon, Neve, and Yinon Cohen. "Western Interests, Israeli Unilateralism, and the Two-State Solution" *Journal of Palestine Studies*. 2012. 41 (3) (Spring): 6-18.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jps.2012.XLI.3.6>, (accessed February 13, 2014).

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 7.

unilateral actions because the party that wields the power does not need to – and consequently is unusually unwilling to – consult the other party when making policy choices that affect both sides.”¹¹⁶

Helis argues that states may choose unilateral action over other options because unilateralism provides “maximum freedom of action”.¹¹⁷ While allies and partners “can bring extra capabilities to the table, they often bring constraints on how their tools can be used”.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, Helis argues “there are clear trade-offs between sacrificing freedom of action and lowering costs and adding the capabilities of other nations. ...there are times and circumstances for both approaches. The art is to recognize them and select the proper tool.”¹¹⁹

Bland, Salem, and Schnell all argue that unilateralism can be used as a peace-building tool that can eventually lead to cooperation and negotiations.¹²⁰ Bland proposes that states follow a formula of “reciprocal unilateralism“ which ”focuses on incremental steps in the pursuit of mutually desirable goals and intentions.”¹²¹ While bargaining and negotiating produces treaties and agreements, “reciprocal unilateralism aims at informal arrangements that can later be codified into formal agreements.” In fact, Bland argues, “the historical record suggests that the most successful unilateral strategies have features

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Helis, James A. “The National Security Environment: Multilateralism and Unilateralism” *Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College*. 2004. 13-18.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 14.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 17.

¹²⁰ Bland, Byron. "Building Trust through Unilateral Strategies" *Palestine-Israel Journal Of Politics, Economics & Culture* 13, no. 2 (June 2006): 42-46. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed February 8, 2014).

Salem, Walid, and Itzhak Schnell. "The Ethics of Unilateralism." *Palestine-Israel Journal Of Politics, Economics & Culture* 13, no. 2 (June 2006): 5. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed March 8, 2014).

¹²¹ Bland , “Building Trust,”

[of] a conditional component”.¹²² “Reciprocal unilateralism” is so effective because “independent self-interested action that also promotes the interest of the other side speaks for itself in a way that negotiated concessions, encumbered by tradeoffs and coercive tactics, cannot.”¹²³ However, Bland argues, “reciprocal unilateralism” can only work if both sides build trust. Trust can be built by “establish[ing] a foundation for trust in the vision of a shared future” in which each side will “understand the encapsulated nature of the other side’s interests within their own, and vice versa.”¹²⁴ The parties involved must demonstrate the “encapsulated nature of their own interest [that] causes them to place value on the relationship itself.”¹²⁵ Salem and Schnell, when speaking of the Israeli context specifically, also argue that unilateral actions can pave the way for negotiations and cooperation.¹²⁶ According to Salem and Schnell, “rather than viewing the plans as a final step, Israel must present [them] as a further measure in an overall attempt to reach peace based on political compromise.”¹²⁷ Furthermore, Salem and Schnell argue that “unilateral steps should be agreed upon and coordinated between the two sides.”¹²⁸ Overall, there appears to be a lack of scholarly research on the specific factors, external or internal, that cause states to choose unilateral action over multilateralism or negotiations.

¹²² Ibid., 44.

¹²³ Ibid., 45.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Salem and Schnell, “Ethics of Unilateralism,” 5.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

Israeli Unilateralism

While some scholars analyze the effects and consequences of Israeli Unilateralism on the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process (Gordon and Cohen, Daoudi)¹²⁹, there is very little research on the *strategy* behind Israeli unilateral action. The editorial in *Tikkun* briefly explores the strategy behind the Gaza disengagement specifically and argues that by effectively giving control over Gaza to HAMAS rather than to the Palestinian authority, Sharon rewarded Palestinian violence and continued a strategy of “weakening the Palestinian people by splitting them into two opposing camps.”¹³⁰ Etkes argues that Unilateralism has been an Israeli strategy for a long time, and that “the seeds of unilateralism were nurtured in the general Zionist experience, and in the Israeli experience in particular, by the way that ‘Israel’ sees itself”.¹³¹ In fact, Etkes argues that the settlement enterprise itself is an expression of Israeli unilateralism for “from its first day the settlement enterprise was a unilateral measure meant to serve the purposes of the Israeli collective”¹³²

Sharon’s Strategy in General

Sharon’s legacy, and subsequently assessments of his political and military strategy, is complicated and controversial. Criticized as a heavy-handed war-maker by some, he is credited as a brilliant military strategist by others. His legacy is complex in that his strategy varied greatly based on the context in which he operated during his

¹²⁹ Dajani Daoudi, Mohammed S. "Unilateralism: Lessons from the Gaza Disengagement." *Palestine-Israel Journal Of Politics, Economics & Culture* 13, no. 2 (June 2006): 13-17. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed February 8, 2014).

¹³⁰ "The Brilliant and Short-Sighted Strategy of the Israeli Right." *Tikkun*, Winter 2012., 9, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed February 8, 2014).

¹³¹ Etkes, Dror. "The Identity Conflict." *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics & Culture*, June 2006., 78-82, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed February 8, 2014).

¹³² *Ibid.*, 80.

nearly five decades in government office. Weizman writes that “in all the positions he has held since the 1950s...Ariel Sharon displayed the same stubborn and implacable spatial ideology: the use of apparently temporary security-architecture to create permanent facts on the ground, the rejection of borderlines as the limits of state territory, the preference for the dynamic shifting and formless geography of the frontiers.”¹³³

Burg writes that Sharon was “more so than many others — the symbol of the Israeli with whom no Palestinian can talk. Sharon was the ultimate “no partner” for the Palestinians.”¹³⁴ Buttu also agrees that Sharon was a war-monger rather than a peacemaker and states “during his five decades as a political figure in Israel, he faced the same choice: allow Palestinians to live in freedom or continue their subjugation. At every turn, he chose the latter.”¹³⁵ Conversely, Ibish writes “he showed that even the most hawkish Israelis could be moved by the simple facts of the Israeli-Palestinian demographics in the occupied Palestinian territories. He was one of the first Israeli right-wingers to openly acknowledge the reality of occupation and call it by its real name. He was also, perhaps, the first to openly endorse Palestinian statehood as a goal.”¹³⁶

Sharon’s Strategy in Gaza Withdrawal

Regarding Sharon’s strategy in the Gaza Withdrawal, Pressman makes what is probably the most significant contribution to this field. Pressman argues that “Israeli unilateralism [in Gaza] was a response to several inter-related factors: the failure of the Oslo process, the second Intifada, the absence of a Palestinian partner, Israeli fatigue with

¹³³ Weizman, Eyal. "STRATEGIC POINTS, FLEXIBLE LINES, TENSE SURFACES, POLITICAL VOLUMES: ARIEL SHARON AND THE GEOMETRY OF OCCUPATION." *Philosophical Forum* 35, no. 2 (Summer2004 2004): 221-244. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed March 8, 2014).

¹³⁴ “Ariel Sharon's legacy and Israel's National Strategy.” *Al Jazeera America*, January 13, 2014, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/1/13/what-is-ariel-sharonlastinglegacy.html> (accessed February 1, 2014).

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

the pursuit of Greater Israel, and the limits of military efforts for containing Palestinian nationalist aspirations.”¹³⁷ Additionally, Pressman argues that the United States missed chances to “jump-start bilateral diplomacy,”¹³⁸ which was another contributing factor to the withdrawal.

Pressman also argues that Sharon’s strategy served to divert attention and pressure from Settlements in the West Bank, as it was a “way to shift attention from the West Bank as Israel deepened its hold on large settlement blocs.” Falk also argues that the disengagement was simply a “diversionary tactic” in that “it removed the critical international gaze from the West Bank, which is designed to join the bulk of the settler population irreversibly to pre-1967 Israel while imposing major new hardships on tens of thousands of Palestinians.”¹³⁹

Aronoff argues that Sharon’s shift in policy which eventually lead to the withdrawal from Gaza can be best explained by Sharon’s “ideological and personality factors” rather than by any one specific factor on the ground. Aronoff argues that in that Sharon’s “weak commitment to any one ideology, his present time orientation, his high risk propensity, and moderate cognitive flexibility enabled his significant policy changes.”¹⁴⁰

Contributions

In researching unilateralism it quickly became apparent that a lot of work has been done on American political unilateralism, specifically on American unilateralism during the beginning of the Iraq war in 2003 (Kellner, Chauduri and Moustakis,

¹³⁷ Pressman, Jeremy. "Israeli Unilateralism and Israeli–Palestinian Relations, 2001–2006." *International Studies Perspectives* 7, no. 4 (November 2006): 360-376. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed March 8, 2014). 360.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Falk, Richard. 2005. “Gaza Illusions”. *Nation*. 2005, 281 (7) (09/12): 4-6.

¹⁴⁰ Aronoff, Yael S. "From Warfare to Withdrawal: The Legacy of Ariel Sharon." *Israel Studies* 15, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 149-172. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed February 8, 2014).

Tiefer).¹⁴¹ Additionally, much has also been published on unilateralism and environmental issues (Kulovesi, Scott and Rajamani)¹⁴² and economic and trade issues (Ethier, Bhagwati).¹⁴³ Much has also been written on the descriptive nature of unilateralism – some scholars argue that it is undemocratic (Seigfried)¹⁴⁴, while others argue that it is necessary to preserve a state’s security (Harvey).¹⁴⁵ The global political costs of unilateralism have also been explored (Brooks and Wohlforth).¹⁴⁶ However, other than a few select works, there appears to be a general lack of scholarship regarding the specific factors, external or internal, that cause states to chose unilateral action over multilateralism or negotiations.

¹⁴¹ Kellner, Douglas. "Preemptive strikes and the war on Iraq: a critique of Bush administration unilateralism and militarism." *New Political Science* 26, no. 3 (September 2004): 417-440. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed March 8, 2014). 417.

Moustakis, Fotios, and Rudra Chaudhuri. "The Rumsfeld Doctrine and the Cost of US Unilateralism: Lessons Learned." *Defence Studies* 7, no. 3 (November 2007): 358-375. *Military & Government Collection*, EBSCOhost (accessed March 8, 2015).358.

Tiefer, Charles. "The Iraq Debacle: The Rise and Fall of Procurement-aided Unilateralism as a Paradigm of Foreign War?" *University of Pennsylvania Journal of International Law*. 2007. 29 (1) (09/01): 1.

¹⁴² Kulovesi, Kati. "Addressing Sectoral Emissions outside the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change: What Roles for Multilateralism, Minilateralism and Unilateralism?." *Review Of European Community & International Environmental Law* 21, no. 3 (November 2012): 193-203. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed March 8, 2014).193.

Scott, Joanne, and Lavanya Rajamani. "EU Climate Change Unilateralism." *European Journal Of International Law* 23, no. 2 (May 2012): 469-494. *Criminal Justice Abstracts with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed March 8, 2014).469.

¹⁴³ Bhagwati, Jagdish. "Departures from Multilateralism: Regionalism and Aggressive Unilateralism." *Economic Journal* 100, no. 403 (December 1990): 1304-1317. *EconLit with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed March 8, 2014). 1304.

Ethier, Wilfred J. "Unilateralism in a Multilateral World." *Economic Journal* 112, no. 479 (April 2002): 266-292. *EconLit with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed February 8, 2014). 266.

¹⁴⁴ Seigfried, Charlene Haddock. "The Dangers of Unilateralism." *NWSA Journal* 18, no. 3 (Fall2006 2006): 20-32. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed March 8, 2014).

¹⁴⁵ Harvey, Frank P. "Addicted to Security: Globalized Terrorism and the Inevitability of American Unilateralism", *International Journal*. 2003. 59 (1) (Winter): 27-57. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40203902>, (accessed March 8, 2014).

¹⁴⁶Brooks, Stephen, and Wohlforth, William. "International Relations Theory and the Case against Unilateralism", *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Sep., 2005), pp. 509-524. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3689021>,(accessed February 8, 2014). pp. 509-524

By exploring the specific factors that influenced Israel's strategy to unilaterally withdraw from Gaza in 2005, this research will make a contribution to the field by identifying factors that can help predict future Israeli unilateral action. These factors are not just relevant and influential in the Israeli context, but can also be applied to other political contexts. Sharon's strategy for unilateral disengagement from Gaza was influenced by a combination of internal and external pressures.

Methodology

Now that knowledge on the existing literature on unilateral action and Israeli unilateralism in particular has been established, this research will attempt to determine which factors were most influential in Sharon's strategy to withdraw from the Gaza Strip by focusing on internal and external pressures. For internal pressures, the cost of securing the settlements, demographic pressures, and public opinion will be examined for how they informed Israel's strategy. For external pressures, the status of the Peace Process, pressure from the US, and Israel's distrust of their Palestinian counterpart in furthering negotiations and achieving a peaceful outcome will all be explored. The approach will be principally qualitative -- various public statements and actions by Sharon will be examined as indicators for how they may have influenced his strategy, with a specific focus on Sharon's 14 April 2005 letter to US President Bush¹⁴⁷ and Sharon's 25 October 2004 address to the Knesset^{148,149}.

Internal Factors

Domestic factors including security costs of maintaining Israeli settlements in Gaza, demographic pressure and public opinion probably heavily influenced Sharon's

¹⁴⁷Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Exchange of letters between PM Sharon and President Bush.

¹⁴⁸The Knesset. PM Ariel Sharon's Address to the Knesset Prior to the Vote on the Disengagement Plan.

¹⁴⁹Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Exchange of Letters between PM Sharon and President Bush.

strategy to make concessions in the unilateral withdrawal from Gaza. Ultimately, Sharon probably decided that the costs of maintaining control of the settlements would probably outweigh any strategic benefits.

Security Costs of Gaza Settlements

Protecting Israeli Settlers in Gaza came at a significant financial cost to the Israeli government. Over 3000 soldiers and tens of millions of dollars a year were needed to guard just 7,500 settlers, causing a tremendous strain for the Israeli defense budget.¹⁵⁰ As Israel poured a “disproportionate” amount of resources into building and protecting the settlements, some Israelis “complained and lamented the opportunity costs.”¹⁵¹ The projected costs for disengagement were also expected to be high – the Knesset approved a bill for providing \$900 million for withdrawing from Gaza which included the resettlement of approximately 1500 settler families that would receive between \$200,000 and \$750,000 in compensation each and the more than \$200 million to move military installations that were built to protect Settlers from Gaza into Israel.¹⁵² Although disengagement would be expensive, in the long run it would cost less money and less loss of lives to disengage from Gaza entirely rather than continuing to fund the Settlements in Gaza, and “the majority of Israelis felt that parting with much or all of the territories was possible and rational”.¹⁵³

Furthermore, the disengagement plan still allowed Israel “complete control of Gaza’s borders, as well as of its entire airspace and coastal waters”¹⁵⁴, which would

¹⁵⁰Thomas, Evan, et al. "THE INSIDER." *Newsweek (Atlantic Edition)* 143, no. 14 (April 5, 2004): 18. *MasterFILE Premier*, EBSCOhost (accessed March 8, 2014).

