A POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THE LIKUD PARTY OF ISRAEL 1931-1992

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Works Submitted

Israel, Likud and the Zionist Dream:
Power, Politics and Ideology from Begin to Netanyahu
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Chapters 4, 5 and 6 (Israel and the Diaspora)
Ploughshares into Swords?
Israelis and Jews in the Shadow of the Intifada
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270 pp, price £35.00

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1.1 Introduction

Israel, Likud and the Zionist Dream: Power, Politics and Ideology from Begin to Netanyahu was published in September 1995 by I.B. Tauris. Work on the book commenced in late 1992 shortly after the electoral defeat of the Likud by Yitzhak Rabin's Labour Party. The research proposal was to write a broad political history of the Likud from 1931 (the 17th Zionist Congress) until 1992. A central focus was to monitor ideological deviations from this attachment through schisms in the 1930s and 1940s; through compromise with other movements in order to gain power; and finally to contrast theory and practice in and out of power. Several research tributaries flowed from this such as confrontation with the far Right, the delegitimisation of Palestinian nationalism and Israel's relationship with the Diaspora. Emphasis was placed on leading figures rather than party institutions since they were effectively emasculated by Menachem Begin after 1948 and were in a state of organisational disarray under Shamir in the 1980s and 1990s. The intention was to write a serious original book for an informed readership, analytical yet accessible, intelligent yet intelligible. The London Review of Books commented:

'Colin Shindler's book provides the first comprehensive survey of the Party's origins, rise and decline, while paying particular attention to the role played by its successive leaders'[1].

The research was carried out in academic institutions[2] in both London and Israel and built on past research at the Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace, Hebrew University where I was a Visiting Fellow in 1989/1990. I devoted that academic year to writing *Ploughshares into Swords? Israelis and Jews in the Shadow of the Intifada* which was published by I.B. Tauris in 1991. The current work on the Likud arose out of interest and questions posed in researching my earlier book.

In November 1994, interviews were conducted in Israel with past and present leaders of the Likud; government Ministers and parliamentary opponents of the Likud; academics, journalists, writers and observers of the political scene.

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1.2 An Understanding of the Methodology

The research methodology followed a relatively conventional and eclectic path in that I did not commence with a pre-conceived theory or overt political agenda. The research design was effectively determined by the chronological organisation of data. The project was defined as a case study of the Likud within the parameters and qualifications defined above. Data was collected from a wide spectrum of sources: these were mainly from archives and interviews, articles and books; speeches and broadcasts, official publications and secondary literature.

The time span 1931 - 1992 and my own knowledge from researching my previous book provided the evolving conceptual framework of the project. The purposes of the enquiry were thus:

- Exploratory — to find out what actually happened; to seek new insights into events already documented; to ask questions about events and developments; to assess familiar phenomena in a new light
- Descriptive — to depict an accurate projection of events and to analyse the actions of the principal figures who participated in them; to build on previous knowledge
- Explanatory — to pose and answer questions which a specific situation in this political and ideological evolution demanded

Normally the purpose of the enquiry would assist in selecting the strategy to be followed. In this particular case study, all three purposes were integrated to reflect different yet important aspects of the study. Thus, although this case study would have been served well by relying solely on the exploration and monitoring of Likud ideology, the use of public opinion surveys produced an understanding of events and the political patterns inherent in their evolution while cause-and-effect phenomena led to an explanation of a specific situation or problem. A flexible or indeed hybrid case-study approach was thus implicitly enacted.

1.3 Achieving Objectivity

Historical research has been defined as:

'the systematic and objective location, evaluation and synthesis of evidence in order to establish facts and draw conclusions about past events.' [3]

The values of such research can be categorised as:

(a) it enables solutions to contemporary problems to be found in the past

(b) it throws light on present and future trends

(c) it stresses the relative importance and the effects of the various interactions that are to be found within all cultures

(d) it allows for the revaluation of data in relation to selected hypotheses, theories and generalisations that are presently held about the past [4]

Such an act of reconstruction undertaken in a spirit of critical enquiry runs into fundamental problems where passions, emotions and mythology in the cause of a higher goal colour history. Any astute observer of the Israel-Arab conflict realises that objectivity is problematic if not elusive. Each side believes that it is the guardian of the complete truth. In terms of each side's perception, objectivity is relative. There is often a subconscious merging of fact and propaganda. It is closer to a hermeneutic view of the world rather than to an absolutist position. Such subjectivity is further repeated within the internecine struggle between the Likud and Labour where both sides have constructed their own myths about Israeli and Zionist history. Objectivity, in the classical scientific sense, is thus extremely difficult to apply in this situation. Instead, it is better to employ the idea of an objective/subjective contrast. One writer has referred to 'objective' as

'what multiple observers agree to as a phenomenon, in contrast to the subjective experience of the single individual. In other words, the criterion for objectivity is intersubjective agreement'.[5]

Clearly, anyone starting out to write a political history should ideally be value-free, devoid of vested interests and ideologically neutral — and in the absence of collaborators in a collective enterprise, the outcome should be validated by informed outsiders.

Thus the conceptual framework of any documentary exercise demands a self-discipline and trustworthiness to explore, describe and explain both accurately and in an unbiased fashion. In the specific case of

investigating the Likud, this striving for fairness and objectivity has been accentuated because of the sensitivity and controversial nature of the subject matter.

The recording and interpretation of this history has been and remains a political battleground in Israel. Indeed, it has permeated a wide variety of discourses from the education of Israeli schoolchildren to the use and abuse of history in parliamentary debate. The historic bitter ideological rivalry between the Israeli Right and Left has spawned competing mythologies, serviced by either hagiographies or rival condemnatory accounts.[6] As Karl Mannheim has commented:

'The concept "ideology" reflects the one discovery which emerged from political conflict, namely, that ruling groups can in their thinking become so intensively interest-bound to a situation that they are simply no longer able to see certain facts which would undermine their sense of domination. There is implicit in the word "ideology" the insight that in certain situations the collective unconscious of certain groups obscures the real condition of society both to itself and to others and thereby stabilises it.'[7]

The resulting megaphone war, fuelled by a soundbite mentality, is therefore a constant deterrent against any attempt at objectivity / subjectivity.

In order to overcome this fundamental obstacle, it was important to proceed on a neutral investigative basis, politically and methodologically, in order to collect information systematically, make an appraisal from accurate data and thus arrive at a reasoned analysis. This effectively meant endorsing several elements of 'naturalistic enquiry' such as grounded theory,[8] emergent design, idiographic interpretation, tentative application and focus-determined boundaries.[9]

Conversely, however, this did not mean a suppression of either reasoned argument or a rationalised dissection of viewpoints. It did not mean a neutered approach to the project. Indeed, it was important not to distort such sensitivity to the realities of this polarised situation in that it did not thereby translate into an uncritical, unintellectual approach either towards interviewees or to the collection of information.

Similarly, when it came to writing and evaluation, although it was important to explore, describe and explain in an unbiased manner,

this did not mean a negation of analysis or a self-censorship of one's critical faculties.

Against all this must be set the possibility of a writer's political agenda, however, subconscious. Clearly all writers have political opinions, however submerged, and even more so those who feel involved in the passion of ideological politics in Israel. For example, Jabotinsky has been depicted as a 19th-century liberal-conservative by some writers and by others as someone who danced with the Fascists in the 1930s. How did writers arrive at such disparate evaluations? Were they informed — however subconciously — by their own political views? And if so, to what degree? Conversely, did they bend over backwards to ward off accusations of political bias? Most Israeli academics who have written on an aspect of the subject have been aligned with the Labour Party and the left in general. It is an important question to ask if they have been objective. Perhaps in the final analysis, objectivity is something to be striven for rather than actually attained. In most cases, there is no clear answer to this question.

These were the questions which I considered myself at the outset of the project. I had to scrutinise my evaluation of the project for political bias. As Norbert Elias has commented:

'The problem confronting those who study one or other aspects of human groups is how to keep their two roles as participant and as inquirer clearly and consistently apart and, as a professional group to establish the dominance of the latter. This is so difficult a task that many representatives of social sciences, at present, appear to regard the determination of their inquiries by pre-conceived and religiously held social and political ideals as inevitable.' [10]

A basic ontological question centred on the 'reality' to be investigated — was it an external entity or the product of my own consciousness? Investigating a political history tended towards an objectivist approach invoking realism rather than nominalism. Underlying this was the question: to what extent does my Jewishness and enthusiasm for Israel push the ontological question in the opposite direction?

Secondly, there were questions about assumptions of an epistemological nature. My tendency was to view the history of the Likud in a positivist light in that it was a search for patterns, regularities and

causal relationships. And yet I was aware that the Jews projected such a mindset based on millennia of persecution to the effect that outsiders often neither understood them nor their actions. To what extent was my project influenced — and indeed aided — by the fact that I could take a more relativist, anti-positivist approach as someone who was not an outsider? Moreover, some researchers have pointed out that

'the evaluation and formulation of a problem associated with historical research often involve the personality of the researcher to a greater extent than do other basic types of research...Personal factors of the investigator such as interest, motivation, historical curiosity and educational background for the interpretation of historical facts tend to influence the selection of the problem to a great extent.'[11]

Finally on the question of human nature I believed that the Jews had acted in a deterministic fashion during the last 100 years, due to the historical situation in which they had found themselves — and the politics of the Likud was an objectivist version of this transition.

The methodology which I thus adopted emerged from these three set assumptions. And it was not surprising that there was no clear delineation between objectivity and subjectivity. In essence, it was a hybrid between both approaches — that the resultant methodology was a mixture of both the nomothetic and the idiographic.

In acting as the sole investigator, there was no colleague to monitor my deviations. Instead, a number of control mechanisms helped to clarify the situation in the quest for fairness and objectivity.
(1) My attempt to achieve fairness in critical writing was vindicated by numerous academic reviewers — Jew and non-Jew, Israeli and Arab — of my previous book, *Ploughshares into Swords? Israelis and Jews in the Shadow of the Intifada.*[12]
(2) Drafts of the Likud manuscript were given to two writers, one in Israel, the other in Britain,[13] both of whom were knowledgeable and who had lived through most of the events described. These specialists were fluent Hebrew speakers and acquainted with the Hebrew sources. They validated the crucial point that my work reflected available knowledge in Hebrew. They also professed different political allegiances, both opposed and close to the ideology of the Likud. Both felt that I had been fair.

