

The United States and Israel: Impact of the Lebanon War

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THE WAR IN LEBANON OVERSHADOWED all other developments in the Middle East in 1982. The conduct of "Operation Peace for Galilee," as Israel termed the massive onslaught of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) against the Palestine Liberation Organization's (PLO) military and political infrastructure in Beirut and southern Lebanon, aroused a sharp debate within the United States, as it did throughout the world.

The administration of President Ronald Reagan was generally sympathetic to Israel's desire to remove the PLO threat to the civilian population of northern Galilee. Moreover, President Reagan expressed his "deep sense of shock and outrage" at the "cowardly and unconscionable attack" by Palestinian terrorists on Shlomo Argov, Israel's ambassador in London. In his message to Prime Minister Menachem Begin following the June 3rd assassination attempt, Reagan added, "I pray with you that the day will soon arrive when this mindless violence will no longer plague the earth." The Israelis thus had good reason to believe that the Reagan administration would applaud the destruction of the PLO's bases in Lebanon, which had served as training centers for Soviet-supported terrorists from more than twenty countries around the globe.

Strategic Implications of "Operation Peace for Galilee"

The Reagan administration, in general, and Secretary of State Alexander Haig, in particular, viewed all developments on the international scene in terms of their impact on the global Soviet-American rivalry. From this perspective, the war in Lebanon—including Israel's decisive blow against Kremlin-backed terrorism, the IDF's destruction of Syria's Soviet-supplied SAM-missile sites and large quantities of Syrian aircraft and tanks, the apparent superiority of American over Soviet weapon systems this revealed, and the impotence displayed by the Kremlin in the final months of the Brezhnev era by its failure to save the PLO or its Syrian ally from humiliating defeat—served to enhance America's prestige in the power struggle with Russia.

Because of the special relationship that existed between the United States and Israel, it was to Washington rather than Moscow that Lebanon and

most of the other states in the Arab world turned in hope of influencing the Israelis and promoting peace. Thus the United States took the lead in creating the multinational force that supervised the evacuation of the PLO from Beirut. The force was recruited from three Western NATO members—France, Italy, and the United States—excluding the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies. In the diplomatic arena, it was the Reagan initiative of September 1, and not the Brezhnev peace plan announced two weeks later, that became the major focus of attention and debate in Palestinian, Jordanian, and most other Arab circles. And it was the special envoys dispatched by President Reagan whom the Lebanese relied upon to facilitate the negotiations with Israel that began late in 1982.

By destroying the PLO state-within-a-state in southern Lebanon, removing PLO and Syrian forces from Beirut, and exerting military pressure on Damascus, the IDF significantly changed the balance of forces within strife-torn Lebanon. For the first time since the outbreak of the bloody civil war in 1975, there was hope that an independent Lebanon, under Maronite Christian leadership, and with an essentially pro-Western orientation, might emerge. Thus, as Israeli defense minister Ariel Sharon argued, it was the power of Israeli arms that advanced America's strategic interests in Lebanon and the broader Middle East region. While Prime Minister Begin made it clear that Israel did not covet an inch of Lebanese territory, and that the IDF was prepared to withdraw when conditions assuring Israel's security had been met, the presence of Israeli armed forces in southern Lebanon provided the United States with a potential bargaining chip to negotiate the removal of the PLO and the approximately 30,000 Syrian troops, who had been stationed in Lebanon since 1975. (The Syrian troops ostensibly were in Lebanon as an Arab League-sanctioned peacekeeping force, but they actually served as an instrument for asserting Syria's claim to hegemony over Lebanon.)

President Reagan underscored the extent to which the United States and Israel shared basic strategic objectives when he declared, at the conclusion of a three-hour meeting with Prime Minister Begin at the White House on June 21: "All of us share a common understanding of the need to bring peace and security to the Middle East. . . . On Lebanon, it is clear that we and Israel both seek an end to the violence there and a sovereign, independent Lebanon under the authority of a strong central government. We agree that Israel must not be subjected to violence from the north. The United States will continue to seek these goals and the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon."

Differences Within Reagan Administration on Israel

Nevertheless, there were sharp disputes between Washington and Jerusalem. These arose not only over the tactics employed by Israel in the conduct

of the war, but over the more fundamental question of the extent to which American and Israeli interests in the region were in fact congruent, and whether the United States should treat Israel as its primary strategic ally against Soviet penetration and radical destabilization of the region. While various reasons were advanced for the sudden resignation of Secretary of State Alexander Haig at the end of June, for Israel this meant the removal of a sympathetic voice and a firm advocate of close cooperation between Washington and Jerusalem. The departure of Haig also marked the ascendancy of Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, who had alienated Israel and its American friends by his vigorous pressing of the AWACS and F-15 enhancement sales to Saudi Arabia, and of William Clark, who had recently replaced Richard Allen, also known for his understanding of Israel's position, as the president's national security adviser. Unlike Haig, who believed that occasional disagreements between Washington and Jerusalem could be best resolved by offering aid and other positive inducements to the Israelis, Weinberger and Clark were not afraid of confrontation, and at times advocated the use of pressure against Israel. Clark, who lacked experience in foreign affairs in general, and knew little about the Middle East, was reportedly sharply critical of what he regarded as Israeli "intransigence" and "aggression" in Lebanon.

George Shultz, who succeeded Haig as secretary of state, was more evenhanded in his approach. At his Senate confirmation hearings in mid-July, he reiterated the traditional American recognition of Israel as "our closest friend in the Middle East," and confirmed America's enduring commitment to support Israel's security needs. However, he also stressed "the importance to our own security of wide and ever-strengthening ties with the Arabs," and defined America's vital interests in the Arab world in terms of oil, resistance to Soviet imperialism, and promoting Middle East peace. While expressing his support for the Camp David accords, Shultz emphasized their importance as the framework for resolving the Palestinian problem. The Lebanese crisis, he declared, "makes painfully and totally clear a central reality of the Middle East: the legitimate needs and problems of the Palestinian people must be addressed and resolved—urgently and in all their dimensions." This renewed emphasis by the administration on the Palestinian issue was to be reflected in the unveiling on September 1 of the Reagan initiative, an effort to induce King Hussein of Jordan and Palestinian Arabs to enter American-sponsored negotiations on the future of the West Bank. (For details, see below.)

(At the confirmation hearings, Senate members questioned the secretary of state-designate about his connections with Bechtel, the giant construction company with extensive projects in the Arab world. Senator Paul Sarbanes (D., Md.) criticized Bechtel's non-compliance with American legislation forbidding U.S. firms to cooperate with the Arab boycott of Israel, and

questioned whether Shultz's past association with the company would color his policies on the Middle East. Senator Larry Pressler (R., S.D.) questioned Bechtel's intensive lobbying on behalf of the AWACS sale to Saudi Arabia. Shultz replied that Bechtel had been entirely law-abiding under his leadership. He justified the company's advocacy of the AWACS sale, and firmly denied that his Bechtel experience would have any bearing on his conduct in office.)

Shultz's testimony revealed a fundamental difference in the positions of the American and Israeli governments with regard to the Palestinian issue. The Americans hoped that a militarily weakened and chastened PLO might be induced to moderate its aims and agree to work with King Hussein of Jordan toward creation of a Palestinian entity on the West Bank linked to Jordan and at peace with Israel. But for this scenario to work, PLO leader Yasir Arafat would have to be provided with an opportunity to withdraw his forces from Beirut without humiliation and with his political organization intact. Some American visitors to the besieged PLO leader, notably Representative Paul McCloskey (R., Calif.) who saw him in Beirut toward the end of July, contended that Arafat had already agreed to "recognize" Israel. (This was promptly denied by Arafat and other PLO spokesmen.) Other American officials, while not convinced that the PLO had yet made any decisive change in its policy of rejection of Israel, still felt that the mainstream of the PLO might be moving in the direction of accommodation. They pointed out that the British had uncovered evidence that the assassination attempt against Ambassador Argov, which triggered the Israeli attack on the PLO in Lebanon, had not been initiated by Arafat, but was the work of the dissident Abu Nidal faction, which had broken away from Arafat's al-Fatah and had been working, with Syrian and Iraqi backing, to destroy any chance of an Israeli-Palestinian political settlement.

Critics of the Israeli incursion into Lebanon contended that Israel's action was unjustified because the PLO had not initiated any direct shelling of Israeli civilians across the border from Lebanon since the cease-fire arranged the previous summer by U.S. envoy Philip Habib had gone into effect. George Ball, an under secretary of state during the Johnson era, and a long-time critic of Israel, told the Senate foreign relations committee that Israel's invasion of Lebanon "was not a defensive action; it was an attempt to crush the only legitimate and recognized Palestinian opposition, so that Israel could proceed unchallenged to absorb the occupied areas." He urged the United States government to "recast its relations with Israel." While not going quite that far, committee chairman Charles Percy (R., Ill.) questioned whether the time had not come to define what was meant by "defensive actions." Senator John Glenn (D., Ohio) asked for an inquiry into whether Israel's use of American weapons in the war in Lebanon had violated the

conditions under which the arms had been sold. The administration responded by suspending the sale of cluster bombs to Israel, by initiating an inquiry into Israel's use of U.S. weapons in Lebanon, and by holding up the pending sale of 75 F-16 fighter planes. (Israel had an option to purchase the planes as part of an earlier arms package to Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Israel. After the Reagan administration won congressional approval of the AWACS and F-15 enhancement package for Saudi Arabia in 1981, Israel activated its request for the F-16's.)