¹⁵¹ Pressman, “Israeli Unilateralism,” 369.

¹⁵²Mark, Clyde R. 2005. Israel's Proposal to Withdraw from Gaza. Congressional Research Service, RS22000.

¹⁵³ Pressman, “Israeli Unilateralism,” 369.

¹⁵⁴ Falk, “Gaza Illusions,” 4.

enable Israel to maintain security of Israel proper. Additionally, Israel would claim a “continuing right to use force within Gaza either preventively or reactively at any time and place of its choosing.”¹⁵⁵ The disengagement from Gaza would represent a shift to a “less oppressive form of occupation, allowing greater Palestinian mobility, eliminating internal checkpoints and easing the ordeal of daily life in the impoverished circumstances of the Gazans, but in the end Israel [would still] retains control.”¹⁵⁶ In other words, by withdrawing from Gaza, Israel could still maintain the security benefits of having control over Gaza’s borders, without investing in the cost to police Gaza internally for the purpose of protecting its settlements.

In Sharon’s letter to President Bush explaining the disengagement plan, Sharon referred to the security costs of protecting the Gaza Settlements on a number of occasions. Sharon wrote “terror has not ceased, reform of the Palestinian security services has not been undertaken, and real institutional reforms have not taken place. The State of Israel continues to pay the heavy cost of constant terror.”¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, Sharon explained that “the Disengagement Plan is designed to improve security for Israel and stabilize our political and economic situation” and that the plan will enable [Israel] to deploy [their] forces more effectively until such time that conditions in the Palestinian Authority allow for the full implementation of the Roadmap to resume.”¹⁵⁸

Demographic pressure

Demographic pressures and imbalances in Gaza were crucial in informing Sharon’s strategy to unilaterally withdraw from the Gaza Strip, as the continued

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.,5.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 6.

¹⁵⁷ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Exchange of Letters between PM Sharon and President Bush.

¹⁵⁸ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Exchange of Letters between PM Sharon and President Bush.

occupation of Gaza called into question Israel's ability to remain both Jewish and democratic at the same time. For Israel to be a democratic state, then it must be a state that is *demographically* Jewish. In order for there to be a Jewish state of Israel, Israel must be governed by Jews. This concept represents a permanent existential dilemma for Israel.¹⁵⁹ According to well-publicized demographic predictions, there would "eventually be more Palestinians than Jews in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza combined."¹⁶⁰ At the time of the withdrawal from Gaza, there were approximately 1,375,000 Palestinians and only 8,000 Jewish settlers in Gaza.¹⁶¹ With a majority of Palestinians or non-Jews under its control, Israel could either be Jewish or democratic, but not both. Without a withdrawal from densely populated Palestinian areas, "Israel was in danger of one day being turned into a single, bi-national state if the Palestinian majority chose to demand the right to vote in Israel rather than to have their own state". A democratic demand for the right for non-Jews to vote would "no doubt receive widespread support from the international community".¹⁶² Therefore, the Israeli settlement project in Gaza, where the demographic imbalance between Jews and Palestinians was so high, threatened the greater Israeli demographic project and by extension, Israel's very existence as a Jewish state. Withdrawing from Gaza would therefore "automatically ameliorate Israel's demographic situation."¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ Friedman, George. "The Gaza Withdrawal and Israel's Permanent Dilemma", *Forbes*, January 14, 2014, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/stratfor/2014/01/14/the-gaza-withdrawal-and-israels-permanent-dilemma/> (accessed February 13, 2014).

¹⁶⁰ Rynhold, Jonathan, and Dov Waxman. "Ideological Change and Israel's Disengagement from Gaza." *Political Science Quarterly (Academy Of Political Science)* 123, no. 1 (Spring2008 2008): 11-37. *Military & Government Collection*, EBSCOhost (accessed March 8, 2014). 11-37.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 23.

Sharon repeatedly referred to the demographic logic of disengagement from Gaza in public. Although he had been “dismissive” of the argument that demographics were a necessary reason to withdraw from the Palestinian territories, “in the months preceding the announcement of the disengagement plan, he consulted a well-known demographic expert and subsequently presented this as a major justification for his unilateral disengagement plan.”¹⁶⁴ When presenting his plan publicly, Sharon stated “disengagement recognizes the demographic reality on the ground specifically, bravely and honestly.”¹⁶⁵ In Sharon’s address to the Knesset on the Disengagement Plan on 25 October 2004, Sharon stated “we have no desire to permanently rule over millions of Palestinians, who double their numbers every generation.”¹⁶⁶ Sharon stated that because Israel wishes to be an “exemplary democracy”, that Israel “will not be able to bear such a reality over time...the Disengagement Plan presents the possibility of opening a gate to a different reality.”¹⁶⁷

At the cabinet's final approval of the plan on 20 February 2005, “Sharon declared that disengagement “ensures the future of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.”¹⁶⁸ By making these statements, Sharon was “acknowledging and giving voice to the ideological change that had taken place within the Likud, according to which the value of Eretz Yisrael” or the notion of “Greater Israel” was “subordinated to the more important value of maintaining Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, with a large Jewish majority.”¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 25.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 25.

¹⁶⁶ The Knesset. PM Ariel Sharon's Address to the Knesset Prior to the Vote on the Disengagement Plan.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Rynhold, and Waxman, “Ideological Change,” 25.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

Domestic Public Opinion

Sharon's disengagement plan enjoyed a significant amount of domestic support, and was consistently supported by anywhere from 55 to 63 percent of the Israeli public.¹⁷⁰ 42 percent of the Israeli public believed that disengagement from Gaza was inevitable.¹⁷¹ It was widely believed that the settlements in Gaza, and some of the outlying settlements in the West Bank were a liability and would eventually be abandoned.¹⁷² Sharon, the father of Israeli settlements, had turned on the settlers with the backing of a solid majority of Israelis, because "as a majority of Israelis saw it, Israel was expending a disproportionate amount of human, financial, and military resources protecting Jewish settlers in Gaza."¹⁷³ Public opinion was the result of the already existing political context – it was an important added benefit to the strategy, but public opinion was already formed by other issues and factors, such as the stalemate in the Peace Process, and the relative cost of maintaining the Settlements versus the benefit to Israel. Public opinion was informed by these other factors, but did not inform those other factors or realities.

Appeal to the national consensus was also an important factor in Sharon's strategy for Disengagement, and he referred to the concept on a number of occasions. The idea of a "national consensus" is the idea that a national political consensus is important for national security, and many in the "higher echelons of the IDF believe [it] to be crucial to sustaining national morale in a situation of endemic low-intensity conflict."¹⁷⁴ When Sharon first publicly announced the disengagement policy on 18 December 2003, he

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 31.

¹⁷¹ "The Gaza Strip: History of Jewish settlement," Jewish Virtual Library.

¹⁷² Rynhold, and Waxman, "Ideological Change," 31.

¹⁷³ Pressman, "Israeli Unilateralism," 367-368.

¹⁷⁴ Rynhold, and Waxman, "Ideological Change," 31.

explicitly “linked it to the idea of shoring up the national consensus...the core of which was a desire to maintain Israel’s identity as a Jewish and democratic state.”¹⁷⁵ Withdrawing from Gaza would therefore, Sharon argued, strengthen this consensus because “disengagement from Gaza unites the people, distinguishing between goals which deserve to be fought for...such as Jerusalem and maintaining Israel’s character as a Jewish state...from goals which it is clear to all of us will not be realized, and which most of the public is not ready, justifiably, to sacrifice so much for.”¹⁷⁶ In his speech to the Knesset on 25 October 2004, Sharon stated “we must find a common denominator for some form of ‘necessary unity’ which will enable us to cope with these fateful days with understanding, and through our common destiny, which will allow us to construct a dam against brotherly hatred which pushes many over the edge.”¹⁷⁷ Additionally, Sharon stated that “we must find the root which brings us all together, and must carry out our actions with the wisdom and responsibility which allows us to lead our lives here as a mature and experienced nation.”¹⁷⁸

Despite the overwhelming support for disengagement, there was also a significant amount of opposition to the plan. The plan was a political gamble due to the overwhelming influence of the Israeli far right and the ultra orthodox, as the “plan alienated a significant minority of Israelis, religious Zionists, the overwhelming majority of whom opposed disengagement primarily for ideological reasons.”¹⁷⁹ Some religious settler leaders and rabbis called for civil disobedience and “even the use of force to resist

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ The Knesset. PM Ariel Sharon's Address to the Knesset Prior to the Vote on the Disengagement Plan.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Rynhold, and Waxman, “Ideological Change,” 31.

the evacuation of settlements.”¹⁸⁰ This actually led to the Justice Minister Yosef Lapid and Sharon himself “to express concern about a possible civil war”.¹⁸¹ Approximately 40 percent of Israeli Jews thought that the chances of a civil war occurring were high or moderately high.¹⁸² Shin Bet, Israel’s internal security service, even warned Sharon of possible assassination attempts by right-wing radicals due to his Gaza disengagement plan.¹⁸³ There was also a fear that the unilateral disengagement from Gaza would be viewed as a reward for Palestinian terrorism. Opponents of the plan argued that “it would be viewed as a victory for terror that would damage Israeli deterrence and assist HAMAS, or that Israel should at least get something in return for surrendering territory”.¹⁸⁴ Considering that Sharon decided to proceed with the plan despite the fear of civil war and the threats from the radical right wing, public opinion in general and negative public opinion in particular were probably not as influential as other factors on his strategy for the unilateral withdrawal from Gaza.

Based on the above research, the idea that domestic factors including security costs of maintaining Israeli settlements in Gaza, demographic pressures, and public opinion heavily influenced Sharon’s strategy to make concessions in the unilateral withdrawal from Gaza is correct. Based on the attention Sharon paid to demographic pressures and security costs in both his speech to the Knesset and his letter to US President Bush, both of those factors weighed heavily on the calculus behind pursuing a strategy of unilateral disengagement. Conversely, public opinion does not appear to be as

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid., 32; Despite the fear, none of this ever materialized and the disengagement when it went into action actually faced minimal opposition.

¹⁸³ Gozani, Ohad. “Shin Bet Alert Over Right-Wing Plot to Kill Sharon”, *The Telegraph*, 8 July 2004, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/1466523/Shin-Bet-alert-over-Right-wing-plot-to-kill-Sharon.html>, (accessed February 22, 2014).

¹⁸⁴ Rynhold, and Waxman, “Ideological Change,” 33.

influential as these other internal factors in that Sharon faced a significant amount of opposition from his own party and members of the ideological right-wing, yet Sharon still went ahead with the plan. Ultimately, Sharon probably decided that the demographic and financial costs of maintaining control of the settlements would probably outweigh any strategic benefits.

External Factors

The combination of a stalemate in the status of the Peace Process, US pressure, and distrust of Palestinian partners probably equally influenced Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Gaza.

Stalemate in the Peace Process and US Pressure

In early 2003, Sharon officially endorsed the Road Map to Peace sponsored by the "Quartet", comprised of the US, the European Union, Russia, and the United Nations.¹⁸⁵ Sharon considered the Road Map an "important diplomatic victory for Israel" in that "instead of prioritizing peace negotiations over establishing security, it predicated a Palestinian state and permanent-status negotiations on the prior establishment of security and an interim agreement."¹⁸⁶ During the summer of 2003, a cease-fire to halt the violence of the Palestinian Intifada came into affect, "and the newly appointed Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas¹⁸⁷ was prepared to work with the United States and Israel on the basis of the Road Map." By September, however, Abbas resigned "in the wake of renewed Palestinian terror attacks, citing Yasser Arafat's refusal to grant

¹⁸⁵ Otterman, Sharon. "MIDDLE EAST: The Road Map to Peace", *Council on Foreign Relations*, February 7, 2005, <http://www.cfr.org/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east-road-map-peace/p7738> (accessed March 15, 2014).

¹⁸⁶ Rynhold, and Waxman, "Ideological Change," 27.

¹⁸⁷ Also known as Abu Mazen.

him sufficient powers as the main reason for his resignation.”¹⁸⁸ Due to a stalled Road Map, Sharon “feared that a diplomatic vacuum would develop that would lead to new international proposals unfavorable to Israel.”¹⁸⁹

At the same time, international opinion and support for Israel started to waver. The Palestinians had garnered international opposition to the West Bank separation barrier, and the UN General Assembly had condemned the barrier and “referred the issue of its route to the International Court of Justice.”¹⁹⁰ International discourse against Israel was also changing, and there were “widespread international efforts to delegitimize Israel as a racist, apartheid state”, and there was an “erosion of support for Israel even in the United States and among diaspora Jewry.”¹⁹¹ With a stalled Peace Process as a new reality, continuing the status quo would have had severe political consequences for Israel in that Israel would likely have had to make concessions that were not in its best interest. There was a risk that because of the stalled Road Map agreement, an external actor (such as the US, the UN, or the Quartet) would go “back to the drawing board” and revise the Road Map or propose a new agreement that would no longer be in Israel’s best interest. Considering the dire circumstances in which Israel now found itself with the virtual dissolution of the Road Map and the growing international opposition to and condemnation of Israeli policies, Israel needed to do something in order to maintain good relations with the United States, and “stave off the specter of an internationally imposed peace agreement, and avoid further international criticism.”¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ Rynhold, and Waxman, “Ideological Change,” 16.

¹⁸⁹ Rynhold, and Waxman, “Ideological Change,” 28.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

In 2003, the US advocated for renewed Israel-Syria Peace talks, as the Syrian government had indicated willingness for such talks.¹⁹³ Sharon flatly rejected the idea of Peace talks with Syria.¹⁹⁴ Instead, Israel proposed a disengagement plan, of which the US was initially very skeptical of, as the administration of George W. Bush and the international community remained committed to the Road Map.¹⁹⁵ There was no U.S. demand for Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, however the US did play a role in determining the extent of the disengagement plan in that “withdrawal from the four small West Bank settlements was an American suggestion that Sharon agreed to in return for U.S. support.”¹⁹⁶ On April 14, 2004, George W. Bush wrote a letter to Sharon “approving Israeli retention of West Bank settlement blocs while praising Sharon’s courage, giving Israel a huge political victory.”¹⁹⁷ US support for the disengagement plan helped the Sharon government to “solidify the Israeli public’s support for the plan, which, in turn, assisted Sharon in overcoming right-wing opposition to it.”¹⁹⁸ The stalling of the Road Map and subsequently the Peace Process, coupled with US pressure to make progress on the Peace Process, left Israel in a bind in that it had to do something to make it appear that it was still doing its best to move the Peace Process forward.