(3) Reviews of the book in academic journals have subsequently mentioned that I had attempted to be fair in my approach.[14]

1.4 Methods of Data Collection
(a) Introduction

The approaches adopted for the collection of data were both indirect and direct.

Content analysis of documents and material was the indirect technique employed — this allowed for valid inferences to be made from the data and to be placed in context. Semi-structured interviews were the direct technique used in that face-to-face interviews were conducted with central and informed figures.

(b) Content Analysis

Content analysis is a research tool for making inferences.

'Content analysis does not study behaviour itself; rather it focuses on artifacts produced by behaviour; that is; recorded speech and writing.' [15]

Normally a specific subject was chosen at a period in history and then all available documentation was collected and compared. A number of reference points for each subject was pre-determined and this prompted the collection of primary sources. For example, material on the Stern Gang would be scanned for references relating to ideology, particularly to the Land of Israel; differences with the Irgun and official Revisionists; relationship to fascist and other nationalist movements; statements, particularly ideological, of its leaders, Stern, Shamir, Eldad and Yellin-Mor. Material would be compared, validated and inferences drawn. Essentially, the process was one of Discovery > Analysis > Extension > Interpretation.[16] In all cases, an evaluation of historical data was employed. Two questions were asked. Was the source authentic? What was the worth of the evaluated data?

The methodological progression was essentially an *aufbau* — 'building-up' - process. Building on previous knowledge and personal documentation from the research in writing *Ploughshares into Swords?*, the collection of data moved from the general to the specific, from secondary sources to primary ones, from indirect documentary analysis to direct focussed, semi-structured interviews. Beginning with a general

outline of an event or situation, the *aufbau* process would transform the broad contour of a particular subject into a passage where no sentence would be considered to be superfluous or wasted. This process of continual comparative analysis permited a transition from substantive theory to formal theory.

Although the central research focus and the chronological framework had been determined at the outset, an ongoing issues analysis helped to organise and select material. In turn, this helped to bring sub-themes and patterns to the surface. This then assisted in the planning of further investigative techniques, both direct and indirect.

The final explanation of an event was arrived through a process of refining and distilling an initial proposition. This iterative version of pattern-matching often commenced by comparing secondary sources, but finished with an extensive interview with a central figure in the specific event. In between, there was a progression of comparison, revision and elimination, integrating all relevant data, until a satisfactory rational conclusion had been reached.

(c) Semi-structured Interviewing

The semi-structured interview provided a vehicle of flexibility in dealing with interviewees. This created a communication whose nature was more of a dialogue rather than a rigid question-and-answer session. This allowed for the possibility of modifying a pre-defined line of questioning and exploring new avenues of investigation due to interesting responses. This form of respondent interview was based on a prepared list of topics with associated questions that had to be covered. The type of questions employed was open-ended because they allowed for exploration.

'(these) allow the interviewer to probe so that he may go into more depth if he chooses, or clear up any misunderstandings; they enable the interviewer to test the limits of a respondent's knowledge; they encourage cooperation and rapport; and they allow the interviewer to make a truer assessment of what the respondent really believes. Open-ended situations can also result in unexpected or unanticipated answers which may suggest hitherto unthought-of relationships or hypotheses'. [17]

All this proved in to be true in practice. As I had previous experience of interviewing, this direct method of data collection elucidated the subtleties of many difficulties and proved invaluable.

Twenty leading figures were interviewed in Israel in November 1994. The purpose of the interviews was to clarify questions that had arisen in the draft manuscript. These interviews were arranged through the Jewish Agency. Coincidentally — and fortunately — the section head who organised my schedule was the wife of one of the leaders of the Likud.[18] Each interview lasted between one and a half to two hours. Oral information was checked against written documentation. The salient points of almost 40 hours of tapes were later transcribed and integrated into the draft manuscript. The interviewees[19] were originally chosen because they fell into a number of broadly defined categories.

(d) The Framework of the Interview

The method of interview was semi-structured, allowing for flexibility in both wording and the order of presentation of questions. Specific questions were attuned to events in which the interviewee had participated, to known behavioural patterns, to beliefs and attitudes.

In order to establish myself as knowledgeable and authoritative, a general introduction including the following points proved effective:

(1) an explanation of the raison d'etre for writing the book

(2) a reference from the wife of Eliahu Ben-Ellisar (a leading Likud figure and now the Israeli Ambassador in the United States), who was also responsible for the arrangement of the interview

(3) a reference from a known and mutually known person

(4) a brief chronological exposition of the ground to be covered

This brief introduction was followed with several non-threatening 'warm-up' questions to set the interviewee at ease. Each interviewee was approached with a clearly defined purpose — a specific topic to discuss.[20]

(e) Other Research Sources

A large part of the research was carried out at *Metzudat Ze'ev* — the Likud headquarters in Tel Aviv where the Jabotinsky Archives and

relevant documentation are located. Other material relevant to the period and research questions posed was examined at a variety of locations in Israel. In all cases, material was evaluated for accuracy and authenticity and checked against other sources of data.

The Stern Museum, the Knesset Library and the Library of the Hebrew University were utilised. The library at the Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem provided a source of documentation during my year as a Fellow in 1989/90.

In London, documentation from the Hebraica and Judaica sections of the School of Oriental and African Studies; the libraries of the Royal Institute for International Affairs, the London School of Economics and the Institute of Jewish Affairs were studied. Material was also obtained from the British Library and the British Newspaper Library.

Context analysis of a wide range of sources — letters, books, speeches, newspaper cuttings and magazine articles — as an indirect technique of data collection was carried at a variety of locations. Categories were constructed for analysis of specific time periods eg Begin's policies from 1965 - 67, following the formation of Gahal up to the outbreak of the Six Day War. Such a topic would be examined for subject matter, direction, political goals and quotes. Several sub-themes would similarly be examined: did Begin dilute his Eretz Israel ideology following the alliance with the Liberals to form Gahal? How did Begin deal with opponents especially on the right of his party at this time? What sort of overtures were made to Rafi at this time after its secession from Labour? In what sense did the almost historic animosity between Begin and Ben-Gurion begin to dissipate?

Secondary sources were usually employed initially eg looking in the literature of the broad subject to note if any of these questions had been posed? This was usually followed by a detailed reading of the Jerusalem Post for the specific period and selected material from the Hebrew press. Relevant files on people and events at the Jerusalem Post Archives would also have been consulted — although these were often incomplete. Quantitative data such as opinion polls, particularly in the 1980s when the Likud was in power, was collected in abundance. Relevant opinion polls after 1977 were analysed and estimated. Although a certain caution was

always exercised, it gave a measure of Israeli public views on various policies. For example, this permitted an interpretation of the growing public disenchantment with Israel's war in Lebanon from an initial high point of 93% in favour at its outbreak. The analysis of electoral data such as the number of Knesset seats obtained by Herut and its successors, showed both how Begin was able to build a right wing alternative to Labour through coalition with other political forces. Other data showed fundamental changes in Israeli society, eg how Labour was losing the youth vote in the 1970s; how the Sephardim drifted away from Labour after the Yom Kippur War; how Labour and the left wing bloc fragmented between 1948 and 1973; and how small but crucial 'left-wing' segments migrated to the right to form the Likud with Gahal.

All such analysis of raw data was greatly assisted by keying relevant statistics into a computer graphics package[19] and observing the different possibilities for presentation.

The collection of qualitative data was mainly in the form of quotes by central figures of the Likud and its predecessors as well as observers of historic events. This often helped to enlighten the reader, to convey a characteristic in vivid detail. For example, Rafael Scharf observed Begin's first meeting with his mentor, Jabotinsky in Cracow in 1935, and described the effect of Begin's rhetoric on his followers and the general atmospherics pervading the movement at that time

'A young man of pale complexion and with a black shock of hair mounted the rostrum and addressed the audience in the purest Hebrew (not a common accomplishment in those days). The speech was enthralling, in form and content. It was constructed around the 'Hymn of Betar', written by Jabotinsky, which in contrast to the insipid Hatikvah (Israel's national anthem) speaks of pride and defiance, torches and flames, and a whole noble and pitiless race of princes, and of conquering the summit or dying in the attempt — rousing, heady stuff. The audience was stirred, Jabotinsky was enchanted. He embraced the speaker: "Such young men", he said, "grow up all around me and I don't even know their names".... It was Begin. After all those years, the recollection remains in the memory.' [20]

Such qualitative material was always regarded as supplementary to the serious quantitative material extracted from data collection and content analysis — this ancillary function could, however, help to crystallise often complex points in a simplistic and descriptive fashion.

(2) Its Position in the Literature

2.1 Introduction

There is no direct comparable work, published in English or Hebrew, which covers the central theme of my book, that is, the political history of the Likud as a whole between 1931 and 1992.