The Begin government was angered by the Reagan administration's embargo of the F-16 sale, both because Jerusalem regarded this as an improper form of pressure, and because it symbolized administration disapproval of the Israeli action in Lebanon, lending support to the charge that Israel was not acting strictly in self-defense.

In the months before the launching of Operation Peace for Galilee, there had been extensive discussions between American and Israeli officials as to what would constitute an unquestionable breach of the cease-fire which Ambassador Habib had obtained in July 1981. The view of the PLO was that it had only agreed to stop direct shelling of Israeli targets from across the Lebanese border, but that it was entitled to continue its armed struggle against Israel and Israeli supporters abroad. Early in 1982 a variety of terrorist acts occurred in Israel and the occupied territories. After Israel had stopped several PLO attempts to infiltrate via Jordan, the state department had declared that the United States' understanding was that "any hostile action originating from Lebanon but going through Syria and Jordan into Israel would be a violation" of the cease-fire. This clarification was issued in March after Ambassador Habib had returned from yet another trip to the Middle East to defuse the rising tension. Habib told reporters that the Israelis had given him "a clear indication that they wish to abide by the cease-fire" and would "not be the first to attack." However, Israel had also put Washington on notice that it reserved the right to respond to PLO violations that constituted "clear provocation."

More dangerous to Israel over the long run was the growing evidence that the PLO was engaged in a massive buildup of conventional military forces in southern Lebanon. In February the Kuwaiti News Agency reported that the Soviet Union had recently supplied the PLO with \$50 million in sophisticated weapons, including surface-to-air and FROG missiles, as well as heavy artillery. An Associated Press dispatch on February 11 confirmed the PLO's acquisition of some 80 tanks and 500 artillery pieces. Secretary of State Haig condemned the provision of such armaments to the PLO in southern Lebanon as "an aggravation of the efforts we have been engaged in to prevent the outbreak of conflict." Nevertheless, the buildup continued, and, on March 16, Drew Middleton, veteran military analyst of the New

York *Times*, wrote that the PLO was "now able to attack most of the cities and towns in northern Israel at long range." Middleton reported that "a steady stream of long-range guns, rockets, and mortars has been reaching southern Lebanon in the last two months." He added that the Soviet-supplied PLO forces had been steadily reinforced by well-trained military volunteers from Iraq, Libya, and South Yemen.

As the PLO increased its capacity to pose a serious threat to civilian life in Israel's northern population centers, Prime Minister Begin became convinced of the necessity to attack the terrorist organization. In February Major General Yehoshua Saguy, chief of Israeli military intelligence, was dispatched to Washington to seek the understanding of the Pentagon and Secretary of State Haig of the danger confronting Israel. After Soviet Air Force commander Pavel Kutakhov held talks with Syrian defense minister Mustafa Tlas in Damascus in March, diplomatic sources in Beirut reported that Syria and the Soviet Union had signed an arms agreement under which Moscow was to supply Syria with a new missile network and advanced MIG planes. This introduced an additional element of urgency to Israel's military planning, since if the IDF was to strike effectively against the PLO and the Syrian missile batteries in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, it had to do so before the Syrians had emplaced and learned to use the more sophisticated new Soviet equipment.

Defense Minister Sharon visited Washington in mid-May and made no secret of the fact that if Israeli lives were threatened by the PLO, Israel would strike swiftly and firmly to protect its citizens. According to Ze'ev Schiff's account, published in the Spring 1983 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Secretary of State Haig "issued no threat against Israel's forthcoming military action. . . . He emphasized that it would take an unquestionable breach of the cease-fire by the PLO to warrant an Israeli riposte. Without such a breach, he said, an Israeli attack would be neither understood nor accepted in the international arena." In a letter to Prime Minister Begin on May 28, Haig expressed American concern over the unforeseeable consequences of Israeli military action, and emphasized that the U.S. would appreciate "utmost restraint" on the part of Israel. Yet Defense Minister Sharon did not interpret this as an American warning not to act. Indeed, a subsequent meeting between Haig and Israeli ambassador Moshe Arens seemed to support Sharon's contention that the United States would not oppose an Israeli move, since Arens reported that he had discussed "in a positive atmosphere" Israel's need to establish a security zone in southern Lebanon.

There was a rather broad consensus among Israel's supporters in the United States favoring the initial Israeli incursion and the establishment of a 45-kilometer-deep security zone in southern Lebanon. Once Israeli forces moved further north, however, and especially when the bombardment of

Beirut intensified and casualties mounted, this consensus broke. During his visit to Washington in late June, Prime Minister Begin came in for harsh questioning even from traditional congressional friends of Israel.

Secretary of State Haig's warning that Israel's action would not be understood or accepted internationally was borne out by the scathing condemnation of Israel not only by the Communist and Islamic blocs, but also by commentators and intellectuals in Western Europe and Latin America, as well as by liberal elements in the United States. One reason for the criticism of Israel was the confusion in the public mind as to the objective of the Israelis. If the aim was a 45-kilometer security zone, why besiege Beirut? The basic explanation—which was not adequately presented at first by the Israelis—was that the 1978 Litani operation had demonstrated that a quick “riposte” to the PLO terrorists in the south of Lebanon would not prevent their eventual return. The only way to assure that the PLO would not operate in the south was to destroy its headquarters in Beirut and eliminate its infrastructure.

The vast extent of the PLO's military arsenal did not become known for several weeks. The total, including huge amounts contained in a network of 15-foot-high tunnels that the PLO had dug under Beirut, was not discovered until after the PLO evacuation in late August. According to military experts, the equipment was sufficient to equip three to four full divisions. It included tanks, artillery pieces, armored personnel carriers, mortars and rocket launchers, rifles and automatic weapons for 35,000 men, and 5,000 tons of ammunition. While much of the equipment was of Soviet and East European origin, there were arms and vehicles produced in 15 countries, including the United States. To the amazement and annoyance of American officials, the PLO arsenal even included crates of G-3's, the current NATO rifle.

Media Coverage Heightens Anti-Israel Sentiment

Another difficulty the Israelis faced in presenting their case to the American public was the sense of horror that was evoked by the war. Night after night, Americans sat in front of their television sets, absorbing images of death and destruction. In contrast to the immediacy of the graphic coverage of the carnage of war, the factual background analysis necessary to put the pictures into proper perspective was usually difficult to obtain, and even where available, did not lend itself to dramatic pictorial presentation.

Moreover, the star reporters who were flown into Lebanon frequently lacked essential background information on the complicated situation. Thus they were unable to distinguish between damage caused in the course of the Israeli advance and destruction that had occurred years earlier during the civil war. It also took several weeks before detailed newspaper stories

began to appear on the extent to which the PLO had terrorized the civilian population of southern Lebanon. In at least one case, an American television crew stopped filming as soon as it became clear that the robbing and raping that a Lebanese woman was describing had not been perpetrated by Israeli soldiers but by armed PLO elements. The TV crew reportedly explained that this "old story" was of no interest to them since they were assigned to cover only the casualties inflicted in the course of the Israeli invasion.

The Israelis were also at a disadvantage in the battle for public opinion about such disputed issues as the number of civilian casualties. The PLO and other Arab sources had no hesitation in issuing exaggerated and unsubstantiated figures as part of a propaganda campaign to portray the Israelis as indiscriminate murderers and perpetrators of genocide. The information gap was especially severe during the first week of the war when it was impossible for reporters to obtain figures from the Israeli side. At first, the IDF was too busy fighting to take time out to consider the needs of the press. After persistent calls for timely information, liaison was established between the IDF and the relevant civilian information personnel to arrange press briefings and visits to the front. While this greatly improved the situation, the army still ruled certain areas out of bounds to reporters because of danger, as well as for military-security reasons.

Another difficulty the Israelis faced was technical. If one sought facts rather than propaganda, it was necessary to go through the painstaking work of checking hospitals for the wounded, as well as identifying bodies, some of which were buried in the rubble of buildings that had been struck. Since many persons had fled their homes during the fighting, it took time and effort to distinguish between those who were missing because they had taken shelter with relatives or friends out of range of the fighting and those who had been killed.

The extent to which civilian life in southern Lebanon had been disrupted by the fighting was also a matter of dispute. At first the Lebanese Red Cross claimed that 600,000 persons had been made homeless—an impossibility since the total pre-war population was scarcely half a million—and that some 10,000 persons had been killed. These figures came into question when it was revealed that they had originated with the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, whose director was the brother of PLO leader Yasir Arafat. The International Red Cross cut the refugee figure in half and the Lebanese government provided an estimate of 70,000.