In neither Sharon’s letter to President Bush and his address to the Knesset on 25 October 2004 did Sharon make any public statements on how US pressure or Israeli willingness to appeal to the US influenced the plan. However, in both documents Sharon reiterated his commitment to the Peace Process. In his speech to the Knesset, Sharon

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 29.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 28.

¹⁹⁷ Falk, “Gaza Illusions,” 5.

¹⁹⁸ Rynhold, and Waxman, “Ideological Change,” 29.

stated “the Disengagement Plan does not replace negotiations and is not meant to permanently freeze the situation which will be created. It is an essential and necessary step in a situation which currently does not enable genuine negotiations for Peace.”¹⁹⁹ Additionally, Sharon stated “I have repeatedly and openly said that I am willing to make painful compromises in order to put an end to this ongoing and malignant conflict between those who struggle over this land, and that I would do my utmost in order to bring peace.”²⁰⁰ In Sharon’s letter to Bush, he reaffirms his commitment to the Peace Process and the Road Map specifically by stating “we view the achievement of a settlement between Israel and the Palestinians as our central focus and are committed to realizing this objective. Progress toward this goal must be anchored exclusively in the Roadmap and we will oppose any other plan.”²⁰¹ Although Sharon did not mention US Pressure in either of those instances, he did reiterate his commitment to the Peace Process in both forums, which alone may be indicative of some of the pressures he felt from the US to demonstrate that Israel was doing its part to advance the Peace Process.

Conversely, one could also argue that US pressure did not hold much weight in Sharon’s calculus in that the US didn’t actually pressure Israel to pursue any specific plan related to the Peace Process. If Sharon's main objective was only to deflect pressure from the US, Israel could have resumed talks with Syria as the US government had actually proposed. Therefore, it is probable that international pressure alone did not determine Sharon’s policy of disengagement from Gaza because other policies could have been adopted to mediate diplomatic pressures from the US. However, US support for the

¹⁹⁹ The Knesset. PM Ariel Sharon's Address to the Knesset Prior to the Vote on the Disengagement Plan.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Exchange of Letters between PM Sharon and President Bush.

disengagement plan did serve Israel's interests, even though US pressure was not a determining factor in creating the disengagement plan.

By withdrawing from the Settlements in Gaza, Israel was able to divert attention and pressure from its growing Settlement project in the West Bank and enabled Israel to "deepen its hold on large settlement blocs"²⁰². While the specific plan for unilateral disengagement from Gaza "sacrificed all the Gaza settlements and a few in the West Bank, it did so in the hopes of salvaging Israeli control of key chunks of the West Bank."²⁰³ In other words, it was not "an abandonment of the settlement project but rather a significant narrowing of its geographic scope."²⁰⁴ The withdrawal was not a result of negotiations with the Palestinians, "but a bargain struck over their heads, with Washington"²⁰⁵. The disengagement initiative was shaped "unilaterally by the Israelis, for their own purposes."²⁰⁶ The Gaza disengagement was a "gigantic exercise in diversionary politics" in that not only removed pressure from continued construction and development of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, but also in that "it removed the critical international gaze from the illegal Israeli separation wall in the West Bank, which is designed to join the bulk of the settler population irreversibly to pre-1967 Israel while imposing major new hardships on tens of thousands of Palestinians."²⁰⁷

While critics argue that Israel was simply exhibiting "diversionary tactics" by withdrawing from the Gaza Strip unilaterally, the fact that Israel undertook such on the challenge of an expensive and logistically complicated withdrawal and the subsequent

²⁰² Pressman, "Israeli Unilateralism," 367.

²⁰³ Ibid., 370.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Falk, "Gaza Illusions," 5.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 6.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

resettlement project demonstrates that Israel was sensitive to international pressure, even though the pressure was not for a specific plan or course of action. Israel seized the opportunity of the Peace Process stalemate and used US pressure to impose a plan that was actually beneficial to them. Coupled with the cost-benefit calculus or internal domestic factors, Sharon probably decided that withdrawal would make Israel look favorable and enabled them to win back international opinion, which in turn bolstered the domestic support for his plan.

Distrust of the Palestinian Counterpart

A distrust of their Palestinian partner in negotiations was also likely an influential factor in Israel's strategy to withdraw from Gaza unilaterally, rather than as part of a negotiated peace treaty or agreement. From the Israeli viewpoint, "the failure of the Oslo process and especially the Camp David Summit of 2000 meant that bilateral negotiations with the Palestinians would not bring peace and security."²⁰⁸ In fact, "for many Israelis, the failure of the Camp David summit in July 2000 revealed once and for all that the Palestinian side did not want a negotiated end to the had offered a two-state solution that also addressed East Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees, and the Palestinians had turned it down."²⁰⁹

Additionally, the outbreak of violence and terrorism brought about by the second Palestinian Intifada, which was "widely seen as a calculated Palestinian move to force further Israeli capitulation, only strengthened the viewpoint that Israel did not have a partner in the Palestinians".²¹⁰ During the Second Intifada from 2000-2005, both the Palestinian and Israelis suffered severe civilian casualties. In Israel proper, 431 civilians

²⁰⁸ Pressman, "Israeli Unilateralism," 369.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

were killed, and 218 civilians were killed in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.²¹¹ Israeli Security forces were also significantly affected by the violence, with 218 security force members killed in the West Bank and Gaza.²¹² Israel is known to have an exceptionally high sensitivity towards casualties, which is “due in part to Israeli society’s well-known tendency toward mass hysteria.”²¹³ Furthermore, it became apparent that the Palestinian leadership was not interested in fulfilling the first part of the Road Map, namely Palestinian security reforms. Instead, they wanted “to proceed straight to permanent-status negotiations, in contravention of the sequential stages set out in the Road Map.”²¹⁴ As a result, “Sharon concluded that there was no Palestinian partner willing and able to enforce an interim agreement within the framework of the Road Map.”²¹⁵ The Palestinian leadership, from the Israeli perspective, was either unwilling or unable to stop the violence, and was also unwilling to proceed with the most basic tenets of the Road Map. This created a deep sense of distrust in Palestinian willingness to move towards a peaceful solution to the conflict, and was probably a major impetus in Sharon’s pursuit of unilateral withdrawal from Gaza.

Sharon made several explicit comments about his distrust of Palestinian leadership and how that affected his strategy to pursue the disengagement plan in both his letter to Bush and his address to the Knesset on 25 October 2004. In his letter to Bush, Sharon clearly attributed his strategy for disengagement to the lack of trust in a Palestinian partner:

²¹¹ “Intifada toll 2000-2005”. *BBC World News*, 8 February 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3694350.stm, (accessed February 1, 2014).

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ Harel, Amos and Issacharoff, Avi. 2008. *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah, and the War in Lebanon*. Palgrave Macmillan.

²¹⁴ Rynhold and Waxman, “Ideological Change,” 30.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

“Having reached the conclusion that, for the time being, there exists no Palestinian partner with whom to advance peacefully toward a settlement and since the current impasse is unhelpful to the achievement of our shared goals, I have decided to initiate a process of gradual disengagement with the hope of reducing friction between Israelis and Palestinians. The Disengagement Plan is designed to improve security for Israel and stabilize our political and economic situation. It will enable us to deploy our forces more effectively until such time that conditions in the Palestinian Authority allow for the full implementation of the Roadmap to resume.”²¹⁶

Sharon does provide other reasons for the disengagement in his letter to Bush, such as the high security cost of protecting the settlements in Gaza, but all of the other factors he presents tie back to the central theme of his letter, which seeks to demonstrate that Israel is acting out of necessity due to the lack of a responsible and reliable negotiating partner in the Palestinians.

In Sharon’s address to Knesset on 25 October 2004, Sharon stated:

“There are those who tell me that, in exchange for a genuine signed peace agreement, they too would be willing to make these painful compromises. However, regrettably, we do not have a partner on the other side with whom to conduct genuine dialogue, in order to achieve a peace agreement. Even prime ministers of Israel who declared their willingness to relinquish the maximum territory of our homeland were answered with fire and hostility. Recently, the chairman of the Palestinian Authority declared that “a million shaheeds will break through to Jerusalem”. In the choice between a responsible and wise action in history, which may lead to painful compromise and a “holy war” to destroy Israel, Yasser Arafat chose the latter – the path of blood, fire and shaheeds. He seeks to turn a national conflict which can be terminated through mutual understanding into a religious war between Islam and Jews, and even to spill the blood of Jews who live far away.”²¹⁷

Unlike Sharon’s letter to Bush, in Sharon’s address to the Knesset, more explanation and weight is given to other factors – such as demographic issues and security costs – rather than just his distrust of the Palestinian partner. However, Sharon does attribute the unreliability of the Palestinian partner in curtailing violence and

²¹⁶ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Exchange of Letters between PM Sharon and President Bush.

²¹⁷ The Knesset. PM Ariel Sharon's Address to the Knesset Prior to the Vote on the Disengagement Plan.

implementing the Road Map as a major factor in his attempt to convince Israeli lawmakers to pursue the course of Disengagement.

Ideally, the withdrawal from the Gaza settlements could have been implemented through a negotiated agreement with the Palestinian Authority. However, the Palestinian Authority's "sordid record on terrorism made it an unpalatable partner, and its two successive powerless prime ministers, obsessed with protecting their own backs from the militias around them, showed little interest in parleying with the Israelis."²¹⁸ By creating a unilateral disengagement plan, Israel was able to implement the withdrawal on their own terms, in a manner that was most beneficial to their interests and priorities. The lack of trust in a Palestinian partner to negotiate a withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, coupled with the Palestinian Authority's poor record on advancing peace and stability while effectively curtailing terrorism and violence, was probably a major influence in Israel's decision to withdraw from the Gaza Strip unilaterally rather than through bilateral or multilateral negotiations. By withdrawing unilaterally, Israel was ultimately able to secure its own interests, even if it necessitated some concessions on their part.

The idea that a combination of a stalemate in the status of the Peace Process, US pressure, and distrust of Palestinian partners would be similarly important was not entirely correct. Based on the above analysis, the stalling of the Peace Process and distrust of the Palestinian partner appear to have been more influential in Sharon's strategy than US pressure based on how often he mentioned each of those factors in both his letter to US President Bush and his speech to the Knesset. US pressure was probably

²¹⁸ "Exit Strategy." *New Republic*, May 03, 2004.,7, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed February 1, 2014).

not as important to Sharon in forming the Disengagement Plan in that the plan itself was formulated and proposed by Israel, not the US. If Israel had been entirely susceptible to US pressure, they would probably have reengaged Syria in Peace talks, per the US' suggestion. US pressure may have been more of a secondary factor in that Israel was under pressure to advance the Peace Process – by unilaterally withdrawing from Gaza Israel appeared to be making significant concessions to the Palestinians and appeasing the US' desire to advance the Peace Process.

Weighing the Different Factors

All of the factors that are explored in this paper probably had some weight on Sharon's strategy to unilaterally withdraw from Gaza -- they all influenced his strategy in different ways and for different reasons, which were discussed in detail in the preceding sections. However, some factors undoubtedly had more weight than others. In an attempt to quantify the weight that different factors had on Sharon's strategy, the factors which were mentioned in both the letter to US President Bush and Sharon's address to the Knesset are examined below.²¹⁹

²¹⁹ I selected these two specific documents as a sampling of primary sources on the disengagement plan because I thought these two documents had some of the better explanation of reasons behind Sharon's pursuit of the Disengagement Plan.

The table below shows the various factors mentioned in document as being an influence on Sharon’s strategy to pursue the Disengagement Plan (“X” denotes that the factor was mentioned):

	<i>Letter to US President Bush</i>	<i>Address to Knesset</i>
<i>Security Costs</i>	X	X
<i>Demographic Pressure</i>		X
<i>Israeli Public Opinion/National Consensus</i>		X
<i>Peace Process/US Pressure</i>	X	X
<i>Distrust of Palestinian Partner</i>	X	X

In Sharon’s letter to President Bush, it makes sense that Sharon didn’t mention domestic factors like demographic pressure and Israeli public opinion/appeal to national consensus, as those are internal factors that can only be addressed by Israel alone, and would have no weight on the US’ interests in deciding whether or not to support the plan.

Next, the number of times each factor is mentioned in each document, specifically as a reason for pursuing the Disengagement Plan is examined:

	<i>Letter to President Bush</i>	<i>Address to Knesset</i>
<i>Security Costs</i>	1	1
<i>Demographic Pressure</i>	0	2
<i>Israeli Public Opinion/National Consensus</i>	0	1
<i>Peace Process/US Pressure*</i>	0	0
<i>Distrust of Palestinian Partner</i>	2	1

*The Peace Process, or Israel’s commitment to the Road Map is mentioned in these documents (5 times in Letter to President Bush, 3 times in address to Knesset), but is not specifically mentioned as a reason for pursuing disengagement.

Based on this data, it is evident that Sharon clearly had to convince two different audiences – the US President and Israeli lawmakers -- and he appealed to different factors based on which group he was addressing. In his letter to US President Bush, he almost exclusively used distrust of Palestinian partner as a reason for disengagement. In his speech to the Knesset, he mentioned demographic pressure more than any other factor, but also mentioned security costs, Israeli public opinion/National consensus, and distrust of the Palestinian partner as reasons for pursuing the Disengagement Plan. This thesis sought to explore how Sharon’s strategy for unilateral Disengagement from Gaza was influenced by a combination of internal and external factors. Based on the above analysis, while all of the above factors probably played a role in Sharon’s strategy for the unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, demographic pressures and the distrust of a Palestinian partner probably held more weight than any of the other factors.

Alternative Strategies to Unilateral withdrawal from Gaza

Israel did have alternative options to a unilateral withdrawal from Gaza – Israel could have settled in for a permanent or semi-permanent occupation of Gaza, or could have refocused on bilateral negotiations with the Palestinians. If Israel had decided to occupy Gaza on a permanent or semi-permanent status, the same demographic pressures would have existed, and would have called Israel’s very identity as a *Jewish and democratic* state into question. Additionally, the security costs and commitments necessitated for protecting the Israeli settlers would have remained, and would have continued to stress Israel’s overall security and defense budget. Negative internal public opinion on the settlements could have eventually resulted in Israel being required to make concessions that it was neither willing nor able to do. Considering the context of the

stalemate in the Peace Process and the lack of reliability in the Palestinian partner, pursuing and refocusing on bilateral negotiations would probably not have resulted in favorable conditions for Israel. By waiting for bilateral negotiations to result in an agreement, Israel would have made itself susceptible to concessions to were not in its best national or security interests. Bilateral negotiations had failed to produce a lasting a stable peace in decades, so there was no reason to believe that they would have worked in 2005, especially considering the context of the second Palestinian *Intifada*. By proactively conceding the Israeli settlements in Gaza, Israel was able to shape where it would focus its security and financial resources, with the added benefit of bolstering international opinion of Israel's image – these results could not have been achieved through multilateral negotiations.