Only two books, Amos Perlmutter's *The Partitioned State: A Political History since 1900* (New York 1985) and the Marxist polemicist Lenni Brenner's *The Iron Wall: Zionist Revisionism from Jabotinsky to Shamir* (London 1984), come close to covering the same ground as my own work. Both only go as far as the early 1980s but approach the question from very different perspectives and with considerably different emphases. They deal in very sparse detail with Likud's attachment to the Land of Israel ideology,

Permutter continued his research and wrote a second book, *The Life and Times of Menachem Begin* in 1987 which overlaps with and is a development from *The Partitioned State.*

2.2 Categories of Research

There are several categories of research which coincide with specific aspects of my book:

	SUBJECT	TYPE	AUTHOR
Ideology	Revisionist	Academic	Shavit, Ben-Hur, Sofer, Avineri, Shimoni,
	Far Right	Academic Popular	Sprinzak, Isaac Eldad, Achimeir
Movements	Irgun	Academic Popular Hagiographic	Niv Bowyer-Bell Begin, Katz, Lankin, Livni
	Lehi	Academic Popular	Heller Yellin-Mor

		Hagiographic	Eliav
	Related works	Academic	Wasserstein, Charters, Ben-Yehuda
		Popular	Bethell
Biographies	Jabotinsky	Academic Hagiographic	Shavit, Ben-Hur Schechtman, Katz
	Begin	Academic Popular	Sofer, Shapiro Silver, Temko, Gervasi, Haber, Perlmutter, Nakdimon & Golan, Caspi, Diskin & Gutman
		Hagiographic	Hurwitz, Hirschler & Eckman
	Stern	Academic Popular	Heller Amichai-Yevin, Sherman
	Shamir	Popular	Endelin
Autobiographies		Popular	Shamir, Sharon, Weizman, Arens
History of Israel and Zionism	General	Academic	Lucas, Sachar
	Early History	Academic	Galnoor, M.J. Cohen, Shlaim, Morris, Pappé, Troen & Lucas, Flapan
Labour Party	Diaries, memoirs, autobiographies	Popular	Ben-Gurion, Sharett, Dayan, Meir, Eban, Peres, Rabin, Beilin
	Ideology	Academic	Medding, Zweig, M. Cohen
Related Subjects	Non-Israeli autobiographies	Popular	Sadat, Carter
	Begin and the Holocaust	Popular	Segev

Lebanon War	Popular	Schiff & Ya'ari
Israel and the Diaspora	Popular	Hertzberg
Gush Emunim and the settlers	Academic	Newman, Schnall, Efrat, Weisburd
Israeli peace movement	Academic	Bar-On
	Popular	Kaminer, Hall-Cathala,
Changes in Israel	Academic	Avishai, Schweitzer, Drezon-Tepler, Peleg, Segre
	Popular	Rubinstein
Contemporary Likud figures	Popular	Netanyahu, B. Begin
Attitudes and opinion polls	Academic	Arian, Elazar, Penniman

2.3 Collections of Writings

Neither Jabotinsky nor Begin left behind autobiographies. However, their writings were collected. 18 volumes of Jabotinsky's articles and correspondence were published between 1947 and 1959 by *Metzudat Ze'ev*. Selected articles of Jabotinsky have been edited for publication by a number of writers (Bella, Nedava, Shavit). A two-volume collection of Begin's articles in the Irgun underground were published in 1978. Three volumes of Israel Eldad's articles were published in 1980. A collection of Shamir's addresses and speeches was published by the Avraham Stern publishing house in 1993.

(3) The Uniqueness of the Book

3.1 Introduction

Until the publication of my work, there had been no serious analysis which focused on the Likud from 1931 to 1992 and attempted to arrive at an objective historical, political and ideological appraisal of its origins, rise to power and period in government — with specific emphasis on its desire for a Land of Israel as delineated by the British Mandate and the Bible.

3.2 Previous Research

While doctoral and masters' theses, as well as some biographies, memoirs and general works on Israel and the Middle East conflict, have added pieces to this complex jigsaw puzzle, none has looked at the phenomenon of the long ascent to power (1931-1977) and its rule (1977-1992) together as a whole.

A search through doctoral dissertations at both British[21] and North American Universities[22] indicated that this subject as a whole had not been examined before.

This also proved to be true when dissertations in Israel were investigated.[23]

3.3 Classification of Previous Research

Previous research fell essentially into two broad categories:

(a) Most doctoral theses focussed on a contemporary Israeli issue or one dealing with the recent past usually from an international relations or sociological perspective.[26] A few theses went beyond recent political history and examined the Likud's ideological predecessors, but these covered highly specific subjects.[27] Some earlier dissertations — though far fewer in number — have looked at a broader sweep of Israeli history. [28]

My own book falls into the last category — an analysis of an ideological movement's development over a relatively long period of time — in this case from Jabotinsky's breakthrough at the 17th Zionist Congress in 1931 until Shamir's fall from power in the election of 1992.

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(4) The Originality of the Book

4.1 Introduction
The book is a broad survey of the history of the Likud rather than a detailed and painstaking account of a narrow section of it. Its raison d'etre is to interpret afresh the history of the Likud in terms of its adherence to the land of Israel ideology. It is the first comprehensive study of the Likud, a major Israeli political party.

4.2 From the Reviews of the Book in Academic Journals
(a) _Israel Studies 1996_ by Avi Shlaim, Alastair Buchan Reader in International Relations, University of Oxford and Fellow of St. Anthonys College, Oxford

'When Likud came to power, the literature on it was very sparse; by the time it fell from power, in June 1992, this literature had expanded considerably.

Colin Shindler's book represents a valuable addition to this literature on a number of counts. First, whereas most of the existing books deal with specific issues such as the peace with Egypt or the Palestinian uprising against Israeli rule, or the war in Lebanon, Shindler tries to explain the Likud phenomenon as a whole. Second, in order to explain what makes the Likud tick, Shindler explores in some depth its historical and ideological background and particularly the legacy of the founder of the Revisionist Zionist movement, Ze'ev Vladimir Jabotinsky. Shindler also traces the influence of Pilsudski's Poland, Mussolini's Italy and the Irish struggle against Britain in moulding the outlook of Menachem Begin and his successor, Yitzhak Shamir. Third, while the subject matter of this book lends itself all too easily to partisanship and polemics, Shindler remains remarkably balanced and fair-minded throughout. He picks his way carefully through the tangled history of this fiercely ideological and rumbustious movement and manages to avoid the twin pitfalls of hagiography and blind hostility.'

(b) _Foreign Affairs March/April 1996 Vol 75 No 2_ by William B. Quandt, Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution

'Just as the Israeli right wing seems to be losing support in the wake of the Rabin assassination — perhaps only temporarily — a solid historical account of the Likud movement has appeared. The author locates factionalism in Likud in the enduring debates among members of the Israeli right, going back to Vladimir Jabotinsky and Avraham Stern

in the pre-independence era. Much of the value of this historical survey is its thorough presentation of the careers of Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir, leaders who combined elements of ideology and pragmatism while differing significantly from each other'

(c) *Choice April 1996 Vol 33 No 8* by Don Peretz, Emeritus Professor of Political Studies, State University of New York

'Shindler adds a new dimension to the many previous accounts of right wing Zionism and to personal histories of its leaders, including Jabotinsky, Begin and Shamir. Academic readers, all levels.'

4.3 Background to the Work

A central theme of the book is the relationship between Revisionist Zionist ideology and the foreign policy of the Likud in power, with specific emphasis on Jewish sovereignty over the Land of Israel. Since the work deals ultimately with the role of ideas in politics, it therefore became a necessity to return to the origins of Revisionist Zionism in the 1920s and to monitor its evolution during the pre-war years (1931-1939), in the Lehi and Irgun undergrounds (1940-1948); in parliamentary opposition (1948-1977) and during the Begin and Shamir Governments (1977-1992).

The intention in centralising material on the Likud as a whole was to offer new insights and a deeper understanding of the Likud — even though there is much empirical data relating to the movement and its development, but scattered in many diverse works on a plethora of allied subjects. This political analysis has uncovered several new sub-themes which help to explain and interpret the Likud today.

4.4 Important Sub-themes in the Work
(a) The Right and the Far Right

It explains the ideological *raisons d'etre* for the fragmentation of the Zionist Right and its periodic coalescence and regeneration from the 1930s through to the defeat of the Likud in the 1992 election. Building on the work of Ehud Sprinzak,[29] it makes the distinction between the political agendas of the far Right and the pragmatic centrist Right even though between 1948 and 1977 they appeared to outside observers to be one and the same.

Complementing the work of Joseph Heller,[30] it thus traces the ideological origins of this distinction, commencing with the reasons for the growing differences between the radicals of the youth group, Betar and the official Revisionist Zionists in the 1930s and the subsequent splits.

(b) The Party Leader

The book focuses on the party leader as an instrument of authority rather than on the political institution per se — and specifically on Begin and Shamir and less so on their respective ideological mentors Jabotinsky and Stern. This is because Revisionist-Zionism and its successor movements, including the Likud, celebrated the cult of the party leader. The role of the leader was crucial in effect in legitimising the values, policies and actions of the movement and later the government. The leader was also a figure who represented military values — and the centrality of the military as an institution was pivotal in the ideology of the Right.

Although there have been several biographies of Begin, Shamir has been virtually ignored. In addition, there has been only a passing comparison of style between these two leaders of the Likud. The book therefore distinguishes between the differing ideological approaches of Begin and Shamir even though they both projected themselves as the loyal disciples of Jabotinsky and practitioners of an unchanging Revisionist-Zionism. It examines Shamir's ideological origins in Lehi and details the subtle differences between him and his predecessor.

The book suggests a parallel between the two leaders of the Likud in that both were indirectly brought down by the political fundamentalism of the far Right — Shamir over the Madrid Conference, Begin due to the Camp David Accords. Yet in both processes, Begin and Shamir used obfuscatory tactics in order to delay any decision on the territories and on negotiating with the Palestinians. Instead they wished to secure bilateral agreements with their immediate Arab neighbours, namely Egypt and Jordan. Yet this subtlety was neither understood nor appreciated by the far Right.

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(c) Likud's Road to Power

It examines in detail Begin's formation of a right wing bloc, the Likud, in 1973, through a meticulous process of coalition building with parties and movements of differing ideological perspectives. It examines Begin's successful attempt to project himself as Jabotinsky's rightful heir, even though the official Revisionist Party still existed and how he was adept at absorbing remnants of rival movements within the nationalist camp (1948-1950) into his Herut Movement; his courtship and coalition with the Liberals (1955-1965) to form Gahal; his utilisation of Ben-Gurion's split from the Labour Party to court and absorb such disaffected Labour fragments (State List); his attraction of right wing splinter movements (Land of Israel Movement, Free Centre) after the conquest of the Territories during the Six Day War; his courting of target groups, the alienated Sephardim, religious figures and parties and military men (Weizman, Sharon, Lahat) between 1967-1973 to eventually form the Likud .