The number of Lebanese civilian casualties was far fewer than the extravagantly high figures widely circulated in the early days of the war. Mahmoud Khadra, director of civil defense for southern Lebanon and a native of Sidon, told one visitor that he estimated that fewer than 400

civilians had been killed there. Moreover, he stated that of the 20,000 persons in Sidon who had heeded an Israeli appeal to evacuate to the seashore, only nine had been injured. Reporters for the *New York Times* and the Associated Press who interviewed Khadra duly filed his estimates, but they received far less play than the initial claim of 10,000 killed. Toward the end of June, Israeli officials put the total number of civilians killed in Sidon, Tyre and Nabatiye, where the heaviest battles took place, at 408, and the number of new refugees at 20,000.

The Israeli side of the story of the fighting in southern Lebanon had just begun to reach the American public when the siege of Beirut began in earnest, and once again the television screens were filled with scenes of Israeli planes and ships pouring countless shells into civilian areas in Beirut. While the Israelis insisted that they were only targeting military emplacements and various PLO headquarters, it was inevitable that Lebanese and Palestinian civilians would be among the casualties. Although the IDF's intention was to put pressure on the PLO to withdraw, the Israelis also contributed to the suffering of civilians in Beirut by periodically turning off the electricity and water and limiting the entry of supplies into the city.

The increasing ferocity of the Israeli bombardment led to anger and revulsion in Washington. The IDF faced the dilemma of exerting sufficient pressure on the PLO to force it to leave, without causing such extensive damage to Beirut as to jeopardize Israel's friendship with the United States. This dilemma was compounded by an American diplomatic blunder. Although the United States officially shared the Israeli strategic goal of removing the PLO from Beirut, Vice President George Bush allegedly assured the Saudi officials that the United States would not permit Israeli forces to enter Beirut. The Saudis in turn relayed this information to Yasir Arafat. Once the PLO leader believed that the United States would shield him from Israeli ground forces, he began to stiffen his terms, demanding that the PLO be permitted to retain political headquarters and other signs of a continuing PLO presence in Beirut. This was totally unacceptable to Israel and to the Lebanese Christian Phalangists as well. The latter, however, were not prepared to commit the Lebanese Forces under their command to the kind of house-to-house fighting that would force the PLO out of West Beirut. Thus it was left to the IDF to convince the PLO fighters that Israel was prepared to defy the United States and world public opinion, and drive the PLO out by force if it did not agree to leave voluntarily. This entailed an unprecedented shift in Israeli policy, for never before in any of the Arab-Israeli wars had the IDF undertaken a full-scale ground occupation of an Arab capital city. While the Israelis had bombed selected targets in Cairo during the war of attrition and the Iraqi nuclear reactor on the outskirts of Baghdad, Israeli forces had always stopped short of entering Arab capitals. The intensive

Israeli bombardment of Beirut, and the growing public impression that Defense Minister Sharon was a ruthless commander who would stop at nothing to achieve his objectives, finally convinced the PLO it had no alternative but to agree to a total withdrawal from Beirut.

U.S. Concern for Palestinian and Lebanese Refugees

In the course of the following weeks, as it became clear that the PLO would not be permitted to return to southern Lebanon, many civilians who had fled to Beirut and other places further north to escape from PLO domination and the dangers of warfare returned to reoccupy homes that had been taken over by Palestinian militants and to rebuild others that had been damaged in the fighting. Those who suffered most seriously were Palestinians living in United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) camps in the Sidon area. Refugees of the 1948 war with Israel, they had been joined by Palestinians fleeing from Jordan following the expulsion of the PLO by King Hussein in 1970. The PLO militants had turned an UNRWA technical school in Sidon into a PLO terrorist training center and had entrenched their military base within the Ein Hilwe refugee camp, using the Palestinian civilians as a shield.

UNRWA's own report in September 1982 revealed that the PLO had also interfered with the distribution of needed supplies to Palestinian refugees. During the siege of Beirut, the PLO seized well-stocked UNRWA warehouses and prevented the relief agency from distributing the supplies to the Palestinian civilians in the city. UNRWA regained control of its supplies only after the PLO evacuation. Yet these facts were not reported at the time.

The fresh evidence of PLO interference with the humanitarian work of UNRWA aroused anger within the U.S. Congress, since the United States had long been a major contributor to that United Nations body. In November Representative Benjamin S. Rosenthal (D., N.Y.) urged Secretary of State Shultz to suspend all aid to UNRWA, which had amounted to \$67 million in 1982. In December, Congress cut \$22 million from the UNRWA allocation requested by President Reagan for fiscal 1983.

A major issue in the aftermath of the PLO withdrawal from Beirut was the fate of the Palestinian civilians remaining in the country. American and UNRWA estimates of the Palestinians were in the range of 375,000 to 400,000. Of these, about 100,000 belonged to families that came in 1948 and had been fairly well integrated, many even acquiring Lebanese citizenship. The problem was what to do about the other 300,000, especially those who had lived in refugee camps in the Sidon area and Beirut. The Israelis preferred to have them permanently resettled in Lebanon or Jordan. Although the Israeli government provided emergency medical service, clothing, blankets, and food for immediate relief, as well as assistance in repairing

the infrastructure of southern Lebanon, nothing came of the various long-range plans for Palestinian refugee resettlement.

The deadlock was essentially political in nature. The Maronite Christian Lebanese who dominated the new government of Lebanon scarcely concealed their hostility to the Palestinians. In addition to anger at the havoc the PLO had wrought in the country, the Christians feared that the Palestinians, the great majority of whom were Muslims, would back other Muslim elements in Lebanon working to deprive the Christians of the newly won political power they had acquired thanks to the Israeli defeat of the PLO and its Syrian allies. The depth of the Phalangists' hatred of the Palestinians was revealed by the brutal massacres the former perpetrated in September in the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps in Beirut. While the assassination of Phalangist leader and President-elect Bashir Jemayel triggered the Phalangist bloodbath, which resulted in the deaths of 700 Palestinian refugees, it is also possible that the action was a premeditated attempt to induce the Palestinian refugees to flee the country.

In the absence of agreement on a permanent solution, Israeli and UNRWA officials, with grudging Palestinian approval, began to provide cement and other materials to help the refugees in the Ein Hilwe camp to lay concrete bases upon which tents could be erected that would withstand the winter storms. In some places the refugees were able to construct more durable structures. The Lebanese authorities reluctantly allowed the reconstruction to proceed, in part because of a desire to mitigate the impression of cruelty and callous indifference that the Phalangist atrocities had aroused in the United States and around the world, and in part because many of the refugees had found temporary shelter in schools and other communal institutions which were needed by the local Lebanese once the academic year began in the fall. Moreover, although the Lebanese feared the political influence of the PLO, they were reluctant to lose the services of Palestinian workers who provided manual labor in the agricultural and industrial sectors.

In contrast to the congressional controversy over aid to the Palestinians, there was widespread bipartisan support for aid to the Lebanese victims of war. At a House foreign affairs committee hearing in mid-July, M. Peter McPherson, President Reagan's personal representative for disaster relief to Lebanon, testified that a total of \$65 million was available from United States sources, and that other countries had pledged more than \$41 million. When asked about the extent of Arab aid, he replied, "So far, it is a small amount; Saudi Arabia has given about \$1 million." McPherson, who was administrator for the Agency for International Development told the White House press corps, on July 14, that Israel had sent a medical convoy to Lebanon with more than 20 ambulances and 60 doctors and other medical

personnel. Israel had already spent \$1.9 million for food, relief goods, and health services, and the ministry of health had provided \$87,000 worth of medical supplies. "People should know what the Israelis have done," he asserted, noting the "strong, popular response" from the Israeli citizenry.

Reaction in the Jewish Community

While American Jews were distressed by the scenes of human suffering displayed on their television screens, and empathized with the Lebanese victims of the conflict, they were angered by what they took to be a double standard as applied by the media to Israel. Jewish viewers were incensed that the television editors invariably identified film taken by crews accompanying the Israeli forces as "subjected to Israeli censorship," while they rarely noted the restrictions placed on the reporters covering the Arab side. Crews in West Beirut focused on the wounded persons in hospitals and on buildings damaged by Israeli shelling, but they were forbidden by the PLO to photograph the nearby military installations that had drawn the Israeli fire.