Implications

As the “father of Israeli settlements”, Sharon risked upsetting and betraying a section of the Israeli population that trusted him very deeply, and risked political instability and intra-Israeli violence by withdrawing from Gaza. Additionally, Sharon risked sending the wrong message to militant Palestinians that terrorism works and will be rewarded by political concessions. Despite these risks, Sharon took a calculated approach to withdrawing from the Israeli Settlements in Gaza. While supporters of the move credit the Israeli Disengagement from Gaza as a humanitarian measure or a concession to advance the Peace Process, critics claim that it was actually used to advance Israel's own goals and strategy, and strengthen its grip on its settlements in the West Bank.

Was the withdrawal from Gaza successful? The evacuation plan itself was executed relatively smoothly, despite ominous predictions that it would tear Israel apart. Since HAMAS' election in 2006, just a few months after Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, the Gaza Strip has been used as a base for rocket strikes against Israel. Israel has been involved in numerous counter-terrorism operations and campaigns against HAMAS, resulting in severe infrastructure damage and significant civilian casualties. Today Israel faces a different kind of security threat in Gaza – rather than having to protect Israeli citizens within Israeli Settlements in Gaza, it needs to protect Israeli citizens in Israel proper from rocket fire emanating from the Gaza Strip. In addition, Israel needs to find a way to curtail the movement of weapons systems into Gaza by state and non-state organizations that seek to use HAMAS and other militant Palestinian groups as proxy for their wars against Israel.

Additionally, Israel's precedent of unilateral action in Gaza will continue to have implications for the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process.

“For all this, the Gaza disengagement can still be welcomed, even celebrated, for the temporary and partial relief that it brings to the long-tormented Gazan population. But more fully considered, this disengagement represents a dangerous step backward in the struggle to find a just peace for these two peoples based on sovereign equality, respect for international law and fair solutions to the status of Jerusalem and the claims of Palestinian refugees.”²²⁰

By relinquishing the Settlements in Gaza, Israel was able to strengthen its grip on the Settlements in the West Bank, which have grown significantly in both physical footprint and population since 2005. They have become de-facto permanent fixtures in the West Bank, and evacuating them as any part of a final-status agreement or negotiation will extremely difficult if not impossible. Israel also acted unilaterally by beginning the

²²⁰ Falk, “Gaza Illusions,” 6.

construction of the West Bank Security barrier, which does not run along any internationally recognized border between Israel and the Palestinian territories, but rather penetrates deep into the West Bank by encircling its settlements.

This chapter identified some of the drivers of Israeli national security strategy vis-à-vis Gaza by exploring which factors were most influential in Sharon's decision to unilaterally disengage from Gaza. Understanding what drives Israeli national security strategy is vital for understanding how Israel will conduct itself in the future, which could help to predict potential causes of conflict in the region.

Israel's unilateral action in Gaza set a precedent for how Israel chooses to approach problems it sees as unsolvable with a Palestinian partner. The situations that Israel has created on the ground are no accident – they were carefully planned to suit and protect Israel's national and security interests. Israel will probably continue to act unilaterally with regards to the Palestinians as long as they can market their moves as being necessitated by security or by demonstrating how their Palestinian negotiating partner is not adhering to their end of the bargain, similar to how Israel justified its unilateral withdrawal from Gaza.

Chapter Three

The Israeli-Lebanese Trauma: How Domestic Public Opinion Affects Israel's Operations in Lebanon

Israeli military engagement in Lebanon has been a sore subject among the Israeli public since the late 1970s. Since the early 1980s, Israel has intermittently been involved in Lebanon for a number of strategic and political reasons that have ranged from eradicating the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO's) influence in Lebanon to deterring and actively combating Hezbollah. The manner by which Israel withdrew from its nearly 20 years of occupation of Lebanon eventually created the conditions under which Hezbollah, was able to flourish in southern Lebanon. The 2006 Hezbollah-Israel war in Lebanon was a watershed moment for the regional balance of power in the Levant. Despite the massive air campaigns targeted against Hezbollah strongholds and weapons caches in Lebanon, Israel failed to achieve most of the goals it has set for itself at the onset of the war. The 2006 war was the first time that Israel was not the clear winner in a war it fought. Ultimately, public opinion, a factor at the state level, had the most influential and immediate impact on the outcome of the 2006 war in Lebanon, as well as previous engagements in Lebanon because of its impact on the decisions of senior policymakers.

This chapter argues that poor domestic opinion constrains leaders' actions and operational effectiveness, but does not stop the war from happening all together. Existing scholarship on the relationship between public opinion and war generally will be examined, and then the relationship between public opinion and war in Israel and how those factors may determine Israeli conduct in war more specifically. The three specific factors through which public opinion affects the conduct of war that will be examined

include losses, elections, and leaders. Two case studies, the 1982 and the 2006 wars in Lebanon, will be reviewed to evaluate the hypothesis established in the literature review. Although Israeli presence in Lebanon as a result of the 1982 war lasted for nearly 18 years until 2000 and ultimately established the conditions which spurred the onset of the 2006 war (which only lasted 34 days), public opinion had an important and similar affect on determining the outcome of both wars. It is inevitable that Israel will experience a military confrontation with Hezbollah again in the future-- this research may help to predict how the war may be perceived by the Israeli public, and in turn how public opinion may affect the decisions of Israel's senior policymakers and ultimately, the outcome of the war.

This chapter seeks to identify how public opinion drives Israeli national security strategy by examining how it affects Israeli conduct in war. Understanding what drives Israeli national security strategy is vital for understanding how Israel will conduct itself in the future, which could help to predict potential causes of conflict in the region.

Methodology

These two cases were selected because they were the only historical examples of Israeli operations in Lebanon. Rather than studying how public opinion influences the initial onset of a war, or the leadership's decision to go to war, this research will instead focus on how public opinion affects war once the war has already been going on. While the conditions that lead to the onset of war are important, there are too many other factors such as issues of regional balance, and other environmental, economic and military strategic issues to isolate public opinion's role. Rather, public opinion plays an important role in determining the course of the rest of the war once the war has already started. The

sources examined for this research consists of secondary sources that describe historical accounts of these wars.

Literature Review

Public Opinion's affect on Policy

Page and Shapiro argue that public opinion has a significant affect on the outcome of policy. By “examining public opinion and policy data...[there is] considerable congruence between changes in preferences and in policies, especially for large, stable opinion changes on salient issues.”²²¹ Furthermore, Page and Shapiro argue that “public opinion is often a proximate cause of policy, affecting policy more than policy influences opinion.”²²² Burnstein would agree, arguing that the impact of public opinion is substantial and salience enhances the impact of public opinion.²²³ Furthermore, the impact of public opinion “remains strong even when the activities of political organizations and elites are taken into account...responsiveness appears not to have changed significantly over time.”²²⁴

How Public Opinion affects Type of War

Israelis are likely to have different reactions to different types of wars, which will ultimately determine how Israeli leadership will wage war. According to Barzilai and Efraim, “attitudinal propensities of Israelis about the use of force [can be] analyzed at several levels to accord with the perceived threats faced by Israel: interstate war

²²¹ Page, Benjamin I., and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1983. “Effects of public opinion on policy” *The American Political Science Review* 77 (1) (Mar.): pp. 175-190. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1956018> (accessed October, 2011).

²²² *Ibid.*, 175.

²²³ Burnstein, P. (2003). “The impact of public opinion on public policy: A review and an agenda.” *Political Research Quarterly*, 56(1), 29-40. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/215319430?accountid=11752> (accessed September, 2011).

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

initiatives; the handling of the *Intifada*; appropriate responses to terrorism”.²²⁵ Barzilai and Efraim found that of the three different types of conflicts he studied, the public was most likely to support actions against terrorism—in fact, Barzilai and Efraim found that about 80% of the Israeli public is willing to use various measures of force against terrorists.”²²⁶ Overall, Barzilai and Efraim found that “Israelis are generally inclined to support military force against terrorist organizations...and that the propensity of the Israeli public to lend legitimacy to military action against terrorism has not changed over time.”²²⁷ Additionally, a majority of Israelis would support “large scale operations” against terrorist groups.²²⁸ In other words, military action for the sake of responding to terrorism is the most unifying and legitimate use of force according to the Israeli public. Following the logic of these statistics, this framework can also be applied to Hezbollah. Israelis are probably going to continue to support large-scale military operations against Hezbollah if they continue to consider it as a terrorist group. However, despite Israel’s sensitivity to terrorism and terrorist attacks, as the 2006 war in Lebanon aimed at eradicating Hezbollah wore on, public support for the operations waned. Therefore, these statistics probably only apply to the onset of a conflict, and support for large-scale military operations may wane as the war drags on and the Israeli military casualty continues to rise.

Conversely, when questioned about how to deal with a civilian uprising such as the *Intifada*, the most frequent response in Barzilai and Efraim’s study was “a very

²²⁵ Barzilai, Gad, and Efraim Inbar. "The Use of Force: Israeli Public Opinion on Military Options." *Armed Forces & Society* (0095327X) 23, no. 1 (Fall196 1996): 49-80. *Military & Government Collection*, EBSCOhost (accessed September, 2011).

²²⁶ Ibid., 4.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid., 5.

cautious use of force, in a very limited manner and only against terrorists, inciters to violence, and the leaders of the civilian disturbances.”²²⁹ Of the three methods of war examined in Barzilai and Efraim’s study (terrorism, civil uprisings, and conventional interstate wars), the Israeli people had the most aversion by far to conventional wars because “the thought of future large-scale military encounters continues to haunt the Israeli public”.²³⁰ The responses of the survey revealed that “public attitudes reflected the prevailing preference for shying away from unrestrained uses of force”²³¹, and that if force was necessary and inevitable, Israelis favored a preemptive strike.²³² In conclusion, Barzilai and Efraim found that “Israelis distinguish between large-scale war, which is politically risky” and the “safer” limited uses of force involved with the *Intifada* (or other civil uprisings) and terrorism”.²³³ Furthermore, large-scale war, as experienced through conventional war, is “very costly in casualties and economic terms [and] generates greater caution among Israelis than fighting acts of terror and the *Intifada*, which are rather low in costs.”²³⁴

Barlizai and Efraim’s work is useful for assessing how public opinion affects the type of war being fought—the casual opposite of the relationship that I seek to explore in this paper. However, Barlizai and Efraim’s work is useful within my analytic framework because their idea that the military could choose to portray a war that has many conventional elements to it as a campaign against terrorism instead, so as not to risk public support. In turn, this would probably affect the kinds of offensives or decisions

²²⁹ Ibid., 7.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid., 8.

²³³ Ibid., 9.

²³⁴ Ibid.

leaders would make in a war, versus if they felt free to have it perceived as at least in part a conventional conflict.

Despite Barzilai and Efraim's argument that public opinion will be dependent on the type of war that is being fought, Barzilai and Efraim also argue that public opinion regarding National Security and Foreign Affairs is relatively stable. In Barzilai and Efraim's study of Israeli public opinion and the use of force, they found that there was no "great variation over time, despite the fact that changes occurred in other dimensions of the dovish-hawkish continuum."²³⁵ Furthermore, Barzilai and Efraim argue that because public opinion regarding national security and foreign affairs is stable, this "reflects the public's ability to differentiate among various military options."²³⁶

Losses/Casualties

In his writing on the relationship between public opinion and war, John Mueller concludes that the log of cumulative casualties alone influence public opinion about war.²³⁷ Gartner and Segura disagree, arguing instead that "marginal" casualties are better indicators in predicting the levels of public opinion opposition to a war. "Marginal casualties" can be defined as casualties that are greater than what is experienced in "normal" combat operations, such as those occurred from a single event that has a higher number of casualties than other events in the combat situation.

In constructing a generalizable theory of the relationship between casualties and opinion of war, Gartner and Segura establish four basic rules. First, Gartner and Segura argue that wars tend to start popularly with a "rally-around-the-flag effect", but then

²³⁵ Ibid., 19.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Mueller, John E. *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion*. New York: Wiley, 1973.

become increasingly unpopular as they become more costly.²³⁸ Second, the level of initial support for the war “will be critical to the sensitivity of opinion to casualty accumulation” because “military endeavors that are highly unpopular at the onset are very likely to manifest a weaker casualty-opinion relationship.”²³⁹ Third, Gartner and Segura believe that how a conflict begins is very important in determining the general public’s opinion on the war. For example, “an invaded nation is very unlikely to abandon a war effort because it is too costly if the implication of a defeat to national survival is dire.”²⁴⁰ Additionally, nations that are targeted are “likely enjoy more latitude in prosecuting a conflict than initiating nations, whose war participation was always a policy choice.”²⁴¹ Fourth, Gartner and Segura argue that the goals of the war are likely to have a significant impact on the “willingness of the society to pay the human costs of war,” because “conflicts perceived to have no clear criteria for success are likely to produce a public very sensitive to casualties.”²⁴²

The sub-hypothesis about losses is that both civilian and military Israeli casualties will have a profound affect on Israeli leaders to the extent that leaders will conduct operations in war with the goal of avoiding as many casualties as possible, even if those operations are limited and constrain Israel’s opportunities for operational success. Leaders are under enormous pressure, especially in Israel—that pressure will be compounded by negative public opinion towards Israeli losses of any kind. Israel is

²³⁸ Scott, S. G., & Segura, G. M. (1998). War, Casualties, and Public Opinion. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 42(3), 278-300. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/224565841?accountid=11752> (accessed September, 2011). 295.

²³⁹ Ibid., 297.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 298.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid.

known to have an exceptionally high sensitivity towards casualties which is “due in part to Israeli society’s well-known tendency toward mass hysteria.”²⁴³

In terms of the affect of opponent casualties on public opinion and the ultimate effect that has on war, there is a lack of coherent literature explaining this relationship. However, I think that opponent civilian casualties have some affect on public opinion about the war in general, though it may not be as coherent or persuasive as negative public opinion on indigenous deaths (whether civilian or military).