It focuses on Begin's ability to promote coalition partners to prominence at the expense of his own movement and to weather the political differences within components of this disparate coalition through his own (apparent) ideological compromises, yet above all to still maintain the Revisionist ethos and its demand for a Greater Israel.

(d) Likud's Campaign of Delegitimisation of the PLO

It examines the Likud's inability to come to terms with a resurgent Palestinian nationalism, as manifested by the leadership of the PLO. It details the determined effort to depict it as solely a terrorist organisation in a process of political delegitimisation and thereby a threat to Israel's security and existence. This was done in part to extinguish a rival claim to the Territories captured in 1967. It examines the instruments of delegitimisation such as Begin's use of the Holocaust and the ingrained Jewish fear of the 'other' after millennia of persecution, the invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and Netanyahu's sophisticated utilisation of public relations in the 1980s.

It also raises the issue of whether the Likud could adopt a pragmatic approach as advocated by Jabotinsky

'The leadership (of the Arabs) will pass to the moderate groups who will approach us with a proposal that we should both agree to mutual concessions. Then we may expect them to discuss honest practical questions, such as a guarantee against Arab displacement or equal rights for Arab citizens or Arab national integrity'. [31]

— and make peace with the Palestinians and the Arab world without unleashing the political power and destructive fury of the far Right and risking the destruction of the Likud itself as a political party. These arguments are even more valid now given the policies which Netanyahu is seeking to promote in the aftermath of the election victory of May 1996.

(e) Uncovering Trends

The use of computer graphics to explain visually trends of adherence and opinion were used extensively in the first part of the book. It was utilised especially to show how Begin's Herut was able to come to power in 1977 through coalition building despite the fact that they had only increased their representation by six mandates since 1948.

(f) Information, Explanation and Propaganda

The Likud placed great emphasis on *hasbarah* which is the Hebrew for 'explanation'. In *Ploughshares into Swords?* [32] and in my current book[33], Netanyahu's strong support for a sophisticated public relations machine and his own role were analysed. *Hasbarah* was distinguished from both *informatzia* (information) and *ta'amulah* (propaganda). Under the guidance of Netanyahu in the 1980s, the *hasbarah* industry developed apace in parallel with the technological revolution. For both Israelis and Palestinians, public relations often replaced public reality. In addition, the Likud had exhibited a deep antagonism towards the media. In the 1980s, the Likud in power often interpreted unpalatable reporting and biased reporting as one and the same.

(g) Israel and the Diaspora

The relationship between Israel and the Diaspora changed tremendously during the periods of office of several Likud governments. The romantic ideal of a pioneering experiment which succeeded against all the odds began to decline with the conquest of the West Bank in 1967 and the confrontation with Palestinian nationalism.

The massacre in Lebanon in 1982 also challenged the official view of Israel held by many Diaspora Jewish organisations and strengthened the hand of those Jews who hitherto had been critical of the policies of the Likud governments. Three chapters in *Ploughshares into Swords?* [34] look at this changing relationship when Begin and Shamir headed successive Israel governments. It looked at questions such as whether Diaspora Jews have the right to criticise a government of Israel. It drew heavily on the demographic research by Professor Steven M. Cohen[35] on behalf of the American Jewish Committee to show that a compliant Jewish leadership did not reflect the political views of its constituency. It examined the means by which Diaspora silence was maintained — and the contradictions inherent in enacting such an approach.

(5) Major Writers on the Likud and its predecessors

5.1 Works which cover major periods of the history of the Likud

(a) Introduction

Both Amos Perlmutter and Lenni Brenner published their
books on the background of the Revisionist Zionist movement as a
response to Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and the political demise of
Begin the following year. Perlmutter further developed his themes in
publishing an interpretive biography of Menachem Begin in 1987.

Both writers investigated the subject matter with clear pre-
conceived ideas and wrote their work within well-defined parameters .

An American-Israeli academic at George Washington
University, Perlmutter has specialised in the relationship between the
military and politics in Israel.[36] He is also a long time writer on Israeli
affairs with many contacts in Israel and within the Labour Party
establishment.

Brenner is a Trotskyist who wrote widely on Israel and Jewish
affairs in the 1980s. He espouses, in general, an anti-Zionist approach and a
determination to uncover and document an alliance between Revisionist-
Zionism and fascism.

In covering such a long period, my own work is — by definition
— a concise overview of many issues and events. In contrast, it does not
attempt to sit in judgement on the Likud in order to fulfil and 'prove' a
pre-determined ideological stand. It does, however, uncover patterns of
political behaviour and thereby draws conclusions. The bottom line is to
permit the reader to understand the Likud through a documentation of
events and a clear analysis. It allows the reader to permeate the
entanglement of propaganda and to comprehend what makes the Likud
tick.

(b) Amos Perlmutter
[1] The Partitioned State

Perlmutter's reason in writing his first book, *Israel: The
Partitioned State* (New York 1985) was a need to explain to his students,

colleagues and fellow Americans the facts behind the bad headlines earned by Menachem Begin's second government. He believed that such enlightenment could be achieved by retreading the political road which ultimately led to Beirut in 1982 through effectively reclaiming Revisionist Zionist history.

Perlmutter wrote:

'What was missing in all this scrutiny [of the Lebanon war] was perspective, both historical and philosophical. It was easy to focus on Begin as a master rhetorician, a stubborn, defiant autocrat, a former terrorist, without understanding that he was not some simplistic ogre who popped out of a political box several years ago, but rather belonged to a tradition of dissent and conflict deep in the history of Zionism and of Israeli politics. It was easy in the United States to focus on Defense Minister Ariel Sharon as an overweight, preening, Pattonlike villain conducting a vindictive war of conquest and to forget the larger and complicated issues of the war which centred around perennial Israeli concerns of safety, borders and security. It was easy to take heart in the dissent that the war, especially the ugly Sabra-Shatilla Christian Phalangist massacre generated, and easy to see the burgeoning Israeli Peace Movement as a hopeful sign, without realising that dissent, a peace movement and political discord have been a part of the growth of Israel since long before it became an official state.' [37]

While the idea of writing a rationalised history to counteract the soundbite characterisation of the Middle East conflict is admirable, what emerged from Perlmutter's book did not really enhance an understanding of the Likud. It certainly did not concentrate on ideology.

In attempting to be both accessible and serious, an uneven compromise was reached, resulting in an admixture of popular journalism and academic rigour. But it is clear that the book's priority was to project a feeling of benevolence towards the Zionist experiment and then only to convey an understanding of Israeli politics — and the latter was neither always coherent nor clear.

[2] A Subjective Neutrality

In his second book, *The Life and Times of Menachem Begin* (New York 1987) which, although more detailed and coherent, is similarly written in a mixture of journalistic flourish and academic discipline, Perlmutter comments

'Clearly I do not share Begin's world view nor do I ascribe to his ideological and political viewpoint. But I do not intend to throw stones in print, nor do I intend to offer a glowing fawning account.'[38]

Although he presumably did not wish to immerse himself in the megaphone war and wanted to distance himself from hagiography, the liberal use of superlatives to describe Begin and his movement does not lend credence to this comment. Other academics — especially those of the younger generation who have challenged and revised the conventional version of Israeli history have not always judged Begin so leniently.

The Partitioned State sets out to educate the reader that the present (1982) was a logical progression of a conventional interpretation of the Zionist past and the future will similarly be rooted in an acceptance of the normality of the present. This approach thereby invokes an ideological blurring and coalescence. Significantly, Perlmutter termed an inconvenient overview of the activities of Abba Achimeir and Brit Ha'Biryonim, in an article about Jewish Fascism by Zeev Sternhall, the eminent Israeli historian and authority on fascism per se[39] as 'critical and unfriendly'. Moreover, both the Irgun and Lehi are characterised as 'the militant Revisionist undergrounds' — at a period when the official Revisionist movement opposed the Irgun — and Lehi considered itself as post-Revisionist.[40]

Significantly, Perlmutter's interest in the pre-1967 Israel Labour Party was clear when nearly three quarters of the book dealt with their ideology, rule and control. The period after 1977 when Begin was elected formed only the latter section of the work.

Perlmutter wished to cast Begin — warts and all — as emerging from the same Polish stable as Ben-Gurion and many of the founding fathers of Israel. But in distancing himself from Rabin and Peres, Perlmutter argued that the post-1967 Labour Party did not move with the times and its leaders were neither disciples of Ben-Gurion nor made in his mould.

'Yitzhak Rabin is a fine general and perhaps a great chief of staff, but an undeniable failure as a politician and a man who holds petty grudges. Shimon Peres, able and a man with a concern for details, is no great leader and lacks charisma, yet under the Labour-Likud deal he is prime minister for the first 25 months of the 1984

government.....Labour's values still lie with the old partition state. The politics of Israel since 1967 have become the politics of Eretz Israel and Revisionism and Begin, Sharon and Shamir are its most articulate spokesmen.' [41]

This devotional approach often led to a nostalgia for the 'giants' of the past, a certain degree of superficiality and occasional inaccuracies. From this standpoint, it therefore seemed logical to conclude that the invasion of Lebanon was a 'normal' occurrence in terms of the Israel-Arab conflict. As for the bellicose verbosity, Perlmutter argued that the Likud outwardly was merely continuing its role as the historic party of dissent. While this was true to a limited extent, the invasion of Lebanon was a much more complex phenomenon. It emanated from a past, heavy with the Land of Israel ideology and a non-recognition of Palestinian national rights. It served as a vehicle for Begin's Holocaust trauma. Perlmutter said little about the role of Peace Now and the burgeoning peace movement which promoted the widespread debate about the morality and ethics of supporting the invasion. This attitude was further reflected in the sparse mention of the extensive dialogue between members of the peace movement and the Palestinians. Although Perlmutter describes in very broad detail the odyssey of Begin and the twists and turns of the Likud's political fortunes over the passage of 50 years, there is a real sense of public relations triumphing over academic argument. The highly personalised 'insider' style seems designed to project authority and thereby to calm the rage and to dispel the confusion aroused by the invasion of Lebanon — it was predicated on the belief that an understanding of the past would lead to an acceptance of present events.