Other even more brutal conflicts in the Middle East were not portrayed on the American television screens because reporters were totally barred. Thus, in February 1982 the northern Syrian city of Hama was totally sealed off for three weeks while government forces used tanks, heavy artillery, and helicopter gunships to crush the opposition Muslim Brotherhood that had been assassinating Syrian officials and their Soviet advisers. When Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times* was finally permitted to visit Hama three months later, he reported that half of the city of 180,000 had been damaged or totally destroyed. The centuries-old market place had been demolished, "eight mosques were blown apart, and all the domed tombs in Hama's ancient cemetery were crushed to bits." Amnesty International investigated the numerous reports of "atrocities and collective killings of unarmed innocent inhabitants by the security forces," and concluded that while precise figures were unobtainable, "estimates of the dead on all sides ranged from 10,000 to 20,000." The number of orphans created was estimated at 20,000. Yet no scenes of the devastation in Hama appeared on American television. The electronic media also virtually ignored the heavy casualties in the Iran-Iraq war, which raged fiercely throughout much of 1982. Because both sides generally barred reporters from the battlefields, there was no action footage of the carnage, which, since the war's outbreak in September 1980, had resulted in the deaths of more than 100,000 persons and the wounding of some 300,000.

While restrictions on press coverage in the Arab world might be invoked to explain the failure of television news programs to portray the horrors of Hama and the shelling of cities in the Iran-Iraq war, friends of Israel asked

why news commentators and editorialists generally failed to subject Hafez al Assad of Syria, Saddam Hussein of Iraq, and Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran to the scathing condemnation that they applied to the actions of Ariel Sharon and Menachem Begin in the conduct of the war in Lebanon. The answer provided by some American media executives was that the Western world expected a higher standard of behavior from Israel than from third world dictators.

Yet the general absence of criticism in the media of democratic Britain when it imposed censorship and resorted to massive force in the spring of 1982 to protect the Falkland Islanders, caused many members of the Jewish community to suspect that the readiness of the Western world to heap condemnation on Israel reflected not only a double standard but also a resurgence of antisemitic feeling. No doubt, it was this perception of bias and bigotry which prompted most American Jews to refrain from public criticism of the policies of Israel, and to moderate the tone of many of those who did speak out.

Disapproval of some of the Begin government's policies had arisen even before the outbreak of the war in Lebanon. Observers of the American Jewish scene had perceived a growth in dissatisfaction which threatened to result in an increasing estrangement from Israel. On January 9, Rabbi David Polish, a well-known Reform leader and Zionist, urged Israeli leaders to pay attention to the "changing mood" in the American Jewish community. Speaking at the 25th convention of the Labor Zionist Alliance in New York, Polish declared that "Jews are not yet openly critical, but in contrast to their former undeviating assent, they are strongly dissenting in private." He decried the absence of a "proper forum for the discussion of controversial issues in our communities and on a national level." Polish asserted that it was harmful to adopt a stance that "Diaspora Jews must always approve of Israel's policies, even when they are being bitterly fought in Israel." He contended that such a course had resulted in "growing divisions within American Jewish life," which in turn led to alienation. "The alienation is due," he argued, "not so much to honest differences of opinion, but rather to the silencing and discrediting of those who entertain different judgments."

The moral right and, indeed, the duty of American Jews to dissent publicly from Israeli government actions was also championed by Philip Klutznick, former U.S. secretary of commerce and president emeritus of the World Jewish Congress. Speaking at a meeting sponsored by the New Jewish Agenda in Washington on April 18, Klutznick declared that American Jews were losing credibility and "fooling [them]selves" in believing that they were "fooling others" in maintaining that Jews in America and other countries were united behind every action of the Israeli government. He

contended that "we are doing great damage to Israel by our acts that give rise to serious questions of credibility of our own American Jewish institutions, our own American Jewish leaders, who are perceived in too many places as acting as rubber stamps" of Israeli policy. Although Israel had to make the final decision on issues affecting its security, Klutznick said, this did not mean that American Jews could not speak out on such matters. "I wish our Jewish community was as open and respected differences and the right to differ as much as the State of Israel."

Klutznick said that the United States should not simply be a "by-stander," but should work vigorously to resume negotiations for West Bank and Gaza autonomy, and also bring Jordan and other Arab elements into the peace process. He urged Washington to "encourage" Israel and its Arab neighbors, including the PLO, to make "simultaneous commitments" in order to achieve a comprehensive peace. Klutznick warned that unless this were done, the Camp David agreements would come to nought. He urged the PLO, which he said had been sending "signals" through private contacts, to declare publicly that it was prepared to recognize the right of the Jewish state to exist. For its part, Israel should be prepared to yield territory on the West Bank to the Palestinians.

The attempted assassination of Ambassador Argov was quickly condemned by spokesmen for the organized Jewish community. Maxwell Greenberg, national chairman of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith, called on the Reagan administration to launch a worldwide "diplomatic offensive" with the goal of "quarantining the PLO, ousting it from international agencies . . . and denying it financial and military support." Edgar Bronfman, president of the World Jewish Congress, similarly condemned the PLO, and called for a "concerted effort" to halt international terrorism. On June 7, Americans for a Safe Israel issued a statement applauding Israel's decision to "eliminate" the PLO in Lebanon. The American Jewish Committee took note of Israel's declaration that it had no territorial ambitions in Lebanon, and issued a variety of background materials explaining the factors which had prompted Israel's move against the PLO bases. Robert Loup, national chairman of the United Jewish Appeal, called on the American Jewish community to respond to the Lebanon crisis by taking "all possible measures to increase the flow of cash to meet the basic human needs of the people of Israel." When Prime Minister Begin appeared in New York for an Israel Bonds luncheon on June 18, the organization raised a one-day record of \$35 million in pledges.

As the war went on and the fighting extended to the outskirts of Beirut in July, a painful ambivalence arose within the American Jewish community. "We all cherish Israel," said Roland Gittlesohn, a Reform rabbi in Boston, but the invasion "threatens to tear us apart. . . . We worry, agonize, fear, and also doubt." Leonard Fein, editor of *Moment* magazine, and a

supporter of the Peace Now movement in Israel, stated: "Our powerful communal disposition has always been to rally round the flag. The problem is that the flag now is in a suburb of Beirut, and that's a long way to go for a rally."

On June 23 some 400 Jews in the San Francisco area published a denunciation of Israel, saying that "peace and the survival of the Jewish people cannot be achieved through Israeli aggression and disregard for Lebanese sovereignty." Many of the signers were from Berkeley and other university campuses, and few were affiliated with mainstream Jewish organizations. In New York on July 10, members of the New Jewish Agenda participated in a protest rally organized by the National Emergency Committee on Lebanon (NECOL), a broad coalition established on June 24 in opposition to the Israeli invasion. Among the members of the coalition were the Palestine Congress of North America, the American Friends Service Committee, Clergy and Laity Concerned, the United States Peace Council, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Mobilization for Survival, and Women Strike for Peace. Also participating in the protest was a contingent of 20 Israelis, carrying a banner that read "Israelis Against the Massacre in Lebanon." Dan Isaac, a Reform rabbi from Connecticut, told the protestors that he, along with hundreds of other rabbis, "reject the concept of turning West Beirut into a city of slaughter." He called on Jews to recognize the justice of the Palestinian demand for a state.

Earlier, on June 30, Rabbi Israel Dresner, president of the Association of Reform Rabbis of Greater New York, had joined with two Christian clergymen in a press conference sponsored by NECOL. Dresner stated that "hundreds of thousands" of Israelis and "millions of Jews in the United States and around the world are opposed to what is going on" in Lebanon. "I am a lifelong Zionist dedicated to a democratic and just Israel," Dresner declared, but "what is happening in Lebanon today has nothing to do with that kind of Israel." While Dresner was sharply critical, he would not join in the more extreme sentiments voiced by the two Christian clergymen at the news conference—Bishop Dale White of the United Methodist Church in New Jersey and the Reverend Timothy Mitchell, chairman of the National Conference of Black Churchmen—who frequently used the words "genocide" and "holocaust" to describe what the Israelis were doing to the Palestinians and Lebanese civilians. In addition to calling for Israel's unconditional withdrawal from Lebanon, the Christian clergymen called for an end to U.S. military aid to Israel. When asked by reporters whether the panelists also supported the withdrawal of PLO and Syrian forces from Lebanon, only Dresner replied in the affirmative.

The question of how to respond to events in the Middle East evoked impassioned debate at the annual meeting of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (Reform) in New York at the end of June. Rabbi Robert

Marx of Chicago offered a resolution declaring that "the tragic loss of human life and the tremendous destruction of property" in the Lebanon war "leave us concerned, not only for the people in Lebanon but for the soul of Israel and the Jewish people. . . . The current Israeli leadership interpreted American Jewish support for Israel as support for its policies in Lebanon. This is not so." Rabbi Ronald Gittlesohn, who had just returned from Israel, succinctly stated the basic question: "Was Israel right in pushing beyond its 40-kilometer objective? I don't know," he said. "I have been among Israel's severest critics. . . . I have criticized Israel in the past and I shall criticize again . . . but not now, my friends, not now. . . . The house is on fire and my brothers and sisters whom I dearly love are in that house. . . . For the sake of Zion, I will hold my peace."