Leaders

Of the scholarship surveyed, there appear to be conflicting thoughts on the effects of public opinion on leaders. For example, Barzilai and Efraim argue that “public influence over foreign policy decision makers is limited.”²⁴⁴ However, the decisions of political leaders do reflect the country’s “political culture and principle sociopolitical myths.”²⁴⁵ In this sense, Barzilai and Efraim argue, “the influence of public opinion is indirect and contingent” because it depends on the values and structure that define the political setting.²⁴⁶ Therefore, the relationship between public opinion and political and military leadership is multidirectional.²⁴⁷

Lieberfeld would agree with Barzilai and Efraim, because he argues that “the extent to which policymakers are either constrained by factors such as public opinion or are relatively insulated from it varies depending in part on which types of policies are at

²⁴³Harel, Amos., and Avi Isacharoff. *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah, and the War In Lebanon*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

²⁴⁴ Barzilai and Efraim, “Israeli Public Opinion on Military Options,” 2.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 2.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

issue.”²⁴⁸ Furthermore, according to Lieberfeld, the autonomy of the state is generally greater on national security matters than on domestic issues, and thus national security policies are less easily influenced by protest or public opinion.²⁴⁹ Lieberfeld argues that public opinion interacts with both mobilized protest and with opportunity structures that enable the protest to be received. According to Lieberfeld, “social movements can act as a signal to policymakers that public opinion on an issue is shifting, or movements can themselves catalyze shifts in public opinion.”²⁵⁰ In a system where leaders rely on competition in elections, either of these dynamics can create incentives for senior policymakers to change policy based on public opinion.²⁵¹

Sela conversely argues that it is possible for senior policymakers to be significantly affected by public opinion and argues that “Israel’s unilateral withdrawal from the ‘security zone’ was a result of pressures from the bottom up on the political-military policymakers, initiated by a small...grass-roots...group which triggered a broad public debate and challenged the military’s concept and rationale.”²⁵²

Senior policymakers involved in decision making about wars in Lebanon will be cautious to act in ways that accord with public opinion, whether it is actual public opinion, or just perceived public opinion. We can expect that leaders will be sensitive to public opinion on war at all times, not just around the time of elections, and this will determine

²⁴⁸ Lieberfeld, Daniel. "Parental Protest, Public Opinion, and War Termination: Israel's 'Four Mothers' Movement." *Social Movement Studies* 8, no. 4 (November 2009): 375-392. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed September, 2011).

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 378.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 376.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Sela, Avraham. "Civil Society, the Military, and National Security: The Case of Israel's Security Zone in South Lebanon." *Israel Studies* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 53-78. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed October, 2011).

the decisions they make in waging war and will most likely limit their operational effectiveness.

Elections

Arian argues that “policy flows from election results because the elections empower those who make policy.”²⁵³ Public opinion is in the equation for making security policy, but it is not the only part of it.²⁵⁴ In fact, Arian argues, “it is easier to observe that leaders strive to give the impression of heeding public opinion because they hope that the electorate will select or reelect them, and they wish to avoid the threat of being replaced because of a gap between their positions” and public opinion.²⁵⁵ Election campaigns can provide “political stimuli that seem to strengthen the relationship between value preferences and policy: they sensitize people to their value priorities and to conflicts among values as well as among values and issue positions, resulting in more constraint”.²⁵⁶

Timing of elections seems to have a significant impact on the effect that public opinion can have on policy when it comes to war in Israel. For example, Lieberfeld credits a structural change to the Israeli electoral system with the ability to strengthen potential for public opinion on the war.²⁵⁷ The 1999 election was the second election to feature direct election of the prime minister rather than casting one ballot for one party.²⁵⁸ This pressed prime-ministerial candidates to exhibit more sensitivity to public opinion on

²⁵³ Arian, Alan, and Merkaz le-mehkarim asrategiyim ‘al shem Yafeh. 1995. *Security Threatened : Surveying Israeli Opinion on Peace and War*. Cambridge studies in political psychology and public opinion. Tel Aviv: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University ;Cambridge ;New York, NY, USA. 129.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Shamir, Michal, and Asher Arian. 1994. “Competing Values and Policy Choices: Israeli Public Opinion on Foreign and Security Affairs.” *British Journal of Political Science* 24 (2) (Apr.): pp. 249-271.

²⁵⁷ Lieberfeld, “Parental Protest,” 388.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

security issues, especially in the context of a popular protest movement advocating for the unilateral withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon. According to Lieberfeld, by January-March 1999, 55% of Israelis favored unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon during the run-up to national elections. Prime-ministerial candidate Ehud Barak was “certainly aware of the pro-withdrawal trend”; in fact “his promise to remove the army from Lebanon came a week after a Gallup poll” on the issue and thus Barak “announced his new position believing it accorded with public opinion trends”.²⁵⁹

The timing of elections will probably be an important factor in determining the effect of public opinion on the conduct of war because of the intensified and unified pressure they put on candidates to get elected or reelected.

Hypothesis

Based on the survey of the existing literature, most scholars usually indicate that the causal arrow is in the other direction—that war affects public opinion. While there are various factors that influence how public opinion affects Israeli conduct in war, some factors, such as losses, will be more influential than others. However, all of the factors described in the literature review above circle around Israel’s hyper sensitivity to losses, and leaders’ desire to avoid those losses. Based on the above review, the hypothesis for this chapter is that poor domestic opinion constrains leaders’ actions and operational effectiveness because of the steps leaders take to avoid casualties.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.,387.

The 1982 Lebanon War

Background

In the context of all of Israel's wars, the first war in Lebanon is considered to be one of the most controversial because it "broke the former national consensus on defense and encouraged the previously little known phenomenon of conscientious objections."²⁶⁰ From the onset of the war, there was a lot of public opposition against the war. Many Israelis saw the war as a "non-existential" war of choice, namely a "fight which was not forced on Israel but rather one which it had forced on one of its neighbors."²⁶¹ ²⁶² The explanation for this change of attitude "has to do more with a change of perception by the Israelis with regard to the level of the external danger to their state and existence."²⁶³

Israel originally engaged in armed combat in Lebanon because of foreign influence in the country which was recently weakened by civil war. Israel's main objective was to remove the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization), which was based in Lebanon where it was able to stage and prepare for terrorist attacks within Israel proper. Israel's strategy was not "a retaliatory action after [being] struck, but [to] prevent the hit by inflicting blows on...the murderers in their own bases."²⁶⁴ However, eradicating the PLO was only part of the problem—Israel also had to consider Syrian influence in Lebanon because "even if Israel wanted only to remove the terrorists, it had

²⁶⁰ Bregman, Ahron. 2002. *Israel's Wars: A History Since 1947*. Warfare and History. 2nd ed. London; New York: Routledge.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*,178.

²⁶² Lieberfeld, "Parental Protest," 378.

²⁶³ Bregman, *Israel's Wars*, 178.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*,151.

to take into consideration that the response of the Syrians would compel it to deal also with them—and this meant first of all destroying their missile system.”²⁶⁵

To summarize the Lebanon war of 1982, Israeli forces moved up to Beirut and the Beirut-Damascus road where they fought against, and expelled, PLO guerilla fighters²⁶⁶ and also clashed with regular Syrian forces in the eastern sector of Lebanon.²⁶⁷ Israeli forces then gradually withdrew—first to the Awali river in 1983 and then, further south.²⁶⁸ In 1985, plans for withdrawal were underway with United Nations (UN) resolution 291. At the time, there were two opposing schools of thought: one group that was for the “security zone” and the other that was against it. Most of the General Staff favored a deployment in a security zone in Lebanon proper, and preferred to rely on the SLA (Southern Lebanon Army, a Christian, Israeli-aligned group) to fight Hezbollah. The opposing school of thought was led by then Director of Military Intelligence General Ehud Barak who argued that “the best way to protect northern Israeli was by getting troops out of Lebanon and deploying them instead along the Israeli-Lebanese international border, from where they could, if necessary, launch cross-border raids to tackle Hezbollah.”²⁶⁹ The IDF eventually adopted the plan of the Generals and did not make a complete withdrawal. Instead, an 1100 square kilometer security zone was established which included 160 Lebanese towns and villages, and varied from a depth of 3 to 12 miles.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁵ Ibid.,155.

²⁶⁶ The PLO fled to Tunis, Tunisia where they reestablished their headquarters.

²⁶⁷ Bregman, *Israel's Wars*, 253.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 254.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 255.

Eventually, despite the leaders' best intentions, this security zone became one large battleground. Otherwise traditionally effective military equipment such as tanks and other armored vehicles suddenly became cumbersome and ineffective in the hilly terrain of southern Lebanon, breeding the rise of an insurgency that relied on asymmetric, untraditional methods to defeat its opponent. Additionally, while Israel's security zone in southern Lebanon was quite effective in stopping cross-border incursions into Israel, it was less successful in stopping Hezbollah's firing of rockets into Israeli towns and villages.²⁷¹ During the occupation of Lebanon, the IDF precipitated a humanitarian crisis in Lebanon by forcing an exodus of south Lebanese refugees to the capital Beirut, reinforcing Hezbollah's legitimate goal of riding Lebanon of the Israeli occupation.²⁷²

Losses

Losses—both Israeli and Lebanese-- had a profound affect on how the war was perceived by the public, and ultimately played a hugely influential role in determining the outcome of the war because of the pressure placed on Israeli leaders to limit casualties on both sides. For example, in September of 1982 during the Lebanese civil war, “under the watchful eye of their Israeli allies who had encircled the area, Lebanese Christian militiamen entered Beirut's Sabra and Shatila refugee camps bent on revenge for the assassination of their leader Bashir Gemayel.”²⁷³ There was a three day long massacre, an “orgy of rape and slaughter” that left hundreds, if not thousands, “of innocent civilians dead in what is considered the bloodiest single incident of the Arab-Israeli conflict.”²⁷⁴

The extent to which Israeli officials were involved or initiated and ordered these attacks

²⁷¹ Ibid., 258.

²⁷² Ibid., 259.

²⁷³ Martin Asser. “Sabra and Shatila 20 Years On” *BBC World News*, September 14, 2002. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2255902.stm (accessed September, 2011).

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

still remains controversial. However, Ariel Sharon has “already been found to bear ‘personal responsibility’ in the massacres by an Israeli commission of inquiry” which concluded that he shouldn’t hold public office again.²⁷⁵ After the massacres at Sabra and Shatila, Israeli opposition to the war grew dramatically and the “number of men expressing their unwillingness to serve in Lebanon soared.”²⁷⁶ Israeli authorities, in an attempt to keep the phenomenon of unwillingness to serve under the carpet, came up with “private arrangements” for soldiers.²⁷⁷ Hundreds of soldiers who refused to serve in Lebanon “had been spared jail by the government to avoid publicity.”²⁷⁸ Soldiers’ refusal to participate in the war in Lebanon demonstrates that Lebanese civilian casualties had a profound affect on how both the public and military establishments viewed the war—Israeli casualties alone didn’t contribute to this negative affect.

The war also led to some of the biggest anti-war demonstrations in Israel’s history. For example, while the war was still going on (in July of 1982), 10,000 civilians gathered in Tel Aviv to protest, and it was “the first time in the history of Israel that such an event had taken place during the course of a war.”²⁷⁹ Two months later, in September, over 400,000 protests gathered in Tel Aviv because of their “agitation over the continuing war, its accompanying casualty list, and such horrors as were manifested at Sabra and Shatila.”²⁸⁰ The pressure of this protests led to the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry, “whose findings when published led to the removal from office of the architect

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Bregman, *Israel's Wars*, 177.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

of the war, Ariel Sharon.”²⁸¹ The Lebanon war was also reportedly the first war in which a senior military commander, Colonel Eli Geva, resigned while the war was still in progress and the “first time ever that a whole brigade let it be known that if called to serve in Lebanon it would refuse to obey orders.”²⁸²

Public opinion towards the security zone was abruptly turned to be overwhelmingly negative when in February of 1997 two helicopters ferrying soldiers to the Lebanese front crashed, killing 73 troops. Although this was just an accident, this was “nevertheless an unusually large number of casualties for the Israeli public to stomach.”²⁸³ In early September of that same year, 12 more troops were killed after falling into a Hezbollah ambush, their bodies brutally mutilated and handled by Hezbollah Guerillas. Israelis were disgusted by the circumstances of the soldiers’ deaths, and a public debate began regarding the military purpose and viability of the security zone in southern Lebanon.²⁸⁴ Until these two events occurred in 1997, the Israeli public had been almost oblivious of the situation in southern Lebanon.²⁸⁵ Together, these two events formed the beginnings of what would be known as the “Israeli Lebanese trauma”. When it comes to Lebanon, the Israeli public (and subsequently, Israeli policymakers) face an “Israeli Lebanese Trauma”. Past traumatic experiences in Lebanon had taught Israelis that Lebanon was a quagmire, and that it would be wiser to keep out. This trauma continued to shape strategy during future conflicts with Lebanon.²⁸⁶

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Ibid., 259.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 260.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Such as the 2006 war with Hezbollah.

While many protest movements emerged, the Four Mothers Movement (FMM), which began in February 1997 in response to the helicopter crash, was one of the most notable and influential. The group started when several women belonging to a *Kibbutz*²⁸⁷ wrote a letter of support to some members of parliament who “had publicly called for Israeli troops to leave Lebanon.”²⁸⁸ The mothers, most of whom had sons fighting in elite combat units in Lebanon, wrote as “residents of the north”, because they lived and were situated near the front lines, calling for “creative initiatives to end the war rather than “continuing to send [their] sons like lambs to the slaughter.”²⁸⁹ Even before the war, some parents of soldiers “felt that the war imposed unwarranted sacrifices on their families and communities”.²⁹⁰ As they continued to witness rocket attacks from Lebanon, “movement founders observed that the war did not make northern Israel more secure as officials had claimed.”²⁹¹ In other words, “FMM founders saw the Israeli state doubly failing in its security obligations” because it could not protect citizens from rocket attacks and “further endangered families by sending their sons to fight an endless and unwinnable ‘war of choice’”.²⁹² The group demonstrated by holding vigils, demonstrating in front of government ministries, circulating petitions, lobbying parliamentarians, organizing debates and discussions on the war, made media appearances, and ran a hotline for soldiers’ families.²⁹³ With very little funding, and only a couple of hundred active member supports, the movement, “due largely its media visibility” helped make

²⁸⁷ A commune.

²⁸⁸ Lieberfeld, “Parental Protest,” 379.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 380.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Ibid.

the nearly forgotten war a prominent political issue.²⁹⁴ The movement originated because of the affect of conscription, and in the case of the 1982 war, conscription had a dramatic affect on senior policymakers and ultimately, the outcome of the war.