While *The Life and Times of Menachem Begin* is more chronologically coherent, it also suffers from poor transliterations (Shin Fein; Arlazaroff) mistranslations (*misnagdim* translated as 'secular' should read *mitnagdim* translated as 'religious opponent'). Perlmutter admits that he relied on Isaac's work for the post-1967 period, yet he remarkably comments that 'the Land of Israel Movement's ideology arose solely from the Left without any apparent contribution from the Right.' [42]

[3] Which Partition?

Perlmutter's central idea of basing a political history of Israel on the theme of partition is a good one, but there seems to be little recognition that the first partition originally took place in 1922 when the British established the kingdom of Trans-Jordan for the Emir Abdullah — and that this proved to be the fundamental issue for Jabotinsky's resignation from the Zionist Executive and the genesis of the Revisionist Zionist Movement.

Moreover, Perlmutter's concept of Israel in the 1980s as the third partitioned state does not ring true.

His framework for this hypothesis is:

* the first partitioned state 1947-1967
* the second partitioned state 1967-1977
* the third partitioned state 1977-

Perlmutter states that 'the partitioned state presided over by Begin — and now the National Unity Government headed by Shamir and Peres — appeared to have settled the issue of frontiers'.

Given the bitter debate in Israel over the fate and future of the Territories, no other writer — even at that time — postulated that the issue of the frontiers to have been settled by the Likud and National Unity governments in the 1980s despite the ascendency of Revisionist-Zionist ideology and the predominance of the quiescent, less than doveish, Labour views. The Oslo Accords less than ten years later suggest that such views were not cast in stone and could be overturned. It does, however, imply that while Perlmutter may have striven for objectivity, he still interpreted the subject matter from a subjective, mainly pre-1967, ideological framework.

(c) Lenni Brenner

Lenni Brenner's work *The Iron Wall: Zionist Revisionism from Jabotinsky to Shamir* (New York 1984) essentially mirrors his other book *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators*. It is primarily a journalistic account based on secondary sources peppered with a plethora of appropriate quotes. While it is well written, more literate and chronologically coherent than Perlmutter's parallel work, it is also highly selective and

thereby narrower in its choice of sub-themes. Brenner also wrote this book in the aftermath of the Lebanon war, but with a diametrically opposite intention to Perlmutter, he wished to create a blanket negative attitude towards Israel and Zionism. His main concern is two-fold — to show the virtue of Marxism vis-a-vis Zionism and to indicate the reactionary nature of Zionism and the machinations of its leaders.

Brenner took a classic Marxist-Leninist approach, evoking Lenin's dictum that the 'The Jews in Galicia and in Russia are not a nation' and that the revolutionary struggle should not be diluted by an acceptance of Jewish nationalism whether Bundism or Zionism. Ironically, this is a variation of Jabotinsky's propagation of the evils of 'ideological sha'atnez', that any admixture of ideologies would pollute the original philosophy. Brenner's premise in writing the book was to advocate a Marxist approach to the Jewish question in the marketplace of ideas through a selective recalling of Revisionist-Zionism.

Brenner's central task was to eloquently generate a sense of moral outrage in showing that Zionism had always been a reactionary wolf in progressive sheep's clothing

'*Ante-bellum* Zionism had the traitor's part in the revolutionary play, as insensate of the life problems of Jewry as the local theosophists or esperantists. Only with Zionism we hear off-stage whisperings and treacheries in the ministries of antisemitism. For Zionism to have ever been correct politics we must believe, *ipse dixit,* that the eventual creation of a revived Hebrew state should have been the prime political concern of flesh and blood Jews. That was nothing better than ideological future-music. Drowning swimmers need dry land, not the Holy Land.' [43]

This approach is embellished by a concentration on instances of contact between Zionists and the purveyors of official antisemitism such as Herzl's meeting with von Plehve in 1903. Brenner therefore emphasised the Stern Group's proposal of an alliance with the Nazis in 1940 and 1941. Since Shamir was a member at that time, Brenner extrapolated the idea of Zionist-Fascist collaboration to go beyond Stern to include Revisionist-Zionism *per se* — 'Herut's fascist past'. Brenner at times utilised Stern's approach to further tar the actions of all Israeli politicians after 1948 as politically and morally fascistic. Even the non-

Zionist peace activist, Uri Avneri was labelled 'a left Zionist', while Peace Now becomes 'reactionary'.

While Brenner is entitled to enunciate his viewpoint, historical fact is, however, bent to fit his ideological agenda and thus his work cannot be seen as a full political history of the Likud.

The ire which he attempted to generate is understandable on the emotional surface level, but he does not really explain what lay behind events. No reason is given, for example, for Stern's seemingly irrational action in approaching the Nazi regime for aid to oust the British. Brenner's approach — although literate and full of factual information — offers no understanding of why controversial actions were taken and why certain events came about.

5.2 Works which cover important aspects of the history of the Likud

(a) Introduction

Several academics — mainly Israelis — have specialised in specific aspects of the Likud's evolution and have made serious contributions to the study of the phenomenon. These past works have complemented my own work and investigated areas outside the purview of my book.

(b) Raphaella Bilski Ben-Hur (Political Science, Hebrew University, Jerusalem)

A recent work on the social and political thought of Jabotinsky by Raphaella Bilski Ben-Hur recognised that his writings are often viewed through the prism of his own movement. The fact that he was a controversial figure added to that distortion. Bilski Ben-Hur researched a wide range of subjects from Jabotinsky's pen from many diverse sources. According to Bilski Ben-Hur, Jabotinsky was fundamentally a nineteenth century liberal-conservative who did not subscribe to his youthful acolytes' radicalism. For example, Jabotinsky's *The Iron Wall* and *The Ethics of the Iron Wall* acknowledge the legitimacy of Arab nationalist opposition to Zionism and the possibility of peace. As Gideon Shimoni has attested from Jabotinsky's writings, there was a tortuous inner debate

as to the merits of liberal democracy vis-a-vis a totalitarian approach. Bilski Ben-Hur argues convincingly that Jabotinsky suspended his liberal views to achieve an embracing breakthrough to achieve a Jewish majority in the Land of Israel. All other ideals were to be suspended for that period and then revived when the State had been established. Thus Jabotinsky is depicted as a sophisticated, if flawed, liberal rather than as a flirter with fascism. My own work develops Bilski Ben-Hur's interpretation of Jabotinsky as an authoritarian figure who was lukewarm towards fascism as a role model for Begin and his generation of Betar radicals even in the changed circumstances of the post-war period. It also provides an understanding for Begin's relationship with the far Right and his political meandering between pragmatism and radicalism in power.

(c) Sasson Sofer (Political Science, Hebrew University, Jerusalem)

Sofer's work, *Begin: an Anatomy of a Leadership* (Oxford 1988) was neither a history of Revisionism nor a political biography of Begin. It sought to analyse the world view, political methods, ideological teachings and perceptions of reality that came to expression during Begin's lifetime. Sofer understood the trap of preserving objectivity and aligning oneself with one or other of Israel's main ideological streams. He too wished to recover Begin's thought if for no other reasons than to add to our interpretation of Israeli history and to repair some of the flaws that have occurred in our understanding.

His comments in 1988 still have a profound validity today.

'No other Israeli political figure has received such unbalanced treatment from writers — mostly journalists — such as Menachem Begin. No other Israeli politician of the last generation has had his outlook, mental condition, and physical health subjected to such close scrutiny. But few books or biographies have been written about him, and virtually nothing has been done in the way of research. In following the tracks of Begin's political life and legacy we must be wary of uncritical admirers and sworn opponents; but, no less, of the traces Begin himself left in an attempt to direct others to the image he hoped to be accorded in history'. [44]

Based on extensive archival investigation, Sofer's work is that of a political sociologist which aims to conceptualise Begin's world. Sofer is

particularly good at elucidating Begin's attempt to claim Jabotinsky as the source of his political legitimacy.

'The image of Begin as Jabotinsky's ideological heir is a distortion of historical fact.......Begin's political skill was exhibited in his usurpation of the Revisionist ideal and on his creation of a new political movement, portraying it as the exclusive historical claimant to Jabotinsky's heritage'.[45]

Building on Sofer's exposition of Begin's deviation from classical Revisionist Zionism and his use of Jabotinsky as a unifying symbol, I tried to elucidate Begin's seizure and control of the Israeli Right from 1948 until 1977 and his often tortuous odyssey between a loyal adherence to a nostalgic past and the political reality of the present. Unlike Joseph Heller, Sofer does not connect the radical aspect of Begin's policies with the political thought of Abba Achimeir who often expressed an admiration for fascism.

(d) Yaakov Shavit (Jewish History, Tel Aviv University)

Yaakov Shavit's *Jabotinsky and the Revisionist Movement: 1925 - 1948* (London 1988) was based on a collection of seven articles originally published in Hebrew as *The Mythologies of the Zionist Right Wing* (Tel Aviv 1986). Although it deals with the the ideological evolution of the Revisionist Movement, the book is chronologically disjointed because of its origin as a series of articles. It is essentially an exposition based on extensive archival research which explains the many questions which the sudden appearance and growth of the Revisionist Movement in the 1930s raised. For example, the importance of the depopulated Eastern Eretz Israel (Jordan) to the cause of Zionist maximalism. It is particularly good at elucidating the intellectual origins of the Right and separating the national philosophies of Jabotinsky, Klausner and Achimeir and the national messianism of Greenberg, Stern and Eldad.

Shavit's academic expertise coincided with the rise to power of the Likud in 1977. He was well placed to answer the often asked question 'Why did the Likud come to power?' He writes in the introduction:

'Unfortunately Zionist historiography has been unable to provide a satisfactory background for this kind of discussion, due to the neglect of the history of the Right as an academic field......This book offers an historical interpretation of the genesis

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and evolution of the Zionist and Israeli Right wing, both in the intellectual-ideological field and in the political field'[46]

Although Shavit was interested in exploring this *terra incognita*, the book is rooted in understanding the intellectual origins of the Right rather than a political history of the Revisionist Movement. It is therefore rather weak on the 1940s when intellectual discourse and ideological discussion had been replaced by the doctrine of military Zionism of the underground groups, the Irgun and Lehi. A second book, documenting the odyssey of Herut after 1948, although advertised, was never written by Shavit.