"Over and over," countered Rabbi Jerome Malino of Danbury, Connecticut, "we are told: 'this is not the time to criticize.' There are times when we must speak what we know to be right irrespective of the prevailing circumstances." Rabbi Herbert Rose defended the Begin government policy of driving the PLO from Lebanon. "Our philosophy in Judaism is not to turn the other cheek to evil," he said, "but to strike out at evil and cut off its arm." Rabbi Everett Gendler of Lowell, Massachusetts, said that it was wrong to "confuse moral principles with the politics of a given nation-state." The clinching argument was provided by Rabbi Stanley Davis of Worcester, Massachusetts, who reminded the rabbinic group that "this resolution is not going to be read by Israelis. . . . It will go to Congress. . . . It will influence funding . . ." The critical resolution was defeated by what appeared to be a two-to-one show of hands.

The Phalangist massacre in the Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut in September sent waves of shock and revulsion through the American Jewish community. Expressions of sadness and regret were issued by numerous Jewish organizations. The dismay within the Jewish community was intensified when the Begin government, in the face of Labor party demands for its resignation, seemed to stonewall all attempts to conduct an inquiry. Major American Jewish organizations, including the American Jewish Committee, B'nai B'rith, and the American Jewish Congress, as well as many prominent individuals, called on Israel to conduct an independent judicial inquiry into the facts, to discover what acts of omission or commission by Israeli military officers and government officials might have facilitated the massacre. Once the Israeli government agreed to the appointment of the Kahan commission of inquiry, Jewish organizations expressed confidence that the truth would emerge. They also contrasted the strength of the moral conscience in democratic Israel with the callous indifference displayed by the Lebanese, who made only half-hearted efforts to find and bring to justice the Phalangist militiamen who had actually perpetrated the massacre.

Debate over Extent of Jewish Dissent

The question of the extent to which the war in Lebanon fragmented traditional American Jewish solidarity with Israel received considerable attention in the general press. On July 6 the *Christian Science Monitor* ran a front-page story, "Some American Jewish Leaders Voice Anguish over Lebanon." The story noted that Philip Klutznick, former World Jewish Congress President Nahum Goldmann and former French premier Pierre Mendès-France, had called on Israel to lift the siege of Beirut and declare its readiness to negotiate with the PLO on the basis of mutual recognition. Within the American Jewish community, the statement by the three Jewish leaders had been quickly denounced. Julius Berman, the newly-elected chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, maintained that Klutznick, Goldmann, and Mendès-France spoke only for themselves and were "overwhelmingly in the minority." "The overwhelming consensus of the Jewish community in the United States," he added, was "in support of the operation in Lebanon."

On July 15 the *New York Times* ran a full-page article headlined, "Discord Among U.S. Jews over Israel Seems to Grow." The article conceded that there was no way to determine with precision the feelings of American Jews, especially those who were not affiliated with synagogues or Jewish organizations. Supporters of Israel who were interviewed argued that the critics had become more vociferous, but not more numerous. Those who were critical generally said that they had opposed the Begin government long before the Lebanese invasion, but maintained that events were pushing the uncommitted toward dissent. Norman Podhoretz, editor of *Commentary*, contended that many of the critics were people who had shown little concern for Israel in the past, but who had been briefly converted to Israel's cause by the trauma of the 1973 Yom Kippur War. They "are being deconverted now," he maintained.

Some observers argued that a split was developing between the leadership and the broader membership of Jewish organizations. Hans Jonas, professor of philosophy at the New School for Social Research, claimed that "the official Jewish organizations cannot bring themselves to say this, but in the rank and file I can assure you there is a feeling of disgust, of shame. I know rabbis who feel exactly as I do, but who cannot express it because their congregations would be up in arms." Jonas, who said he had been a Zionist since his youth in Germany and had fought as an artillery lieutenant in Israel's 1948 war of independence, was among 67 American Jewish scholars, writers, and rabbis who signed an advertisement in July in support of Israel's Peace Now movement. The ad expressed "grave misgivings" over the fighting in Lebanon, and advocated "national self-determination" for the Palestinians. It also posed a rhetorical question to American Jews: "Is it not time for us as supporters of Israel to speak out critically about those

Israeli policies we know to be mistaken, self-defeating, and contrary to the original Zionist vision?" In addition to Jonas, signers included Saul Bellow, E.L. Doctorow, Alfred Kazin, Irving Howe, Meyer Schapiro, Daniel Bell, Nathan Glazer, and Seymour Martin Lipset.

Whatever their private misgivings, most American Jews who had previously contributed to Israeli causes generally tended to increase their contributions after the Lebanon war started, just as they had in earlier crisis situations. Murray Wood, executive director of the community relations committee of the Los Angeles Jewish federation, noted that in early July he had received a letter from a benefactor stopping contributions because of Israel's continuing presence in Lebanon, but that such letters were "very few and far between." The Jewish community in Los Angeles tended to be "very supportive of Israel's policy," Wood said. "I can't perceive that we have the division you read about on the east coast," he told the *New York Times*.

Arthur Hertzberg, former president of the American Jewish Congress, and a self-described "dove" in the Arab-Israel conflict, summed up moderate American Jewish opinion on Lebanon in July as "a kind of two-edged anger: first, anger at Begin and Sharon for having overdone it; second, anger at the press for using this as a holiday to beat up on Israel." Hertzberg labeled the proposal of Goldmann, Klutznick, and Mendès-France for Israeli negotiations with the PLO as "counterproductive" and likely to "polarize Jewish opinion." Instead, he argued for new effort to bring success to the long stalled Egyptian-Israeli talks on Palestinian autonomy.

Joseph Kraft, the syndicated columnist, maintained that the division within the American Jewish community over the war in Lebanon provided the Reagan administration with a significant opportunity for diplomatic maneuver. In an article, "American Jewry Divided" (*Washington Post*, July 20), he argued that "the easing of Jewish support for Israel in this country makes it possible to press the Begin government hard on the West Bank." He warned, however, "that pressure can only succeed if it is set in a wider policy that involves a strong American line toward all the Arab parties to the dispute. Fairness, in other words, means renunciation all around."

Arab Disarray Provides U.S. Opportunities

Developments in the Middle East also seemed to make the time opportune for a new American peace initiative. The war in Lebanon had demonstrated the unwillingness or inability of the Soviet Union to save Syria and the PLO from humiliating military defeat. Indeed, Moscow had made a point of publicly proclaiming its unwillingness to extend the provisions of the Soviet-Syrian treaty of friendship and cooperation to cover Syrian forces

in Lebanon. The radical Arab states had been equally ineffectual; Muammar Qaddafi, the vocal Libyan champion of Arab unity and the Palestinian cause, had offered Arafat and his desperately besieged fighters in Beirut the not very helpful advice that they commit suicide and become martyrs to their cause. The PLO's attempt, encouraged by the Soviet Union, to have the Arabs impose an oil embargo on the United States for its alleged backing of the Israeli attack on Lebanon, also met with failure.

Although Syria and the PLO were allied in the so-called "front of steadfastness and confrontation" against Israel, Damascus had concluded a separate cease-fire with Israel after the first week of the Lebanon war that left the PLO isolated and on its own in Beirut. Friction had been developing for some time between PLO leader Arafat and Syrian president Hafez al Assad over tactics to pursue against Israel. Attempts at rapprochement between Arafat and King Hussein, who had expelled PLO forces from Jordan in September 1970, also angered Assad, who suspected that the Jordanians were aiding his Muslim Brotherhood opponents. Assad was also worried that Hussein and Arafat might be tempted to participate in American-sponsored negotiations that would wrest the West Bank from Israel. This would satisfy at least some Jordanian and Palestinian aspirations and might result in a separate peace, leaving Syria out in the cold. While Assad was not ready to negotiate peace with Israel in his weakened position, he was also reluctant to be drawn into a full-scale war before he felt ready. Consequently, Assad kept the Palestinians in Damascus under tight rein. When, at the dramatic conclusion of the PLO exodus from Beirut at the end of August, Arafat decided to travel by ship to Athens, where he was officially welcomed, rather than to Damascus, this was seen as a snub of Assad.

Washington had been making steady progress in convincing some Arab states of the value of economic, political, and even military cooperation with the United States. By mid-1982, Egypt, Sudan, Oman, and Somalia were all providing facilities for, or cooperating with, the U.S. rapid deployment force. Increased American military aid to Morocco had also strengthened that country's readiness to cooperate with the United States. Even Iraq, among the most implacable foes of Israel, had begun to drop hints to American officials in 1982 that it was not unalterably opposed to a fair, negotiated peace settlement. In return, the U.S. government had agreed in February to remove Iraq from the list of countries barred from purchasing American civilian aircraft and other sensitive products because it was a "terrorist" supporter.