In the three years of FMM's activity, public opinion turned sharply against the war. In 1997, 40% of Israelis favored unilateral withdrawal—two years later in 1999 that percentage had risen 15% to 55%.²⁹⁵ By 2000, over 86% of the public believed remaining in Lebanon was “not worth the lives of Israeli soldiers” and 62 percent favored Israel's unilateral withdrawal.²⁹⁶

The losses experienced during the reign of the “security zone” in southern Lebanon, specifically that of the 1997 helicopter crash, spurred national dialogue and negative public opinion towards the war where Israelis had previously been unaware of the situation in Southern Lebanon. The rise in protests against the war and the dramatic rise of negative public opinion, compounded with the effect of elections and conscription (which will be discussed in later sections) eventually lead to the full withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000.

Elections

This shift in public opinion against the war had a profound impact on Israel's political leadership. In the context of elections in March 1999, the public opinion shift described above prompted policy change. In the heat of the campaign, the Labor party's candidate, Ehud Barak, “publicly pledged that if elected he would ‘bring the boys home’ within a year.”²⁹⁷ Barak's opponent, Benjamin Netanyahu also stated for the first time

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 381.

that he would do the same. In the context of elections, leaders were subject to public pressures, which in turn eventually affected policy on the war—if these public opinion pressures had existed distant from elections, leaders probably wouldn't have felt the same pressure to accommodate the public's demands.

However, a structural change to the electoral system around the time when a withdrawal from Lebanon was being debated in public discourse had an especially important role in highlighting the election platform of the candidates. The 1999 election was the second election to feature direct election of the prime minister rather than casting one ballot for one party.²⁹⁸ This pressed prime-ministerial candidates to exhibit more sensitivity to public opinion on security issues, especially in the context of a popular protest movement advocating for the unilateral withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon. This further strengthens the argument that elections can have a profound affect on how leaders perceive and absorb public opinion and ultimately lead to amend decision making regarding war. Prime-ministerial candidate Ehud Barak was “certainly aware of the pro-withdrawal trend”; in fact “his promise to remove the army from Lebanon came a week after a Gallup poll” on the issue and thus Barak “announced his new position believing it accorded with public opinion trends”.²⁹⁹ Therefore, the outcome of elections was an important manifestation of public opinion on the first Lebanon war because of the ways in which candidates heeded to the public's demands, ultimately restricting their operational effectiveness in the Lebanon war.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 388.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 387.

Leaders

In 1999, Barak was elected as Israel's Prime Minister. In his election campaign, he pledged to get Israeli forces out of Lebanon by July 2000. Barak believed that an end to the Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon would deprive Hezbollah of its legitimacy; "after all, Hezbollah claimed that it was fighting the Israeli occupation and thus if it went on to provoke Israel even after an Israeli withdrawal then the international community would back Israel in hitting back."³⁰⁰ However, Barak's execution of his plan did not go exactly as he had planned. Barak kept his true plans in secret from other Israeli officials and decision makers for as long as possible—that he was determined to withdraw from Lebanon even *without* a peace deal from Syria, as promised by his election campaign where he had succumbed to the pressures of negative public opinion against the war. Barak's lack of transparency as to the nature of his true motives lead to miscalculations in the IDF's logistical plans for withdrawal because they made their plans based on the context of an Israeli-Syrian deal.³⁰¹ A withdrawal that didn't include a deal with Syria would require more preparation because there would be "no guarantee that Hezbollah would not open fire on the retreating forces, or begin to take over the evacuated areas", using them as "launching pads" against Israel.³⁰²

Eventually, Barak was able to proceed despite strong resistance from the military command.³⁰³ The IDF on April 18 2000, issued a document entitled "The future of SLA as part of implementation of UN Resolution 425. It outlined the principles which, on the one hand, would enable Israel to dismantle the SLA in line with UN resolution 425, but

³⁰⁰ Bregman, *Israel's Wars*, 262.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid., 266.

on the other hand, let it continue to exist as small SLA civilian units, secretly financed and supported by Israel, to operate in southern Lebanon and ensure” that Hezbollah wouldn’t penetrate into the area close to the international border.³⁰⁴

When the IDF began withdrawing in early 2000, it quickly became impossible to hide the truth from the SLA, “who became concerned that they were about to be left on their own to face the wrath of Hezbollah.”³⁰⁵ Fearing preemptive desertion by the SLA, General Ashkenazi wanted to implement the exit plan immediately to maintain and preserve its effectiveness (IDF Chief of Staff Mofaz also believed it would be better to get out immediately so as to avoid casualties and surprise Hezbollah).³⁰⁶ However, Barak first wished to receive formal UN approval of the line of withdrawal to ensure that Hezbollah could not claim that the Israelis were still occupying Lebanese territory, and to maintain what little domestic legitimacy was left regarding the war. Since the war already had many unexpected setbacks, Barak wanted to make sure to tread lightly to avoid further public backlash.

However, because Barak kept deciding to delay the withdrawal to wait for official word from the UN, Hezbollah was able to take over numerous SLA strongholds peacefully, gathering small victories, both symbolic and logistical.³⁰⁷ On 16 June 2000, the UN Secretary General reported to the Security Council that Israel had withdrawn fully from Lebanon, in line with Security Council Resolution 425. After Israel’s full

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 267.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 269.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 270.

withdrawal from southern Lebanon, Hezbollah rapidly expanded its infrastructure and prepared itself for future confrontations with Israel.³⁰⁸

Barak's urgency in withdrawing from Lebanon originated from campaign pressures and promises—as detailed in the previous “elections” section, elections had become a quasi “single issue” vote that was based almost on the war. Barak clearly sensed the urgency in withdrawing from Lebanon, and therefore failed to fully inform the IDF of his motives. If he had been more transparent with the IDF about his plans, he would probably have faced the military leadership's opposition, as they would have advocated for a slower, more methodical withdrawal from Lebanon to ensure operational success, putting them in a position that was in tension with the desires of the public. Barak's lack of transparency from the onset to his hesitation in authorizing withdrawal until receiving official word from the UN to appear legitimate, ultimately lead the IDF to pursue and execute plans that were operationally ineffective. In other words, Barak demonstrated sensitivity to public opinion, which ultimately lead to operational ineffectiveness.

Conclusions on the 1982 War

Negative public opinion had a significant amount of influence on the outcome of the 1982 war. The negative public opinion that ultimately lead the Israeli Army to withdraw to the “security zone” or “buffer” constrained Israeli leaders to make war in a manner that was operationally effective. The influence of this negative public opinion was manifested in the elections of 1999 in which negative public opinion of the security zone became one of the sole issues of the election, and Israel made its decision to withdraw entirely from Lebanon as a result. Although impossible to prove, it may have

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 273.

been more effective for Israel to occupy more of Lebanon for longer, or to not have a security zone at all and withdraw from Lebanon entirely at an earlier point in the war. What is possible to prove is that Israel's creation of a security zone in southern Lebanon and its full withdrawal from that security zone as a result of the massive negative publicity it generated, was ultimately ineffective in preventing another armed conflict in Lebanon, which will be explored in the following section.

The 2006 War in Lebanon

After Israel's full withdrawal from southern Lebanon, Hezbollah rapidly expanded its infrastructure and prepared itself for future confrontations with Israel.³⁰⁹ The manner by which Israel withdrew from Lebanon ultimately determined the circumstances by which Hezbollah was able to establish virtual full control of Southern Lebanon, which ultimately lead to eventual confrontation with Israel and outbreak of total war in 2006. If Israel's leaders had decided to withdraw from the security zone more efficiently, or occupied the area longer, perhaps Hezbollah would not have been able to establish hegemony over the south so quickly and completely.

Background on the 2006 war

On 12 July 2006 at 9:03 am, Hezbollah fighters attacked an Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) patrol on the Israeli side of the border with Lebanon. They killed three soldiers and captured two others. Hezbollah reportedly planned to hold the two kidnapped soldiers ransom, wishing to exchange them for Lebanese held in Israeli prisons.³¹⁰ However, Israel reacted with full force, bombing 69 bridges and other targets in southern Lebanon to cut off Hezbollah's escape routes. Israeli political and military leadership sought to

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 273.

³¹⁰ Ibid., 252.

respond to the attack across the international recognized Israeli-Lebanese border, and sought to achieve other aims such that it “lead to all-out war with Hezbollah” in Lebanon.³¹¹

Losses

Throughout the 34 days of war with Hezbollah, Israeli policymakers acted in manners that demonstrated their sensitivity to and desire to avoid Israeli casualties. While the initial goal of avoiding as many Israeli casualties as possible was partially met, such actions lead to the increased number of Lebanese civilian casualties, ultimately delegitimizing Israel’s status as victim of the war.

In the 2006 war, the Israeli Defense Forces relied heavily on air warfare and were reluctant to send ground troops into Lebanon, eventually making the overall war less effective than it could have been because they were not able to adequately disarm Hezbollah of its small arms and mobile rocket launchers that could simply not be targeted by the advanced technology of the Israeli Air Force (IAF). Israel needed to tackle the problem of small rockets and other munitions in Lebanon, and the only way they could do so was by waging a ground campaign to locate and eliminate the small arms caches hidden by Hezbollah in various warehouses and civilian³¹² buildings throughout southern Lebanon. The reluctance to move troops on the ground into Lebanon reflected the “Israeli Lebanese Trauma” because policy makers hesitated to initiate a ground invasion knowing a ground assault would be bloody and messy, and would not be tolerated by the Israeli public, which has a high sensitivity to Israeli casualties.³¹³ Leadership reflected this sentiment felt by the public; Dan Halutz (IDF Chief of Staff) opposed a major ground

³¹¹ Ibid., 253.

³¹² In many cases apartment buildings, houses, schools, shops.

³¹³ Ibid., 279.

assault so strongly that he would not even initiate a reserve call-up for fear that it might encourage the government to use the troops to invade Lebanon.³¹⁴ Instead, Israel staged a number of small, ad-hoc incursions into Lebanese territory to remove these weapons caches, and initially relied almost exclusively on air strikes, which ultimately proved to be ineffective in dwindling Hezbollah's overall small weapons cache.

On 30 July 2006, Israeli air strikes hit an apartment building in the southern Lebanese town of Qana, killing 28 people, 17 of which were children, with 13 more missing. The event caused international outrage, and forced Israel to suspend air operations for 48 hours.³¹⁵ While the Israeli Air Force (IAF) was constantly improving its ability to locate and hit medium-range missile launchers, they were ineffective in finding and eliminating the supply of short range Katyusha rockets. In late July, the "IAF began to systematically attack houses on the outskirts of southern Lebanese villages", the region from where Katyushas were being launched into northern Israel.³¹⁶ Reportedly, objectives were defined as having "a circumstantial connection", meaning that the IAF identified places from where rockets had been launched in previous days. However, the connection produced no more than an approximate location and often-- as in the Qana incident-- lead to the killing of innocent civilians. From this point forward, Israel received a lot of international and domestic condemnation for their operations against Hezbollah in Lebanon against civilian targets, and was questioned on the overall proportionality of Israeli versus Lebanese deaths throughout the war. Ironically, by relying on the air force to avoid IDF casualties rather than send in ground troops, Israel caused Lebanese civilian

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, 160.

³¹⁶ Ibid., 161.

casualties of great magnitude, thereby generating the same negative public opinion it would have earned as a result of IDF casualties.

Part of the reason that Israel was losing so many public opinion battles because of civilian casualties was Hezbollah's skilled manipulation of the media to garner international and domestic condemnations of Israel. By occupying southern Lebanon, Hezbollah claimed, Israel was breaching basic human rights. By highlighting Israel's alleged violation of human rights, "Hezbollah sought to create a common basis with its target audience in the West, grounded in their, apparently, shared human rights values."³¹⁷ Hezbollah "artfully" exploited this theme by "cynically appealing to Western liberal mores" despite their otherwise anti-Western ideology and rhetoric.³¹⁸

Exploiting its various channels of communication Hezbollah addressed the Israeli public, army, and political establishment. It produced in Israel, but also abroad, a state of mind whereby its violent actions were met with understanding whereas those of Israel were strongly criticized. Showing pictures of innocent civilians maimed or killed by Israeli action helped ignite strong feelings of guilt within Israeli society, so much so that the fact that most Israeli engagements were the result of Hezbollah's kidnapping provocations was forgotten. Eventually, many Israelis came to feel that they had nothing to gain and much to lose from staying in Lebanon-- feelings that soon filtered up from the public to the political arena, and was one of the reasons Israel initially quit Lebanon in 2000.³¹⁹

³¹⁷ Schleifer, Ron. "Psychological Operations: A New Variation on an Age Old Art: Hezbollah versus Israel." *Studies In Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 1 (January 2006): 1-19. *Military & Government Collection*, EBSCOhost (accessed September, 2011).

³¹⁸ Ibid., 13.

³¹⁹ Ibid., 15.

Furthermore, because Hezbollah functioned as a quasi-military force hiding among the civilian population, Israel was “quickly accused of striking civilian targets with an “indiscriminate callousness amounting to war crimes.”³²⁰ On 3 August, the Human Rights Watch specifically accused Israel of war crimes.³²¹ Israel’s foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, defended Israeli actions in Lebanon by stating that “When you go to sleep with a missile, you might find yourself waking up to another kind of missile.”³²² As daily evidence of civilian deaths mounted, Israel’s defense fell on deaf ears of diplomats and reporters. From this point forward, Israel’s actions in Lebanon were often cited as un-proportional and lacking restraint by reporters and critics, and generated doubt about the legitimacy of the war both at home in Israel and abroad.

Leaders

During the 2006 war, leaders were affected by public opinion in such a way that pressured them to act in ways to avoid Israeli casualties, but were operationally ineffective. When Ehud Olmert, Israel’s prime minister at the time of the Hezbollah kidnapping, became prime minister, he “clearly thought it was time to take sharp action against Hezbollah in Lebanon, to discourage them from their cross-border raids.”³²³ Unlike his predecessors, Rabin, Barak, and Sharon, Olmert can be characterized as being a much more bold and confrontational Israeli leader. The timing of the Hezbollah kidnapping probably also had something to do with why Israel chose to react when it did. Gilad Shalit, an IDF soldier, was kidnapped by HAMAS militants on 25 June 2006 via underground tunnels near the border with Gaza, mere days prior to the confrontation with

³²⁰ Kalb, Marving and Saivetz, Carol. 2007. “The Israeli-Hezbollah war of 2006: The media as a weapon of asymmetrical conflict.” *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Bregman, *Israel’s Wars*, 275.

Hezbollah. When Shalit was kidnapped, “Olmert’s people informed the press that the prime minister intended to change the rules of the game...Israel would no longer be vulnerable to blackmail.”³²⁴ According to Olmert, “Israeli response would prove to the terror organizations that the abduction of Israeli soldiers is of no benefit.”³²⁵ Olmert dared to act “where his predecessors showed weakness.”³²⁶ Olmert’s boldness in confronting Hezbollah in Lebanon proper and retaliating towards their initial attacks is a feature of his unique influence on the escalation. If a different Prime Minister had been in power, Israel’s response may have been calculated differently. However, public opinion, or at least perceived public opinion, may have had some effect on why Olmert pushed for this kind of reaction—Israel had just days prior experienced a traumatic loss due to the kidnapping of Shalit, and the public was growing tired of having their soldiers used for political blackmail.