Although Achimeir is shown as a fascist sympathiser and Jabotinsky a critic, the connection to Betar's radicalism is only partially detailed and Stern's discussions with the Italians after 1938 and with the Germans after the outbreak of war downplayed.

(e) Joseph Heller (International Relations and Jewish History, Hebrew University, Jerusalem)

When Heller's *The Stern Gang: Ideology, Politics and Terror 1940 - 1949* [London 1995] was first published in Hebrew at the end of the 1980s, it created a stir in Israel because it neither glorified Stern as an idealised heroic figure nor did it treat him as solely an arch-terrorist. By relying on source material, he described and analysed the ideological development of the Stern Group (Lehi). Heller revealed the policy of the group to ally itself with powers which were inimical to and later in confrontation with Britain and whose ideological direction — the Colonels' Poland, Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany and Stalin's USSR — found a resonance in the group's thinking.

Heller regarded the Stern group as an offshoot of the interwar European radical right and, after Lehi's reforming in 1943, were influenced unknowingly by a National Bolshevik ideology which had originated in Weimar Germany.

'It attempted to combine elements of both right and left. Simultaneously, it supported anti-capitalism, state planning and an obviously pro-Soviet foreign policy as well as the notion of the organic unity of the nation (Volksgemeinschaft). National Bolshevism symbolised an ideology of distress, itself characteristic of some fringe circles

within the German radical right. It expressed a desire to create a 'third force' which would bridge the gap between Communism and Nazism.'[47]

Heller's book makes the important point that both Begin and Stern were influenced by Achimeir's radicalism and flirtation with fascism. But whereas Begin remained within the Revisionist movement, formally maintaining his allegiance to Jabotinsky, Stern left and formed his own group. Moreover, Begin did not agree with the maxim that 'the enemy of my enemy is automatically my friend' and therefore did not seek allies in the Poles and the Italians. Heller's book is the definitive book on the Stern Group and its clarity, backed up by extensive research, provides an ideological and political understanding of both the Irgun and Lehi undergrounds in the 1940s and the ideological chasm which separated them. This invaluable work helped me to understand the ideological roots of both Begin and Shamir and thereby to view their later actions — both in power and preparing for it. Begin and Shamir fundamentally exhibited different *weltanschauungs* , but distinguished as individuals by philosophical and psychological subtleties, yet appeared to be publicly travelling along the same road.

(f) Yonathan Shapiro (Political Sociology, Tel Aviv University)

Shapiro's short book *The Road to Power: Herut Power in Israel* is a sociological study of the political odyssey of Herut from its creation in 1948 until it attained power as the Likud in 1977. Shapiro draws on research on the European far Right and Peronism to understand the political influences on Betar in pre-war Poland. He also draws on anthropological literature on myths and symbols to characterise Begin's demagogic 'politics of the piazza'.

Shapiro makes the distinction between 'class politics', in which political parties and movements see to the material interests of population groups and 'status politics' which is a struggle for group prestige that preoccupies groups on the far Right. In confining Herut to the category of 'status politics', he comments:

'Status politics involves two types of groups or social categories: (a) those that lose status and prestige in the wake of changes in the social system, and (b) those that feel they are not getting due recognition and prestige within the system. Democratic politics

based on a distribution of resources and on compromises finds it difficult to satisfy groups fighting for prestige. In a political debate concerned with the distribution of myths and symbols of status rather than the attainment of material or other tangible accomplishments, it is more difficult to reach a compromise. Politics occupied with status may often lead, instead to radicalisation, in both the content and the style of the struggle between the groups involved.

In a struggle for status waged in the arena of politics through a dispute over myths and symbols, political activity loses its pragmatic character. Instead of looking for practical answers to burning answers to burning issues, leaders deal in symbols and in the pretense that the reality is different from what it actually is.'[48]

This sociological approach is particularly good at understanding Begin's overtly populist politics in the 1950s and his maintenance of control of his party during almost 30 years in opposition. It also partly explains the affinity between the Irgun veterans of Herut and the Sephardim which manifested itself in a massive increase in support for the Likud in the immediate aftermath of the Yom Kippur war.

Building on Shapiro's work, I have tried to show exactly how Begin actually built up electoral and parliamentary muscle between 1948 and 1977 and what political constellations allowed him to forge coalitions and finally to take power in 1977. Indeed, only one short chapter, 'Breakout and Insularity', in Shapiro's work is devoted to this fundamental question.

(g) Rael Jean Isaac

Rael Jean Isaac's book *Israel Divided: Ideological Politics in the Jewish State* (Baltimore 1976) started off as a sociology doctorate at the City University of New York. It focussed on the resurgence of ideology in Israel as a result of the acquisition of the Territories in the Six Day war. Isaac examined the Land of Israel Movement and the general peace movement as posing alternative ideologies to the ruling Labour Party between 1967 and 1974. The arguments and discussions within the Land of Israel Movement were important because it indicated the different types of maximalist position which, while close to Begin's Gahal, were also different from it. For example, their slogan 'The whole of Eretz Israel is now in the hands of the Jewish people', was not acceptable to Begin and

many others in Herut who still hankered after Jordan — Eastern Eretz Israel. The Land of Israel Movement did not wish to see the return of any land under Israel's control, yet Gahal was ambivalent about the retention of Sinai. All this laid the groundwork for the emergence of the far Right and its distancing from the Likud in the 1980s and 1990s. The several maps indicating different right wing perspectives for the borders of Israel were original and useful. Isaac's book although covering a short period of time was important at the time because it was almost a contemporary record of the fragmentation of the Labour Party and the realignment of those fragments as the Likud in 1973. Prior to 1967, such future members of the Likud were on either side of the ideological war initiated by Jabotinsky and Ben-Gurion. Indeed, hitherto they would never have been seen dead in one another's company. As Isaac remarks:

'For many, the Land of Israel Movement provided a transitional forum which enabled individuals for whom direct transfer of allegiance to Gahal would have proved intolerable, gradually to become socialised into acceptance of a perspective in which Gahal became an available alternative.' [49]

I have developed Isaac's examination of the Land of Israel Movement to show how the far Right and centre Right were effectively aligned throughout the 1970s and owed allegiance to Begin. Building on Isaac's analysis of the ideological fallout from Israel's victory in the Six Day War, I have shown how Begin was able to utilise this phenomenon to build a broader coalition from his Herut base and eventually to establish the Likud in 1973.

(6) Research in Retrospect

6.1 Personal Development

I wrote my first book *Exit Visa: Detente, Human Rights and the Jewish Emigration Movement in the USSR* between 1975 - 1977. It arose out of an initial interest in dissent and oppositionism in the Soviet Union since 1917 and subsequently an involvement in the campaign for Jewish emigration from the USSR in the 1960s and 1970s. This catalysed an interest in Israel politics — and with the election of Menachem Begin, a desire to understand the hitherto submerged Israeli Right.

The megaphone war between Israeli and Palestinian, Left and Right, Religious and Secular — and Begin's own brand of populist politics — obfuscated any real understanding. This — and a broad Diaspora conformity towards events made me all the more curious about comments and events. It was important to understand why the 1982 invasion of Lebanon happened, why there was such widespread dissent against it in Israel, why Diaspora Jewry adopted an ostrich-like position towards unpalatable situations, why the international press was hostile — it was a bizarre scenario that had to be explained and rationalised.

In 1989/90, I took the opportunity to answer these fundamental questions about Israel under the Likud during my year as Visiting Fellow at the Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace, Hebrew University, Jerusalem. The result, *Ploughshares into Swords?* was in a sense a personal intellectual odyssey. Although it received many good reviews with epithets such as 'honest' and 'brave' and cited as a book Palestinians should read if they wanted to make peace with the Israelis, it was essentially a series of essays which dealt with various topics.

The research led into archives, libraries and institutions. It also stimulated an interest in the Likud's ideological origin and the fragmentation of the Right. When I began to plan the framework for my current book, I realised that it would have to be more focussed than *Ploughshares into Swords?* and that a chronological political history which monitored the ideological evolution and deviation of the Likud would provide the structure missing in *Ploughshares into Swords?*

This more focussed project allowed me to explore more thoroughly archives at the Jabotinsky Institute, to prepare for and conduct interviews and to critically read secondary literature.

Working on the book also deepened my understanding of the history of Israel and specifically the Likud from both the factual and ideological points of view. It helped me to refine what I already knew — and, as with all political and historical subjects, it confirmed that past events are never as simple as one once believed them to be. It would not be an exaggeration to state that this exploratory and intellectual odyssey was also a learning curve — not simply in filling a factual vacuum but also in the planning and preparation involved in writing a book.

Since no one else had written in this way on the subject, I have been asked to lecture on various aspects of the Likud including sessions at the Centre for Near East Studies (SOAS) and the post-graduate seminar of the Centre of Jewish Studies (SOAS).

I feel that I have certainly progressed since writing my earlier book, *Ploughshares into Swords?* in terms of research rationale and in the ease of expression in print. I have a greater sense of confidence that I feel that I know what I am doing — in terms of writing, interviewing, basic research and the general planning of such a project. The Likud book was in one sense easier to write than *Ploughshares into Swords?* since it was defined chronologically. Although there were questions to answer and situations to explain at every turn, there was a clearly defined beginning and a clearly defined end.

I have received an invitation to write a history of Israel for college and university undergraduates from my publisher, I.B. Tauris. This would lead me into other areas of the Zionist experiment. One area which I would wish to explore is the history and politics of Religious Zionism and especially the recent expansion of the religious far Right. There are many interconnections between this and my current study on the Likud. As far as I am aware, although there have been books which deal with Gush Emunim and the settler movement, there is nothing which examines the history and evolution of the politics of Religious Zionism as a whole.