Also significant from the American point of view was the gradual rapprochement between Egypt and other Arab states. In addition to the manifest success of Egypt's American-backed peace effort in achieving the total

withdrawal of Israeli forces from its territory, Egyptian-Arab rapprochement was spurred by Iran's apparent success in its war with Iraq, which frightened the Arab states of the Persian Gulf. In February Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak paid an official visit to Muscat, and on a return visit in May, Omani Sultan Qabas bin Said held talks with Mubarak about promoting Egyptian reconciliation with other Arab states. Both Jordan and Morocco sent warm official greetings to Egypt upon the completion of the Israeli withdrawal from Sinai. The ending of Egypt's period of ostracism was symbolized by the visit of Moroccan foreign minister Mohammed Boucetta to Cairo on June 7 and by President Mubarak's attendance, the following week, at the funeral of Saudi king Khalid. Mubarak met with his successor, Crown Prince Fahd, and other Arab leaders.

A scheduled visit to Israel by President Mubarak, and an attempt by Secretary of State Haig to get the long-stalled autonomy talks resumed before the completion of Israel's Sinai withdrawal, both foundered on the issue of the venue for the talks. Prime Minister Begin insisted that the Egyptian leader come to Jerusalem, Israel's capital, as President Sadat had done on his first trip. Mubarak, sensitive to the strong feelings of Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the Palestinians that "Arab Jerusalem" was occupied territory, refused to hold meetings in Jerusalem. The American position was closer to that of Egypt than Israel. While the Israelis had passed a law proclaiming all of unified Jerusalem the eternal capital of Israel, the United States never accepted it, and continued to maintain that although the city should never again be divided by barbed wire, its ultimate status would have to be determined through negotiations.

There continued to be a wide gap between Cairo and Jerusalem as to how the Camp David provisions regarding Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza were to be interpreted and implemented. Prime Minister Begin was prepared to grant extensive *personal* autonomy to the Arab inhabitants of "the Land of Israel," but insisted that Israel control internal security, defense, and foreign policy. Israel, in Begin's view, would also exercise a veto power over land and water use, and would actively seek to prevent any foreign sovereignty from attaining power within the territories. In contrast, President Mubarak spoke about the need for Palestinian "self-determination" and the creation of a "national entity." The escalation of PLO-Israeli clashes into a full-scale Israeli invasion of Lebanon on June 6 made all thought of an early resumption of Palestinian autonomy talks a moot point.

Once the United States had succeeded in securing the agreement of Israel, Syria, and the PLO on terms for the withdrawal of PLO forces from Beirut, attention in Washington turned to the wider issue of Arab-Israeli peace. The Reagan administration put its emphasis on an intensified campaign to

induce King Hussein of Jordan to enter the Camp David peace process. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Nicholas Veliotis, who had served as ambassador to Jordan, made a secret visit to Amman, and he returned to Washington confident that King Hussein was now finally ready to take the step of openly entering into peace negotiations. The preoccupation of the Syrians with the Israelis in Lebanon and with the domestic opposition to the Assad regime made it less likely that Damascus would be able to exert heavy pressure, such as the marshalling of troops along the Syrian-Jordanian border, that it had used in the past to dissuade the Jordanians from entering the American-sponsored talks. Moreover, the intensification of ideological debate and struggle for power within the PLO following the Beirut debacle weakened the organization's claim to be "the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people." The Arab League summit conference, which was scheduled to reconvene in Fez, Morocco, in early September, seemed to offer an opportunity to revise if not reverse the Arab League's earlier decision, at its Rabat conference, to have the PLO serve as the exclusive representative of the Palestinians. Moreover, the Arab League had on its agenda a revised version of the Fahd plan, which assumed increased significance because the Saudi crown prince had since assumed the throne, and because the plan represented, at least in the view of the more optimistic members of the Reagan administration, an attempt to achieve an Arab consensus in favor of a peaceful, final, and comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israel conflict. (On the original Fahd plan see AJYB, 1983, Vol. 83, pp. 83-84.)

A new American peace initiative, sensitive to Jordanian and other Arab concerns, it was thought, might influence the decisions reached at the forthcoming Arab summit. The Reagan administration was also concerned about countering the widespread impression in the Arab world that the United States government, despite public criticism of Israel's actions in Lebanon, had in fact quietly colluded in the Israeli campaign to smash the Palestinian resistance movement. American diplomats in the area had been sending reports to the state department expressing fear that the Palestinians and their radical allies would enflame the Arab masses to engage in violence directed against American institutions and U.S. supporters in the Arab world. It was thus considered important for the Reagan administration to distance itself from Israel by making it clear that the United States did not share or endorse Prime Minister Begin's and Defense Minister Sharon's approach to the Palestinian question.

If King Hussein could be brought around to joining in peace talks with Israel, this would also neutralize much of the opposition in the American Jewish community and among Israel's supporters in Congress to an American arms sale to Jordan. During Secretary of Defense Weinberger's visit to

Jordan in mid-February, press reports had indicated that he tried to dissuade the king from going through with the purchase of \$200 million worth of advanced mobile SAM-8 missiles from the Soviet Union—to be paid for by Iraq—by offering Jordan U.S. mobile Hawk missiles and F-16 fighter planes. To justify the arms sales to Jordan, Weinberger had stated (on the NBC Today show on February 16) that “what is important is that the United States have more than one friend in the Mideast.” After a bipartisan resolution opposing the sale was introduced in the Senate on May 27 by Edward Kennedy (D., Mass.), John Heinz (R., Pa.), Gary Hart (D., Colo.), and Rudy Boschwitz (R., Minn.), with 49 co-sponsors, the administration quietly informed Congress that any request for formal approval of a Jordanian arms sale would be deferred until after the November congressional elections. The poor showing of Soviet equipment in the war in Lebanon presumably made Hussein less willing to rely on Moscow as an alternative to Washington as a source of arms. His proclaimed readiness to enter into peace talks would remove an important political obstacle to congressional approval of increased American-Jordanian military cooperation.

The Reagan Peace Initiative

On September 1, President Reagan went on national television to set forth the U.S. position on how to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict and, most particularly, the Palestinian issue. It was the most comprehensive and detailed statement on the subject since the Reagan administration had assumed office more than a year and a half earlier.

Reagan began by noting that Americans could be proud of the crucial role that the United States had played in bringing about the successful evacuation of the PLO from Beirut, which had been completed that day. The president said he was happy to announce that the U.S. marine contingent, which was part of the multinational force helping to supervise the evacuation, “had accomplished its mission” and that, therefore, “our young men should be out of Lebanon within two weeks.” When first ordering the marines into Lebanon, Reagan had made a point of assuring congressional critics—who were concerned that the U.S. might be drifting into a Vietnam-like commitment—that their mission was solely as peacekeepers, that they would be there for only a month, and that they would be withdrawn earlier should they be subjected to attack. These assurances regarding the nature of the marines’ mission and length of service had been necessary to obviate the need for formal congressional approval under the terms of the war powers resolution.

President Reagan went on to note that for more than a generation successive American administrations had been working to bring peace to the Middle East. He underscored the strategic importance of the region to the

United States and the need "to deter the Soviets and their surrogates from further expansion" there, as well as the fact that the "well-being of much of the world's economy is tied to stability in the strife-torn Middle East." Reagan emphasized, however, that "our policy is motivated by more than strategic interests. We also have an irreversible commitment to the survival and territorial integrity of friendly states." Finally, "our traditional humanitarian concerns dictate a continuing effort to peacefully resolve conflicts."

With respect to the Arab-Israel conflict, President Reagan said, "we've embraced the Camp David framework as the only way to proceed." The administration's first objective under the Camp David process was to insure the successful fulfillment of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. The president noted that intensive American diplomatic efforts had led to the creation of the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO), which was in place, supervising the peace treaty's terms in Sinai. He explained that "the successful completion of Israel's withdrawal from Sinai" in the spring, and "the courage shown by Prime Minister Begin and President Mubarak in living up to their commitments convinced me the time had come for a new American policy to try to bridge the remaining differences between Egypt and Israel" on the issue of Palestinian autonomy. Before any action could be taken, however, the conflict in Lebanon had "pre-empted our efforts." Nevertheless, Reagan argued, the Lebanon war, "tragic as it was, has left us with a new opportunity for Middle East peace. We must seize it now . . ."

In the days before his September 1 address, President Reagan had dispatched American envoys to the leaders of Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Israel with personal letters from him as well as a detailed list of "talking points," which outlined the American position on the essential issues in dispute. As noted above, a major American objective was to induce King Hussein to enter into the Camp David negotiations. In the "talking points" presented to King Hussein, Reagan went quite far toward meeting the Jordanian monarch's concerns. Regarding the final status of the area, the president affirmed the American position, which was sharply at variance with that of the Begin government, that UN security council resolution 242 "applies to the West Bank and Gaza and requires Israeli withdrawal in return for peace." Yet he also reaffirmed the American interpretation that the resolution did not necessarily require total withdrawal to the pre-1967 lines: "Negotiations must determine the borders." In place of the formulations used by earlier American administrations, which had said that the changes should be limited to "minor rectifications" dictated by security needs and should not reflect "the weight of conquest," Reagan offered a more pragmatic yardstick: "The U.S. position in these negotiations on the extent of the withdrawal will be

significantly influenced by the extent and nature of the peace and security arrangements offered in return." In theory, this held out to Hussein the hope that Jordan, like Egypt, could in a full peace agreement regain sovereignty over all the territory lost in war, although the actual exercise of that sovereignty would be subject to demilitarization and other agreed restrictions in areas affecting Israel's security.