Olmert also had a profound affect on the course of the war, and acted in ways that revealed his sensitivity to Israeli public opinion, ultimately making his decisions about how to pursue the war less effective. About ten days into the war, frustration grew in Israel as it “became apparent that the limited ground operations and a sustained air campaign had failed to render Hezbollah powerless, as it was simply impossible for the IAF to eliminate thoughts of small and mobile rockets from the air.”³²⁷ However, there were mixed feelings among the ministers as to if and how a ground assault should take place. On 7 August, the military reported that they were ready with preparations for an invasion, and that they would be able to launch the offensive as early as 9 August.

³²⁴Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, 10.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Bregman, *Israel's Wars*, 281.

However, “the diplomatic clock was ticking fast”.³²⁸ On 8 August the Lebanese government agreed to send 15,000 troops to south Lebanon to put an end to Hezbollah’s attacks.³²⁹ Additionally, the UN Security Council was “moving in the direction of agreeing on its ceasefire resolution.”³³⁰ Despite the military’s readiness to start and completely execute a ground invasion within 96 hours, Olmert delayed initiating an invasion a number of times in hope that the UN Security Council would pass its ceasefire, and that the terms would be favorable to Israel. On 10 August, Prime Minister Olmert talked to his Defense Minister, and told him there would need to be another delay saying that they had “no other option to...[Olmert] would not endanger a [Security Council resolution] that [they] have a good chance of getting.”³³¹ Olmert asserted that the situation in Lebanon was very fragile and that “things might stop [at the Security Council]...and then it would take time to resume it...and by then we’ll have ...100 soldiers killed,”³³² revealing yet another example of Israeli sensitivity to casualties and the profound influence that fear has on policymakers decisions.

On 11 August, the UN Security Council passed a draft resolution to Israel, and it proved to be a massive disappointment. The defense minister urged Olmert to give the green light for a ground invasion, but Olmert insisted on consulting with some ministers before taking action. Later that day, “with a deficient Security resolution draft in his hand and his forces impatient”, Prime Minister Olmert finally “gave the green light to act”.³³³ The IDF started its advance into Lebanon towards the Litani, but the advance was slower

³²⁸ Ibid., 284.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Ibid., 288.

³³² Ibid., 288.

³³³ Ibid., 288.

than expected. The next day, the Security Council passed Resolution 1701 and called for a halt to hostilities and both the Lebanese and Israeli government accepted it shortly thereafter. By the time the ceasefire had been called, Israeli troops “failed to reach the Litani river and their achievements on the ground were minimal.”³³⁴ Furthermore, the “meaningless operation” spurred the loss of 33 Israeli soldiers and helicopter which had been shot down by Hezbollah fighters. Israeli leadership wrongly assumed that the UN ceasefire would be favorable to Israel, and miscalculated and delayed Israel’s ground invasion as a result, in part to avoid IDF casualties. Israeli leaders delayed the decision to stage a ground invasion because of their willingness to avoid casualties. However, if the decision for initiating a ground invasion would have been made earlier a ground invasion would probably have been more successful than the one that was eventually launched far too late into the war. Instead, Israeli leadership sought to delay a ground invasion for as long as possible with the sole purpose of avoiding Israeli casualties. Therefore, public opinion, or at least perceived public opinion, affected policymakers in that it limited their operational effectiveness in war because they sought to avoid Israeli casualties, but did not stop the war from happening all together.

Elections

Elections did not play as pivotal of a role as they did in the First Lebanon war, as the 2006 war was only 34 days long and took place immediately after Olmert was elected as prime minister. However, the fact that Israeli policymakers reacted similarly in the 2006 war as they did in the first Lebanon war *without* the added pressure of elections signifies that policymakers displayed the same sensitivity to public opinion on war, and implies that elections simply serve to magnify political pressure to act in certain ways but

³³⁴ Ibid., 290.

are not the sole influencing factor on how leaders will conduct war. The pressure to avoid casualties will dictate the course of Israel's future wars, and elections will merely serve as added political pressure.

Conclusions on 2006 War

Public opinion on the state level had a profound impact on the outcome of the 2006 war--the fear of Israeli casualties influenced the decisions made by senior policymakers through every step of the war. Senior policymakers hesitated initiating a ground assault into Lebanon, despite expert consensus that a ground invasion would be the only manner to severely cripple Hezbollah's weapons cache and ability to launch future attacks against Israel. A ground invasion would have put Israeli troops in direct danger and would probably have cost many lives, a burden that few senior policymakers were able to bear as the consequence of their decisions. Instead, they avoided a ground invasion, enabling Hezbollah to continue to flourish in Southern Lebanon and Lebanon at large.

Conclusions

Based on the cases explored, the 1982 and 2006 wars in Lebanon, poor domestic opinion does in fact constrain leaders' actions and operational effectiveness based on the actions leaders take to avoid casualties, as predicted by the hypothesis. Although Israeli presence in Lebanon as a result of the 1982 war lasted for nearly 18 years until 2000 and ultimately established the conditions which spurred the onset of the 2006 war (which only lasted 34 days), public opinion had an important and similar effect on determining the outcome of both wars. Based on public opinion, leaders acted in ways to limit Israeli

casualties in war and mediate negative public opinion, but the effect was limited operational effectiveness.

While other factors on the individual and international levels also played a role, public opinion and the pressure to avoid casualties shaped the decisions of senior policymakers. Leaders are under enormous pressure, especially in Israel. In the Israeli case, “it is due in part to Israeli society’s well-known tendency toward mass hysteria.”³³⁵ While leaders have changed with every war, public opinion has almost played the strongest role in determining the outcome, despite the influence of other factors.

The catalyst for the 2006 war was the kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers, but the underlying causes of the war had their origins in the 1982 war in Lebanon. Ultimately, the 2006 war was inconclusive—Hezbollah continues to enjoy de-facto control of a large majority of the country (both militarily and symbolically), and even rules legitimately from within Lebanon’s parliament.³³⁶ The question for Israeli is not if it will find itself in another confrontation with Hezbollah, but *when*.

This chapter identified public opinion as a key driver of Israeli national security strategy by examining how it affects Israeli conduct in war. This research may help to predict how the next war with Hezbollah may be perceived by the Israeli public, and in turn how public opinion may affect the decisions of Israel’s senior policymakers and ultimately, the outcome of the war.

³³⁵ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, VIII.

³³⁶ Since the mid-January 2010 coup that ousted Rafik Hariri and elected Mikati, a Hezbollah party member, as its Prime Minister.

Conclusion

This research reveals a number of key findings about the drivers behind Israeli strategy in Egypt, Gaza, and Lebanon. Understanding what drives Israeli national security strategy is vital for understanding how Israel will conduct itself in the future, which could help to predict potential causes of conflict in the region. Understanding Israel's historical security calculus in Egypt, Lebanon, and Gaza will help to predict future strategic Israeli actions vis-à-vis those states and the non-state actors they host in the wake of change and political upheaval across the Middle East.

Chapter One explored the factors that drove Israel to sign the 1979 Peace Treaty with Egypt and found that the combination of three factors – the legacy of the Yom Kippur war, the balance of power, and US pressure and incentives – all heavily influenced Israel's strategy to make peace with Egypt. Economic factors were secondary to these three primary factors in that Israel had more to lose financially than to gain in the near term by disengaging from the Sinai Peninsula. The treaty was meant to be a framework for peace with other Arab countries, but other than the 1994 Peace Treaty with Jordan, no additional peace treaties were ever reached. Therefore, the distinctive personalities of Anwar Sadat, Menachim Begin, and Jimmy Carter, were probably also significant factors in the role of the outcome. It is also possible that the treaty was not replicated because Israel already achieved its goal of neutralizing Egypt and breaking up the Arab block which restored the balance of power in Israel's favor, and therefore didn't give Israel as much of an incentive to make peace with other nations.

Chapter Two examined the drivers of Sharon's strategy to unilaterally withdraw from Gaza by examining two distinct sets of factors – internal and external. For internal

factors, demographic pressures, public opinion, and the cost of securing settlements were explored and demographic pressures were found to have the most significant influence on Sharon's strategy. Israel simply couldn't maintain its identity as both a Jewish and a democratic state if the demographics didn't reflect a majority Jewish population – Arab Muslims were in the majority in Gaza despite the presence of the settlements, and accounting for them would have meant they would either need to be afforded rights, or Israel would need to cede its control over the territory. Sharon was acutely aware of this demographic issue, and it had more influence on his decision-making than any other internal factor. For external factors, the distrust of the Palestinian leadership held more weight than any other factors. The Palestinians at the time had a sordid record on terrorism and the Palestinian leaders themselves were ineffective in curbing terrorism, making them an ineffective partner to negotiate with. By creating a unilateral disengagement plan, Israel was able to implement the withdrawal on their own terms, in a manner that was most beneficial to their own interests and priorities. Critics of the disengagement from Gaza argued that it was rewarding terrorism, a sentiment reinforced by the claims of HAMAS and its fringe groups that their tactics had accelerated the Israeli withdrawal. Still others claim that Israel used the disengagement from Gaza to distract from the fact that Israel was continuing to expand its settlements in the West Bank. Israel's unilateral action in Gaza set a precedent for how Israel chooses to approach problems it sees as unsolvable with a Palestinian partner, and it is likely that Israel will continue to act unilaterally in the future to protect its interests, particularly with regard to issues involving the Palestinians and the Peace Process.

Chapter Three demonstrated how public opinion drives Israeli security strategy in Lebanon by examining the 1982 Israel-Lebanon war and the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war. The specific factors that were examined for how they affected public opinion were losses (both civilian and military), elections, and leaders. This research found that poor domestic opinion constrains leaders' actions and operational effectiveness, but does not stop the war from happening altogether. While other factors on the individual and international levels also played a role, public opinion and the pressure to avoid casualties shaped the decisions of Israeli senior policymakers in a wartime environment. Based on public opinion, leaders acted in ways to limit Israeli casualties in war and mediate negative public opinion, but their effect was limited operational effectiveness due to the reliance on airstrikes rather than more comprehensive and effective ground operations. Although Israel inflicted massive damage to Lebanese infrastructure, and Hezbollah was annihilated, Hezbollah continues to grow in power and influence in the Levant region today.

Conclusions about Drivers of Israeli Security Strategy

The issues explored in these three chapters demonstrate that Israeli strategy is varied and that different factors and influences will drive Israeli strategy based on the context and the particulars of the situation at hand. However, the cases explored in this thesis overall do share some common themes about Israeli security strategy. Shared themes include Israel's tendency to cave to internal pressure rather than to external pressure, Israel's sensitivity to casualties, and Israel's willingness to make territorial concessions that do not conflict with the Zionist narrative.

All three of the cases explored in these chapters demonstrate that Israel will give greater weight to internal factors and pressures rather than to external pressures, and will act in its own best interests. Although US pressure was an important factor in leading Israel to peace with Egypt, it was the combination of three factors – the legacy of the Yom Kippur War, balance of power, and US pressure – that generated the outcome. The *combination* of these three factors is key, and US pressure alone in the absence of the other factors probably wouldn't have led to a peace deal. In Gaza, Israel did not withdraw due to US or international pressure to advance the peace process – rather, Israel withdrew due to demographic pressures, an internal factor. At the time, the US actually advocated for renewed Israel-Syria Peace talks, as the Syrian government had indicated willingness for such talks. Sharon flatly rejected the idea of peace talks with Syria and instead proposed the Gaza disengagement plan, which the US was initially very skeptical of due to their commitment to the “Road Map” plan for peace.

In both of the Lebanon wars, the Israeli military and Israeli decision makers exercised restraint in military operations due to the fear of backlash from the Israeli public over Israeli casualties, rather than to external pressure. During the 2006 war with Hezbollah, Israel relied on airstrikes on Hezbollah targets, which caused extensive collateral damage and civilian deaths, instead of a ground invasion, which would have been more effective at precisely eliminating Hezbollah targets. Despite the international outrage over these Lebanese civilian deaths and the exorbitant and disproportional damage to civilian Lebanese infrastructure, international pressure was not enough for Israel to alter its military strategy. The idea that Israel is more susceptible to domestic rather than international pressure can be expanded to apply to other Israeli security issues

as well, such as issues related to the peace process with the Palestinians. Israel appears to be immune to international public opinion, and does not often alter its approach based on external pressure -- the expansion of Israeli Settlements in the West Bank despite UN and international condemnations, and the disproportional Israeli Military Operations against HAMAS targets in Gaza both demonstrate that.

Israel's desire to avoid casualties is another common theme found to be a driver of strategy in this thesis. The loss of life in the Yom Kippur War had such a strong affect on Israel's general population and its policymakers that high-ranking Israeli officials resigned and the new leaders sought a peace deal with Egypt to ensure that such a surprise attack on Israeli soil would never happen again. In Gaza, the protection of Israeli settlers was one of the most influential factors in Sharon's calculus to unilaterally withdraw from Gaza. Israel was allocating a significant portion of its defense budget to secure the settlements from terrorist attacks, and Israel's expenditures to avoid Israeli casualties required a significant portion of the defense budget, which was not financially sustainable. The cost of protecting Israeli settlers and avoiding casualties, among other factors, led to the withdrawal from Gaza. In Lebanon, the losses experienced during the reign of the "security zone" in southern Lebanon, specifically that of the 1997 helicopter crash, spurred national dialogue and negative public opinion towards the war where Israelis had previously been unaware of the situation in southern Lebanon. The rise in protests against the war and the dramatic rise of negative public opinion, compounded with the effect of elections and conscription eventually lead to the full withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, finally ending the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon since 1982. Throughout the 34 days of war with Hezbollah in 2006, Israeli policymakers and military

commanders acted in manners that demonstrated their sensitivity to Israeli casualties. Senior policymakers hesitated initiating a ground assault into Lebanon, despite expert consensus that a ground invasion would be the only manner to severely cripple Hezbollah's weapons cache and ability to launch future attacks against Israel. A ground invasion would have put Israeli troops in direct danger and would probably have cost many Israeli lives, a burden that few senior policymakers were able to bear as the consequence of their decisions. Instead, they avoided a ground invasion, enabling Hezbollah to continue to flourish in Southern Lebanon and in the Levant at large.