6.2 Limitations of the Research

Although I think that it was the right decision to interview people in Israel after I had written the manuscript — to answer questions which I could not answer from other sources — clearly, if there had been more time, I would have conducted many more interviews, investigated more primary sources and delved more deeply into the archives at the Jabotinsky Institute and elsewhere.

In hindsight — and with more time — I should have interviewed Shamir, Sharon and Netanyahu if for no other reason than to confirm that they would reveal little new. I would also have investigated Likud party institutions as a counterbalance to the emphasis on the leadership of Begin, Shamir and Netanyahu.

Another obvious limitation was the fast moving and often unexpected developments in the Middle East. My book formally finished with the defeat of the Likud in 1992. This was followed by a very short postscript which focussed on Netanyahu's leadership of the Likud from 1993 - 1995 — and especially the period following the historic reconciliation with the PLO in September 1993.

I delivered the final draft of the manuscript to the copyeditors in April 1995. The book was launched at the end of September 1995 by a lecture at SOAS entitled 'Will the Likud win the 1996 Israeli elections?' I postulated that Netanyahu would win if there was a wave of bombings in Israel and/or if some of the central protagonists — Rabin, Peres or Arafat — were removed from the scene. In questions after the lecture, I even mentioned death threats and the vilification campaign directed at Rabin and Peres.

A few short weeks later, Yitzhak Rabin was murdered by a religious zealot. This was followed by a spate of atrocities by Islamic suicide bombers and sure enough Netanyahu came to power at the end of May in the national elections. The consequences of these possibilities, mentioned in the book and/or at the lecture could thus at the time only be rationalised speculation.

6.3 Most Recent Research

Several books were published during this dramatic period which dealt with the Oslo Accords[50] and indeed the Rabin assassination[51]. In particular, David Makovsky's book[52] on the Israel-PLO peace initiative was useful. The series of academic essays on Israel in the 1990s, edited by Frederick Lazin and Gregory Mahler,[53] was similarly informative. Although there was an interesting essay on Israeli democracy by Gideon Doron,[54] several contributions centred on the Oslo Accords or on subjects that emanated from this. Mention of the Likud or Netanyahu were peripheral and essential non-existent. This phenomenon was similarly reflected in another book of academic essays detailing the road to peace by Barry Rubin, Joseph Ginat and Moshe Ma'oz.[55] Some writers such as Peter Demant[56] looked at unofficial Israeli-Palestinian dialogue prior to the 1993 Accords, others such as Pinhas Inbari,[57] Matti Steinberg[58] and Manuel Hassassian[59] examined the evolution of Palestinian policies. This marginalisation of the Likud suggested that most Israeli and American academics believed that the Israeli opposition after 1993 was of little importance. In one sense, this was true since the Likud was literally dwarfed by the momentous rapproachment with the PLO. They were viewed by most commentators as 'yesterday's men' with nothing to offer.

The handshake on the White House lawn also spawned the first books on the Israeli peace movement in 1996. Mordechai Bar-On,[60] a long-time leader of Peace Now and an academic, produced a comprehensive history of the Israeli peace movement. Reuven Kaminer,[61] an Israeli lawyer, was similarly active in groups to the left of Peace Now and produced a history of the numerous protest groups of the 1980s. It showed the clear difference in approach on a variety of issues between small groups such as *Yesh Gvul* and *Dai L'Kibush* and the mainstream and image-conscious Peace Now.

Few dealt with the security issue which would bring the Likud to power once more in 1996. Netanyahu[62] published a third book on fighting terrorism. Many observers viewed this as a plank in the election campaign and directed primarily at American Jewry. Professor Asher Arian produced an important and probably essential book which surveyed Israeli opinion towards war, peace and security. This was perhaps the first

book to seriously examine and methodically analyse Israeli views in this fashion.

Several books on early Zionist ideology and history were published in 1996. Jacques Kornberg's biography of Theodor Herzl[63] produced a remarkably new picture of the founder of modern Zionism. Stripped of traditional hero-worship, Herzl appears as a Jewish assimilationist, embracing Prussian nationalism, Christianity and finally Zionism — and above all a public-relations man par excellence for the Zionist cause. This picture of Herzl will produce new insights into the thinking of Jabotinsky.

A large collection of academic essays edited by Jehuda Reinharz and Anita Shapira[64] on pre-State Zionism included a 1981 essay on Jabotinsky and the Revisionist movement by Yaakov Shavit[65]. Gideon Shimoni's comprehensive book on Zionist ideology[66] included a chapter on the Revisionist movement as well as numerous other allied topics. Shimoni is particularly good in dissecting Jabotinsky's often ambiguous approach — 'walking dangerously on a tightrope between conceptual alternatives was characteristic of most of Jabotinsky's ideological formulations'.[67]

Itzhak Galnoor's book[68] on the partition of Palestine is also a valuable contribution towards understanding the decisions of the Zionist movement in 1919, 1937 and 1947 which effectively catalysed the genesis and opposition of the Revisionist movement and its successors. It covers all groups within the Zionist movement including the religious and the left as well as the Revisionists.

A book of academic essays on Israel's first decade of independence, edited by Ilan Troen and Noah Lucas,[69] included a contribution by Hannah Torok Yablonka[70] on Herut's attitude towards Holocaust survivors. It provides an overview of Begin's internalisation and utilisation of the Holocaust — and of the legacy of delegitimisation of Mapai and its extrapolation to collaboration with the Nazis.

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These included Amr El-Jowaily *Al-Ahram*; Judith L. Bara *Political Studies;* Yezid Sayigh *International Relations*

13. Dan Leon is Managing Editor of Palestine-Israel Journal and before that a Senior Editor of New Outlook magazine. Living in Israel since 1950, he has been active in the Israeli left and in the Peace Movement for decades. Arieh Handler is the central representative in Britain of the National Religious Party. He has been active in Zionist politics since the 1930s and is only one of only three people still alive who were present when Israel's Declaration of Independence was proclaimed. He lived in Israel during its

first decade, is a frequent visitor and has many high-level contacts amongst its present and past leadership.

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20. Examples of specific topics for interviewees were:

Moshe Arens — his relationship with Shamir; his sense of pragmatism; the Gaza First policy

Uzi Landau — Likud ideology; the views of Sharon and the right wing

Benny Begin — his father; his opposition to Bibi Netanyahu within the Likud

Yossi Beilin — the peace process; the Labour perspective on the Likud

Dan Meridor — the Lebanon War; Shamir's approach to government

Boaz Evron — Canaanite philosophy

Moshe Katsav — Likud and the Sephardim

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34. Shindler, *Ploughshares into Swords?* Chapters 4,5 & 6

35. In the 1980s and early 1990s, Professor Cohen conducted annual demographic surveys for the American Jewish Committee *American Jewish Attitudes Towards Israel and Israelis*

36. Amos Perlmutter has been Ford Professor at MIT and a visiting scholar at Harvard and the Brookings Institution. His books include *The Military and Politics in Israel* (New York 1978) and an account of the bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1981 *Two Minutes over Baghdad* (London, 1982)

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Interviews

CATEGORY	INTERVIEWEES
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Far Right	Yuval Ne'eman (Techiya)
Former members of the Likud	Aryeh Naor
Knesset Opponents	Yossi Beilin (Labour), Benny Temkin (Meretz), Dedi Zucker (Meretz)
Peace Movement	Mordechai Bar-On, Avrum Burg, Dafna Golan, Galia Golan, Reuven Kaminer, David Kretzmer, Dan Leon, Alice Shalvi, Ornan Yekutieli, Chaim Zadok
Religious Figures	Rabbi David Hartman, Yechezkel Landau, Rabbi Jeremy Milgrom, Rabbi Isaac Newman; Debbie Weissman
Intellectuals, Writers, Academics	Boas Evron, Alouph Hareven, Shulamith Hareven, Avishai Margalit, Ari Rath, Tom Segev, Joseph Heller, Moshe Negbi, Shmuel Toledano, David Tal, Yitzhak Zamir
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Will the Likud win the 1996 Israeli Election?

The truth that governments lose elections rather than oppositions winning them has been borne out by numerous examples in the post-war period. Will this also be the case in next year's Israeli election? Will Rabin lose the election because of his historic decision to embark on a peace process with the PLO? Will Bibi Netanyahu defeat Rabin simply because he is there, in position, and restore the Likud to power? And to what extent can the Israel Government or the Likud opposition control such factors? Given the volatility and indeed unpredictability of the Middle east situation, no one can be certain who will actually win the election. But we can look at the factors that will affect the outcome.

Next year will bear witness to a new system of election in Israel. In addition to the normal parliamentary election, there will be a direct election for Prime Minister as well. No one knows how all this will turn out. Some laud it as a great triumph for representative democracy, others believe that it has the potential for the creation of a political cocktail of unprecedented confusion. In his recent book, 'Broken Covenant', Moshe Arens, described in detail the lengths to which he went to persuade Netanyahu in January 1992 to join the rest of the Likud Knesset bloc in voting against the idea of direct elections. Arens failed to budge Bibi and the motion passed by only one vote. Netanyahu thus determined the outcome. Why then was Netanyahu so keen on the idea of direct elections? Was he a true believer in this process or did he see himself even then as a potential future Likud candidate? As the master of the soundbite, such a personalised presidential election would be tailor-made for the candidate with a silver tongue and who looked good. However, recent opinion polls show that in terms of personal qualities — persuasive

ability, superiority, personal integrity, stamina — Netanyahu is actually lagging some 10 - 15 points behind Rabin.

Yet a poll in Yediot Aharanot in August showed both Rabin and Netanyahu on level pegging at 41% each. This and other polls suggest that it is not Rabin's quality of leadership that is in doubt, but a growing hesitancy about his policies towards securing peace in the Middle East.

At the time of the Oslo Accord, over 60% of Israelis supported the move towards reconciliation with the Palestinian enemy. After the Dizengoff bombing, support decreased. The same happened after the Beit Lid bombing, support for the peace process went down to 35%, but recovered after a month to 56%. In July 1995, 46% were in support. The pronounced trend, however, seems to be, that after each atrocity the recovery is weaker. The conclusion: Support for the peace process is gradually being eroded by terrorism.