In his public address on September 1, President Reagan modified his prepared text by inserting the following words to reassure Israel: "I have personally followed and supported Israel's heroic struggle for survival ever since the founding of the State of Israel 34 years ago. In the pre-1967 borders, Israel was barely 10 miles wide at its narrowest point. The bulk of Israel's population lived within artillery range of hostile Arab armies. I am not about to ask Israel to live that way again." The Israeli position, even under the Labor party, was that this narrowness was inherently a cause of insecurity and that the pre-1967 border—which was really only an armistice demarcation line set after the 1948 war, subject to future negotiation—would have to be changed. The president left ambiguous whether he endorsed actual changes in the line. He did spell out somewhat more clearly in his speech than in the "talking points" what kind of peace Jordan would have to offer, saying "the extent to which Israel should be asked to give up territory will be heavily affected by the extent of true peace and normalization and the security arrangements offered in return." Later in the speech, Reagan reiterated that the United States "will oppose any proposal—from any party and at any point in the negotiating process—that threatens the security of Israel. America's commitment to the security of Israel is ironclad and, I might add, so is mine."

With regard to the final status of the territories, the Reagan initiative excluded both the Palestinian demand for an independent state and the Begin government's desire for permanent Israeli control. While stressing that the outcome must be determined by negotiations, the president told the American people that "it is the firm view of the United States that self-government by the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza in association with Jordan offers the best chance for a durable, just and lasting peace." In the talking points, Reagan indicated that "there is no foundation of political support in Israel or the United States" for the creation of an independent Palestinian state in the territories. However, the president said, "we believe that the Palestinians must take the leading role in determining their own future" and he went on to spell out the broad powers of self-government that the Palestinians would enjoy under the American interpretation of the Camp David autonomy provisions.

President Reagan proceeded to call for "full autonomy" for the Palestinian inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza, and due consideration to

"the principle of self-government." He emphasized that the aim of the five-year transitional period called for by the Camp David agreement was "the orderly and peaceful transfer of authority from Israel to the Palestinian inhabitants" of the territories. The Palestinians' autonomy should include "real authority over themselves, the land and its resources, subject to fair safeguards on water." This was in sharp contrast to the Begin government's view that the autonomy was to be personal and not territorial. Moreover, to allay the frequently expressed fear of Jordanians and Palestinians that the United States was encouraging an Israeli policy of "creeping annexation" by doing nothing to stop rapid settlement activity, Reagan declared that "the United States will not support the use of any additional land for the purpose of settlements during the transitional period." He publicly urged Israel to adopt a "settlement freeze," saying that this "could create the confidence needed for wider participation in these talks."

While in the talking points, President Reagan said that the United States backed the view that external security "must remain in Israel's hands during the transitional period," and that Washington would oppose any "provisions which represent a legitimate threat to Israel's security, reasonably defined," in his speech the president explicitly rejected the Israeli view, propounded by Defense Minister Sharon, that all the settlements filled a security need. Reagan declared that "further settlement activity is in no way necessary for the security of Israel and only diminishes the confidence of the Arabs that a final outcome can be freely and fairly negotiated." In the talking points, the president stated that the United States would oppose "dismantlement of the existing settlements" during the transitional period, but this intended reassurance to the Begin government was undercut by the assertion that the ultimate status of the settlements "must be determined in the course of the final status negotiations," and the further reassurance to King Hussein that the United States "will not support their continuation as extraterritorial outposts."

While calling on Israel to show "magnanimity, vision, and courage" to achieve peace, President Reagan also called on the Palestinian people to "recognize that their own political aspirations are inextricably bound to recognition of Israel's right to a secure future." In the talking points, Reagan reiterated that the United States would maintain its commitment to Israel not to recognize or negotiate with the PLO until it had met the conditions previously set down, i.e., recognition of Israel's right to exist and acceptance of security council resolutions 242 and 338. The president called on the Arab states to "accept the reality of Israel, and the reality that peace and justice are to be gained only through hard, fair, direct negotiation." He acknowledged Israel's security concerns, and said that during the transitional five-year autonomy period the Palestinians of the West Bank would

have to prove not only that they would run their own affairs, but also that "such Palestinian autonomy poses no threat to Israel's security."

President Reagan outlined several areas, including the utilization of joint water resources, in which there would be natural interaction and, hopefully, cooperation among Jordan, Israel, and the Palestinians. In the talking points, he said that the United States would oppose "isolation of the West Bank and Gaza from Israel," implying a continuation of the existing economic ties and free movement of persons back and forth.

With regard to Jerusalem, President Reagan declared that this city "must remain undivided," adding, however, the longstanding American view that "its final status must be determined through negotiations." In the talking points, Reagan also endorsed the view, advocated earlier by U.S. special envoy Sol Linowitz, that "the Palestinian inhabitants of East Jerusalem" be permitted to participate in the election of the West Bank-Gaza authority. Ambassador Linowitz had tried, unsuccessfully, to convince the Israelis that such a form of "absentee ballot" for Arab Jerusalemites did not imply that the territory of East Jerusalem was part of the West Bank.

President Reagan made it clear that he was determined to stick to his position even if, as anticipated, it would provoke a critical reaction from the Israeli government or among some of the Arabs. He informed Prime Minister Begin that the same proposals had been given to King Hussein, who was giving them "serious attention," and that "Hussein understands" that "Camp David is the only base that we will accept for negotiations." The proposals were also being discussed with the Saudis. Should the response be positive, the United States planned to take immediate steps to relaunch the autonomy talks with the broadest possible participation.

Reaction to the Reagan Plan

The negative reaction of the Begin government to the Reagan initiative was swift and total. Within 24 hours the Israeli cabinet adopted a resolution declaring that President Reagan's proposals either went beyond the provisions of the Camp David agreement or "contradict it entirely." The cabinet offered a point by point rebuttal of the American proposals with regard to Jerusalem, security, the settlements, the definition of full autonomy, ties of the West Bank and Gaza with Jordan, possible Israeli sovereignty over the territories, and the establishment of a Palestinian state. While endorsing President Reagan's stated opposition to a Palestinian state, the cabinet pointed out that "were the American plan to be implemented there would be nothing to prevent King Hussein from inviting his newfound friend, Yasir Arafat, to come to Nablus and hand the rule over to him." The result would be a PLO state allied to and armed by the Soviet Union, and this state would over time form a joint front with the neighboring Arab states to

"launch an onslaught against Israel to destroy her." The cabinet bluntly stated that since the Reagan proposals "seriously deviate from the Camp David agreement, contradict it and could create a serious danger to Israel, to its security and its future, the government of Israel has resolved that on the basis of these positions it will not enter into any negotiations with any party."

The American press headlined the Israeli response as "Begin Rejects Reagan Peace Plan," giving the impression that Israel was the intransigent party in the Middle East, and that it did not desire peace. When this was pointed out to Prime Minister Begin by a visiting American Jewish delegation in October, he said that this was an unfair impression to draw from the cabinet statement, since it also included the following:

The government of Israel is ready to renew the autonomy negotiations forthwith with the Governments of the United States and Egypt . . . and with other states and elements invited at Camp David to participate in the negotiations, with a view to reaching agreement on the establishment of full autonomy for the Arab inhabitants of Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza district, in total conformity with the Camp David accords.

It was suggested to Begin that had this paragraph been at the beginning of the cabinet's statement rather than at the very end, Israel's position might have received more balanced and sympathetic coverage in the American media.

Opposition Labor party leader Shimon Peres welcomed the Reagan plan, saying that it contained "a great deal of very positive points," as well as some points to which he might object. He stressed, as had state department spokesman John Hughes, that the Reagan plan was not a "dictat" or imposed solution, but only a "basis for negotiations." Peres had recently urged reviving the so-called Jordanian option, under which much of the heavily populated area of the West Bank would be returned to Jordan, with Israel retaining a security belt, this in accordance with the Allon plan, propounded by the late foreign minister in the Labor alignment government. Since this was similar in major respects to the Reagan initiative, the opposition Alignment urged the Knesset to accept the positive aspects of the U.S. initiative and agree to negotiations on issues in dispute. The opposition motion was defeated; the Knesset endorsed the Begin government rejection of the Reagan plan by a vote of 50 to 36.