The third common theme found in this thesis is Israel's willingness to cede territory that does not play an integral part in its religious-Zionist narrative. Israel returned the Sinai to Egypt despite the costs incurred by the dismantlement and relocation of the Israeli settlements and military infrastructure and the costs associated with giving up control over the oil and natural gas fields present there. In Gaza, Israel evacuated its settlements and ceded control over territory there despite the massive financial cost and opposition from Israel's fundamental religious groups. Unlike the West Bank and Israel proper, the territories of the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip do not have much religious significance in Judaism and do not play a vital role in the Israeli narrative of a Jewish homeland in historic Judea. Israel will likely not make any major territorial concessions in the West Bank due to its historical and religious significance, among other factors.³³⁷

³³⁷ Factors such as the cost of rerouting the "security barrier", logistics and costs involved with relocating and compensating the over 350,000 Jewish settlers living in the West Bank (compared to the approximately 7,500 settlers living in Gaza at the time those settlements were evacuated).

Recommendations for Amending Israeli Security Strategy

This thesis demonstrates that Israeli strategy in Egypt, Gaza, and Lebanon all align with the Israeli security pillar of deterrence, with mixed results in terms of effectiveness. Israel's strategy to make peace with Egypt has worked as a successful deterrent to prevent Egypt from going to war with Israel, and the peace treaty's deterrent affect appears to have been upheld despite the two political revolutions in Egypt. In Gaza, Israel disengaged from its settlements due to demographic pressures, and also to avoid potential escalations between the Israeli settlers and the Palestinians. Since the Israeli withdrawal, the multiple military operations Israel has staged in Gaza are meant to act as a deterrent for HAMAS and other groups, but the security situation has never been completely solved. In Lebanon, Israel temporarily set back Hezbollah in the 2006 war, but did not decisively defeat the group in order to eliminate the security problem all together. Israel's strategy of "mowing the grass"³³⁸, in which Israel attempts to deter hostile groups by setting them back temporarily, will not achieve long-term results and in many ways this tactic makes resentment and hatred towards Israel even more entrenched.

Relying on "early warning" has also not always been an effective tactic. The surprise coordinated Egyptian and Syrian attacks that started the Yom Kippur War have largely been credited to an Israeli intelligence failure in its early warning systems in the Sinai, which should have alerted Israel to the movement of Egyptian troops.³³⁹

³³⁸ Inbar, Efraim and Shamir, Eitan, "Mowing the Grass,"

³³⁹ Oren, Amir. "Yom Kippur War as a case study: Intelligence and deterrence did not suffice," *Haaretz*, December 14, 2013,

<http://www.haaretz.com/weekend/week-s-end/yom-kippur-war-as-a-case-study-intelligence-and-deterrence-did-not-suffice.premium-1.515157> (accessed March 2, 2015).

The nature of war is changing, and it may be time for Israel to rethink its foundational pillars of security. Chuck Freilich, Senior Fellow at Harvard, in advocating for a new strategic pillar, defense, writes:

Israel should place far greater emphasis on the new strategic pillar of defense, in terms of budgets, military doctrine, and decision-making. The IDF has yet to fully internalize the need for change, defense contravenes its fundamental ethos, and it will do so only if given clear instructions by the political echelon. In a way, this is beneficial, because it is true, as critics claim, that wars are only won through offense, and it is important that the IDF remain an initiating and aggressive military in its essence. This, however, is precisely where decision-makers' can make a difference, by recognizing the need to adopt new strategic thinking. Offense will still remain at the forefront, but defense must gain far greater priority.³⁴⁰

In addition to Israel's existing security pillars of decisive defeat, early warning, and deterrence, Israel should consider adopting this new pillar of defense proposed by Freilich. Although publicly the Israeli offensive spirit is celebrated and promoted, Israel has needed to become much more strongly defensive in its approach, as recent wars have shown.

However, working towards defense as an additional security pillar may not be enough without also pursuing effective diplomacy vis-a-vis Israel's adversaries for true strategic benefits. Since 2011, Israel has relied heavily on the Iron Dome Missile Defense system, which it developed with funding and assistance from the US. The Iron Dome has a 90 percent success rate and acts as "both a physical and a psychological solace that enables Israelis to go about their business."³⁴¹ However, without effective diplomacy, the

³⁴⁰Freilich, Chuck, "From Decisive Defeat to Restraint,"

³⁴¹ Fromer, Yoav. "The missiles keeping Israel safe may do more long-term harm than good," *The Washington Post*, July 14, 2014, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/07/14/the-missiles-keeping-israel-safe-may-do-more-long-term-harm-than-good/> (accessed March 2, 2015).

Iron Dome may trick the Israeli public into a false sense of security. Fromer, a political science professor at Tel Aviv University writes:

But, over time, Iron Dome may do them more harm than good. What looks like a tactical miracle may, accidentally, help engender a grave strategic blunder. Technology can mislead us by providing a false sense of security. But it cannot – and must not – become a substitute for effective diplomacy. And Iron Dome’s ability to protect Israelis from periodic rocket attacks so far will never remove the strife and discontent that has produced the motivation to ruthlessly fire them in the first place.³⁴²

Israel has the strongest and most technologically advanced military in the Middle East, but it too has its limitations – adding defense as an additional security pillar alone will not have the same effect as combining defense with strategic diplomacy, which would bring about a more authentic stability in the region. The peace treaty with Egypt set a precedent and proved that not only is peace possible in the Middle East, but mutual economic and security cooperation and benefits can occur as a result.

Implications

Future Israeli actions in Egypt, Gaza, and Lebanon will have important implications for stability in the region as a whole, just as they have in the cases that were explored in this study. Although Israeli strategy will likely vary based on the unique circumstances of the situation, the factors that drive Israeli strategy identified in this study may help to predict how some of those situations play out in the future. Due to the sudden collapse of authoritarian governments and the subsequent rise of instability and violent extremism, the Middle East is in a state of turmoil unlike any that has been experienced in recent history. Threats against Israel are evolving and expanding with the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran, the rise and influence of Islamism in the wake of ISIS’ rapid rise to power in the Levant.

³⁴² Ibid.

In early March 2015, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gave a speech to the US Congress about why he thinks the potential agreement with Iran on its nuclear program is a “very bad deal”. Critical of US diplomatic engagement with Iran, Netanyahu argued that “no deal is better than a bad deal”, and many scholars cite US current involvement in the P5 + 1 talks and Israel’s attempts to undermine the deal as the reason for increasingly tense US-Israeli relations.³⁴³ Israel cannot afford for Iran to acquire nuclear capabilities – these capabilities represent a red line for Israeli security and Israel will likely act unilaterally if it thinks diplomacy and negotiations do not produce a satisfactory result. Any Israeli unilateral action towards Iran will undermine US diplomatic efforts and will impact the perception of US power and influence across the world, and it will further strain the already tense relations between Israel and the US.

Dennis Ross, who previously served as senior Middle East advisor to President Obama, argues that the US should aim to seek clearly define different categories of Iranian violations and the consequences for each so that the parties involved discuss how violations will be handled rather than responding to them once it is too late.³⁴⁴ If the US fails to clearly delineate the consequences to Iran, Israeli will not hesitate to act unilaterally to prevent further development of an Iranian nuclear program. The US may

³⁴³ “The complete transcript of Netanyahu’s address to Congress,” *The Washington Post*, March 3, 2015,

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-politics/wp/2015/03/03/full-text-netanyahus-address-to-congress/> (accessed March 14, 2015).

Baker, Peter and Rudoren, Jodi. “Talk Toughens as U.S.-Israel Relations Fray”, *The New York Times*, February 25, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/26/world/middleeast/talk-toughens-as-us-israel-relations-fray.html?_r=0 (accessed March 14, 2015).

“P5 + 1 Negotiations with Iran,” The White House, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/foreign-policy/iran-negotiations> (accessed March 14, 2015).

³⁴⁴ Ross, Dennis. “Netanyahu Has Reasons to Be Worried,” *The Washington Institute*, March 4, 2015, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/netanyahu-has-reasons-to-be-worried> (accessed March 14, 2015).

not be able to prevent Israeli unilateral action towards Iran, but it may be able to anticipate it.

As ISIS continues to rise in influence and power in the Levant, it will pose a greater and more significant threat to Israeli security. ISIS is already approaching Israel's borders with its presence in the Sinai, the Golan heights, and a small presence in the Gaza Strip. In Israel proper, "several dozen Israeli Arabs went to Syria to join ISIS" and cells of Israeli Arabs swearing allegiance to ISIS have been arrested and detained in Israel.³⁴⁵ In addition, ISIS is striving to gain influence in other countries neighboring Israel such as Lebanon and Jordan and "in the long run Israel is very much on ISIS' radar, and might yet become the focus of its active attention."³⁴⁶ The danger of Jihadi attacks on Jewish targets in the West has already manifested itself in the early 2015 attacks on a kosher supermarket in Paris and a synagogue in Copenhagen. For Israel, "defining itself as the nation-state of the Jewish people and considering itself to have special responsibility for the security of Jews anywhere in the world – Jewish targets outside of Israel represent a soft target for Israel's enemies."³⁴⁷

Despite the grave threat that ISIS represents to Israeli security, there are opportunities for greater stability and diplomatic engagement in the region, depending on Israel's approach. Considering their shared interests in curbing the spread of ISIS' influence, Israel and the US should work together to target key ISIS infrastructure and targets, minimizing ISIS' influence with the added bonus of improving tense US-Israeli

³⁴⁵Herzog, Michael. "Jihad on the Horizon: The ISIL Threat from an Israeli Perspective," *The Washington Institute*, March 2015, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/opeds/Herzog20150301-BICOM.pdf> (accessed March 21, 2015).

³⁴⁶Ibid.

³⁴⁷Ibid.

relations through pursuit of a shared goal. Greater Israeli involvement in the coalition fight against ISIS could also promote cooperation between Israel and the pragmatic Sunni powers already involved in the fight against ISIS. Not only would the fight against ISIS become more effective through coordination and burden-sharing which would ultimately enhance Israel's overall security, military and intelligence cooperation between Israel and other Arab powers could lead to enhanced diplomatic relations overall, which could lead to a more positive perception of Israel by the Arab world. The potential for Israel to cooperate over any issues with Arab powers represent the real fruits of the 1973 war.

Now, more than ever, it is crucial to understand Israeli strategy in order to predict how Israel may react to the rapidly changing dynamics of the Middle East. As the region's most powerful and technologically advanced military, Israel will continue to play a crucial role in determining stability in the volatile Levant. In March 2015, Benjamin Netanyahu, an Israeli "hawk" from the Israeli right-wing Likud party, won elections for Prime Minister by a narrow margin. Notorious for his hardline approaches to Israeli security – including the summer 2014 operation in Gaza and his resistance to freezing Israeli settlements in the West Bank – Netanyahu won his seat by ramping up his conservative language the day of the election, stating that as long as he serves as prime minister of Israel, there will not be an independent Palestinian nation.³⁴⁸ In the days leading up to the election, Netanyahu argued that Israeli security would be in jeopardy if he were not reelected, declaring that a vote for his opponents would be a vote for "Hamastan", referring to HAMAS, and further alleged that his opponents would yield to

³⁴⁸ Booth, William. "Netanyahu says no Palestinian state if he wins", *The Washington Post*, March 16, 2015, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/on-final-day-of-campaign-netanyahu-says-no-palestinian-state-if-he-wins/2015/03/16/4f4468e8-cbdc-11e4-8730-4f473416e759_story.html (accessed March 21, 2015).

international pressure and "huge financial support coming from abroad, from left-leaning tycoons and foreign governments."³⁴⁹ In the end, his hardline approach toward security clearly resonated with the Israeli public, securing him the extra votes he needed to be his opponent by a narrow margin. In interview with National Public Radio (NPR) after his reelection, Netanyahu stated that his reelection confirmed Israel citizen's endorsement of his vision of Israel's security.³⁵⁰ The recent Israeli elections prove, yet again, that Israel will shape its security strategy based on internal pressures rather than external pressures or expectations, such as US pressure to pursue the Peace Process. In fact, Israel values candidates who can prove that they reject international public pressure and opinion altogether.

Netanyahu's pre-election statements infuriated the Obama administration, and Obama reportedly waited nearly two days before placing a congratulatory call to Netanyahu.³⁵¹ Obama told Netanyahu directly that the US "would have to 'reassess our options' after the prime minister's 'new positions and comments' on the two-state solution, according to a White House official."³⁵² U.S. officials have also reportedly "spoken of scaling back diplomatic protection of Israel. Until now, the United States has typically blocked United Nations resolutions against Israel."³⁵³ Netanyahu has attempted

³⁴⁹ McLaughlin, Elliott. "Israel's PM Netanyahu: No Palestinian state on my watch," *CNN Online*, March 16, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/03/16/middleeast/israel-netanyahu-palestinian-state/> (accessed March 21, 2015).

³⁵⁰ "Transcript: NPR's Interview With Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu," *National Public Radio*, March 20, 2015, <http://www.npr.org/2015/03/20/394191261/transcript-nprs-interview-with-israeli-prime-minister-benjamin-netanyahu> (accessed March 21, 2015).

³⁵¹ Rudoren, Jodi and Shear, Michael. "Israel's Netanyahu Reopens Door to Palestinian State, but White House is Unimpressed," *The New York Times*, March 19, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/20/world/middleeast/israel-netanyahu-elections-palestinian-state.html?_r=0 (accessed March 21, 2015).

³⁵² *Ibid.*

³⁵³ "Transcript: NPR's Interview With Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu," *National Public Radio*.

to clarify some of his pre-election statements after winning the election, but tension between the US and Israel remains high.

Although the US-Israel relationship is becoming increasingly tense, the relationship and alliance itself is not likely to disintegrate entirely anytime soon due to the entrenched and intertwined history of the US-Israel alliance in the Middle East. As a strategic ally of the US, Israeli actions will continue to have an affect on US goals and objectives in the region, as well as on attitudes towards the US or US Policy. Although the US will likely not be able to influence Israeli security policy and strategy in a significant way, this thesis will aid senior policymakers and decision makers in predicting Israeli action by identifying the drivers of Israeli security strategy.

Recommendations for Future Researchers

This thesis reveals some areas for further study regarding Israeli security strategy. The circumstances under which Israel will chose to pursue a policy of decisive victory rather than continued deterrence would be an interesting topic to explore further. It would also be interesting to explore how Israeli deterrence of HAMAS and Hezbollah has bolstered support for or enhanced the legitimacy of these groups. In addition, future researchers could examine if there are any current or future opportunities that mirror the circumstances that led to Israel's willingness to make peace with Egypt, such as with a state that may currently be challenging Israel's balance of power in the Middle East. On a related note, it would also be interesting to explore any mutual economic benefits or peace dividends that Israel could have from making peace with other countries in the Middle East.

Appendix A

Source: "Outpost Cleared in new Gaza Raid". *BBC World News*, 19 August 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4164530.stm (accessed January 30, 2014).



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Curriculum Vita

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