Yet even before the wave of suicide bombings, at the time of 60% support for Oslo, 63% worried about personal security. This suggests that there were many Israeli supporters of the peace process who understood it would bring an increase in terrorism — that it is possible to be worried about one's personal security, yet still be in favour of the reconciliation with the PLO. It also suggests that there is a wide band of roughly 20 - 30% who could be turned against the peace process through fear of Islamic terrorism.

In the current issue of the *New York Review of Books*, Avishai Margalit shows that from the time of the Oslo Accord up to March 1995, 49 civilians and 22 soldiers were killed. In the 18 months before the Oslo Accord, 14 civilians and 6 soldiers were killed. Clearly, it has been the arrival of the suicide bomber that has caused large numbers of casualties though the terrorist attacks have been few in number. If there had been no peace process, would the growth in the Islamic movement have been contained? If there had been no peace process, would Hamas have refrained from priming the suicide bomber? Indeed, if the peace process is discontinued, if the Likud returns to power, would the bombers stop their activities?

Regardless of the answers to these questions or a comparison with the much larger numbers killed in traffic accidents on the road,

Israelis emotionally make the linkage between the peace process and the suicide attacks. Why? Perhaps the trauma of Jewish history provides the answer.

All this aids the Likud. As Avishai Margalit commented 'Netanyahu's future is heavily dependent on terror'. And what of the Palestinian rejectionists? Although Hamas does not want the peace process, does it follow that it also wants the return of a Likud government? A recent poll showed that over 70% of Palestinians do not favour the Likud, they want the talks to continue, but to what extent does Hamas take this into account despite its desire to supplant the PLO.

In one sense, the action of Hamas and Islamic Jihad are marginal for the Likud and the far Right. The national camp in Israel views the PLO as the central ideological enemy. The far Right — and Netanyahu to a lesser extent — have thus been at pains to associate the PLO with Hamas and to portray Arafat as the *eminence grise* and real leader of the Islamic terror campaign. This mirrored the campaign in the past to blame the PLO for all Abu Nidal's outrages. This perception had been aided in the public mind by Arafat's inability to control and punish Hamas. Although opinion polls suggest growing public confidence in the Palestinian Authority to keep to the terms of the Oslo Accord, there is a real concern whether they will be in a position to maintain effective security on the West Bank in the aftermath of the redeployment of Israeli forces.

Netanyahu's approach has been to concentrate on the issue of security and to subsume the Likud's ideological claim to Judea and Samaria within it. Whilst he wants Gaza closed off by a security fence, he has not said that Israel should retake it because it is part of Eretz Israel. While he has denounced today's agreement in Washington, he has not said that the Likud would repudiate it if they came to power. He has established good relations with King Hussein and was present at the Arava signing. The historic attachment of the Revisionist-Zionist movement of Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky to the East Bank as originally envisioned in the British Mandate has been put to one side. In contrast to Menachem Begin who refused to meet Hussein even clandestinely because he did not wish to compromise the claim to the East Bank,

Netanyahu has followed in Moshe Arens's footsteps and put clear blue water between the dream and the reality. Pragmatism before ideology. A revisionism of Revisionism.

Menachem Begin's success was that he forged a broad coalition of the right over a period of thirty years. The Likud was established through the grafting of a broad coalition of Liberals, Labour fragments and his own party, Herut — itself the political successor to the Irgun rather than to Jabotinsky's Revisionists. This broad coalition broke through to win the 1977 election. Yet it also masked an alliance between the centre Right and the far Right. This came unstuck when Begin unveiled the Camp David Accord and ordered a withdrawal from Sinai — also part of Eretz Israel. The emergence of the far Right, both within Likud and outside it — Techiya, Tsomet, Moledet and a plethora of settlers' groups — have grown in strength since the Camp David accord. They were a far greater threat to Shamir than to Begin. It can also be argued — and Netanyahu has done so — that both Begin and Shamir were brought down by the far Right.

Whatever Netanyahu's personal position, events pushed him towards the far Right as soon as he became leader. When suddenly faced with the handshake on the White House lawn, Netanyahu had no other choice but to make common cause with the far Right if he wished to maintain his precarious position as leader and control the deep emotions aroused by the agreement with the PLO. Indeed, he could not afford to be outmanoeuvered by the far Right especially within the Likud. While Netanyahu called for new elections, Sharon called on Israelis to ambiguously 'fight' the agreement. Given that an opinion poll in Ma'ariv a few months before had indicated that 17% of settlers would use violence to stop any autonomy deal and that Sharon himself had created the conditions for Jewish settlement at Gush Katif at the edge of Gaza in the early 1970s, this was no idle threat. Indeed, Sharon had appeared on Israel television in mid-June 1993 to advocate the expansion of the Gaza settlements to 'several hundreds of thousands'.

Despite warnings from Benny Begin, Dan Meridor and others in the upper eschelons of the Likud, Netanyahu's espousal of a radical populist approach, peppered with appropriate soundbites, was the path

chosen to confront the Oslo agreement and the events that flowed from it. Yet it also meant that if Netanyahu wished to change course, his area of political manouverability would now be more restricted. He must take note of the stance of the far Right.

If a Likud government is to be formed, he must depend on several religious groupings traditionally close to the Likud. Unlike Menachem Begin, Netanyahu is a secular Jew and this psychologically distances him from the various religious parties. His numerous marriages and his prime-time admission on Israeli television of an extra-marital affair did not commend him to the orthodox. He further criticised leading rabbis in Israel and the United States who suggested that it is forbidden for a Jew — and moreover Jewish soldiers — to lend a hand in dismantling settlements. Netanyahu's approach clearly reflected the mainstream, mainly secular component of Likud's supporters, but it also indicated that if a choice has to be made between the law of the State and a rabbinical interpretation of *halakhah* — Jewish law, then Netanyahu would side with the former. Netanyahu's modern Likud would be far removed from the traditionalism of the Begin era.

If the policy of the Likud in the 1980s was to creat facts on the ground through the settlement policy so as to make Israeli control over the Territories irreversible, then Rabin and Peres have similarly created facts through agreement with the Palestinians. Today's agreement in Washington is symptomatic of the Israel Government's desire to make withdrawal from the Territories irreversible. Rabin has sought to further divide the already divided settlers by stating publicly that he would espouse Israeli control over the Gush Etzion bloc, south of Jerusalem and settlements along the Green line. With redeployment and Palestinian elections in the offing, the settlers' plight, particularly those in isolated areas, is becoming more acute, there is much talk about maps and moving the inhabitants of Judea and Samaria into blocs. As the settlers' anxieties increase with the redeployment of the army from seven West Bank towns, how will Netanyahu be able to maintain this balancing act between those of his supporterswho believe that the law of the land must be upheld and those who might stretch extra-parliamentary action into uncharted waters? What happens if some resort to breaking the law?

What happens if some rabbis give a hechsha to such an action and sanctify the incitement to violence?

Another traditional base of support for the Likud is the sephardi underclass. David Levy, the Sephardi standard bearer under Begin and Shamir has finally left Likud after years of prevarication. Yet his departure was not simply due to his opposition to Netanyahu's long overdue reform of the Likud's internal structure. Netanyahu as a moderniser was viewed by Levy as the undesirable importer of American methods and philosophy. But how dangerous is Levy in terms of diverting votes away from the Likud? The latest opinion polls suggest only one seat for Levy's new party and that support is flagging.

Netanyahu has been luckier in that dissidents from Labour's right wing whom Rabin needs to bolster his majority in the Knesset may split Labour's vote. The Third way between Labour and the Likud may emerge as the Trojan Horse which could thwart Rabin's hope of a clear victory. Their support for the 13000 Jewish inhabitants of the Golan has forced Rabin to concede a referendum on the future of the heights. A tremendous public relations campaign has been mounted by the Golan settlers, yet it should be remembered that Rabin needs only 40% of the Jewish vote to achieve peace with Syria since he is assured of the Israeli Arab vote.

While true power has moved from the Palestinian diaspora to the Territories, Syria has sought to recover some of its former influence by controlling the small disparate groups implacably opposed to the peace process. Assad controls the Shiite Hezbollah, the rejectionist Ahmed Jibril group, PFLP - GC as well as influencing the direction of the Popular and Democratic Fronts. Recent announcements from the military wing of Hamas have emanated from Damascus. The implication is that Assad will continue to allow the free flow of terrorism from all these groups if there is no favourable deal on the Golan.

Does the Labour Party have any other weak spots which the Likud could exploit? Compared to the first Rabin government in the 1970s, there has been little overt corruption and a stable economy. Inflation is at 6% this year with great possibilities for economic cooperation with the Arab world. How far this has helped the tens of

thousands of Russian immigrants is an open question. They voted for Rabin in 1992 and gave him that extra boost which lifted him into government. In the interim, they have suffered hardship and the rigours of the Israeli bureaucracy. Will they be so well disposed towards him in 1996?

With today's announcement in Washington, it would seem that the momentum of the peace process will be Rabin's greatest asset in seeking reelection. If that momentum is inhibited by suicide bombers or violence from the settlers or that the Israeli public deem the process of withdrawal not to be irreversible and indeed should be reversed in the name of security, then Rabin's government could indeed fall. The answer to the question posed tonight 'Will the Likud win the 1996 Israeli election?' is still wide open. As we stand at the beginning of the Jewish New Year, it is clear that momentous events of great historic importance will take place in the next twelve months, but there is also a real possibility for both disruption and violence. It is self-evident that the path to true peace in the Middle East does not run smoothly. A volatile electorate will be emotionally swayed back and forth and its final decision on who to back may only be made in the days or even hours before the actual casting of votes.

Arafat and Rabin carry the hopes of millions with them. In the New Year 5756, let us hope that all their deliberations will be marked by success and equanimity and that Israel and Palestine will enjoy the first fruits of peace and justice after so many wasted years of war and terror.