Many people in the American Jewish community tended to favor the Labor party's approach to the Palestinian question, either because they found it ideologically more to their taste than the religio-historical, nationalistic approach of the Likud, or because they believed it had a greater practical chance of success. In any case, since the Labor party had former chiefs of staff, defense ministers, and generals to support its position of territorial compromise with Jordan in the West Bank, there was room for

disagreement with the Begin government's categorical declaration that the Reagan plan constituted a grave danger to Israel's security. Accordingly, the response within the organized American Jewish community to the U.S. initiative tended to be temperate and balanced. American Jewish Committee president Maynard I. Wishner maintained that there were a "number of positive aspects of the Reagan peace plan" which were "obscured by several procedural faults." The first fault was the absence of adequate consultation with Israel before extensive discussions had been held by the United States with the Arab nations. Second, Reagan's approach "missed the genius of Camp David, the process of taking one step at a time, . . . allowing further steps to evolve, rather than specifying outcomes in advance." The third tactical error was that the United States "stepped into a double role, that of protagonist for certain positions as well as of mediator." Wishner noted, however, that President Reagan had not made acceptance of all his points a precondition for the resumption of negotiations, and that Israel had also indicated a readiness to enter negotiations forthwith. The American Jewish Committee president therefore called on "Jordan and moderate Palestinians" to enter into negotiations with Israel, noting that the history of the Sadat peace initiative showed that "anything is possible once negotiations get under way."

In a speech in Washington on September 12, Wishner went somewhat further in giving qualified endorsement to the Reagan initiative. Despite some objectionable features, he said, President Reagan's effort "deserves thoughtful and thorough consideration," and represents "a reasonable approach to be dealt with on its merits." Turning to the question of Reagan's call for a settlement freeze, Wishner noted that the American Jewish Committee had urged a moratorium on new settlement construction after Egypt had agreed to negotiate with Israel, and that Prime Minister Begin had indeed agreed on a three-month freeze at Camp David. Wishner said that if King Hussein joined the peace process, "I would again be willing to call upon Israel for such pause and restraint." In subsequent debates within the American Jewish Committee, Wishner's position was endorsed, while the more radical position of calling on Israel for an unconditional settlement freeze unlinked to Hussein's entry into negotiations was defeated.

After a meeting with Secretary of State Schultz on September 2, Julius Berman, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, said that while the Reagan plan contained "a lot of solid points," his group had told the secretary that they found it "on balance, in terms of moving forward, not constructive." Berman expressed concern that the Reagan administration would hurt peace prospects by deviating from its role as an honest broker enjoying the confidence of all

parties. Presenting a specific American plan "does violence to the spirit of Camp David." For peace negotiations to succeed, he explained, it was critical that the United States "not pre-ordain the ultimate results." In a formal letter to President Reagan, Berman reiterated the view that it was not Israeli settlements, but Jordan's refusal to negotiate with Israel, that was the fundamental obstacle to peace.

The *New York Times*, on September 7, gave front-page coverage to the comment by Thomas Dine, executive director of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) that there was "a lot of value" in President Reagan's Middle East peace plan. Since AIPAC was the official pro-Israel lobby in Washington, *Times* reporter Bernard Gwertzman considered Dine's comment to be in the category of a man bites dog story. Another of Israel's major supporters in Washington, Senator Rudy Boschwitz (R., Minn.), chairman of the foreign relations subcommittee on the Middle East, said that the speech "had positive value" and he praised the president for taking "considerable political risk" in the effort to get King Hussein to act.

In the Arab world, the Reagan initiative received a mixed reaction. It was welcomed by President Mubarak of Egypt and Mayor Elias Freij of Bethlehem. King Hussein reiterated in public his private pledge to give it "serious study." The Reagan plan was rejected out of hand by Damascus radio, which denounced it as "a new maneuver in an established American policy that supports Israel's aggression, expansionist plans, and racist goals." Libya and South Yemen also denounced the American initiative. While some PLO leaders said they saw some "good points" in President Reagan's initiative, they invariably criticized his failure to support an independent Palestinian state and provide an explicit role for the PLO.

The final declaration issued by the Arab League summit conference in Fez, on September 9, made no reference to the Reagan plan. Instead, it noted that it had taken into account two Arab plans in its deliberations. The first was that of Tunisian president Habib Bourguiba, who had long counselled the Palestinians to base their claim to an independent state on the UN general assembly's Palestine partition plan of 1947, which the Zionist leadership of what was to become Israel had accepted, but which the Arabs had rejected at the time. The second plan explicitly mentioned in the Arab League declaration was that of Saudi king Fahd. The eight principles adopted by the Arab summit were a somewhat tougher version of the original Fahd plan. The Fez summit called for Israeli withdrawal from "all Arab territories occupied in 1967 including Arab al Qods (Jerusalem)," the dismantling of Israeli settlements in Arab territories, and the "establishment of an independent Palestinian state with al Qods as its capital." Jewish access to the Western Wall was implied in a call for "freedom of worship and practice of religious rites for all religions in the holy shrines." Those

who had hoped that Jordan would be given a mandate to negotiate were disappointed by the Fez declaration's reaffirmation of "the Palestinian people's right to self-determination . . . under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, its sole and legitimate representative." Indemnification was to be paid to all Palestinians "who do not desire to return."

Some western observers claimed to see implicit recognition of Israel in the Fez declaration's statement that "the (UN) security council guarantees peace among all states of the region including the independent Palestinian state," as well as in the observation that "the security council guarantees the respect of these principles." This was not likely to reassure Israel in view of the security council's patent failure to guarantee peace between Iraq and Iran, or to bring about an end to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. (Reference to the UN security council was reportedly inserted at Syrian and PLO insistence in order to provide a renewed role for the Soviet Union, which possessed veto power in the council.) Moreover, in view of Arab denial of Israel's legitimacy, the omission of any explicit mention of Israel in the context of the phrase "all states of the region including the independent Palestinian state," as well as the failure to limit the borders of the proposed Palestinian state, left open the ominous interpretation that it was designed eventually to replace the State of Israel entirely. The immediate objective, stated in the Fez declaration, was the placing of the West Bank and Gaza Strip "under the control of the United Nations for a transitory period not exceeding a few months."

Pessimists noted that by simply restating Arab demands and once again refusing to assume any explicit Arab responsibility to bring about peace, the Fez declaration constituted a rejection of President Reagan's clear call to "accept the reality of Israel, and the reality that peace and justice are to be gained only through hard, fair, direct negotiation." Optimists saw as a good sign the absence of explicit condemnation of the Reagan plan, and regarded the Fez declaration as an Arab consensus position, which might serve as an opening bargaining position. This more optimistic view was bolstered by the Fez summit decision to send delegations to Washington, London, Paris, Moscow, and Peking—the capitals of the five permanent members of the UN security council—to explain the Arab League position. Meanwhile, King Hussein and PLO chief Arafat intensified their discussions in an attempt to overcome mutual suspicion and achieve an agreed formula for Palestinian-Jordanian cooperation.

In other actions, the Fez summit rejected a Sudanese proposal that Egypt be formally readmitted to the Arab League. However, it did agree that individual Arab states should be free to resume bilateral relations with Egypt. The Arab summit waffled on the request of Lebanon that the Arab League terminate the mission of the Arab deterrent force in Lebanon and

thus call for the removal of the Syrian army. The Fez declaration merely noted that "the Lebanese and Syrian governments will start negotiations on measures to be taken in the light of the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon."

Conclusion

As the year ended, American influence and prestige in the Middle East far outshadowed that of the Soviet Union. This was true even though the hasty withdrawal of American marines from Beirut in early September, and the consequent inability of the United States to prevent the massacre in the Palestinian camps, somewhat weakened American credibility as a protector of the Palestinians. The return of the marines later in the month, and active American efforts to bring about Lebanese-Israeli negotiations for the withdrawal of Israeli forces in the context of the termination of the state of war between the two countries, once again underscored the crucial position of the United States in relation to Israel and the other states of the region.

Much of the acrimony in Israeli-American relations that had developed in the course of the Lebanon war abated by the end of 1982. The underlying sense of shared democratic values between Jerusalem and Washington and their common concern to resist Soviet expansion and radical penetration of the Middle East once again came to the fore. The Reagan plan remained a matter of dispute between the United States and Israel, but this was more a potential than an actual issue as long as Jordan and the Palestinian leadership were unprepared to commit themselves in support of President Reagan's plan. At year's end, King Hussein was still sitting on the fence.

Fears of serious and permanent erosion of support for Israel on Capitol Hill, frequently mooted during the height of the Lebanon war, failed to materialize. On the contrary, as measured in terms of United States economic and military aid to Israel, the situation actually improved. On December 14, Congress approved a total of \$2.485 billion in aid for Israel for fiscal 1983. Not only was the total \$300 million greater than the year before, but Congress sweetened the terms. The administration had proposed that only \$1.025 billion be in the form of a grant and the remainder a loan, but Congress stipulated that \$1.535 billion, or more than 60 percent of the total, be in the form of a grant. Public opinion surveys also indicated that among the American public at large, Israel had regained much of the traditional sympathy it enjoyed before the outbreak of the war in Lebanon.